



# Big Hearts in Bartow County

## Five nonprofits to know

By Taylor Dahl

The primary mission of The Bookmobile is to ensure that every person in Bartow County has access to books.

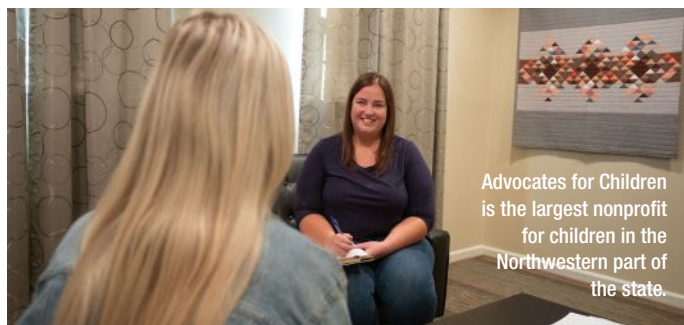
**I**n Bartow County, residents know they can lean on each other in good times and in bad. When there is a community need, Bartow County is ready to answer the call. With many nonprofits and civic organizations throughout, there is always a way to give back. From reading and education programs to addiction and substance abuse campaigns and from pregnancy and infant loss awareness to initiatives aimed at helping kids thrive at home and across the globe, these are five area nonprofits you need to know now.

## Advocates for Children

For more than 30 years, Advocates for Children has provided care for children from birth to age 17, young adults from ages 18 to 24 and their parents and family members of any age who have been victims of abuse and neglect. It's easy to see Advocates for Children's impact on Bartow County when you look at its statistics. In 2019, the organization served 8,841 children and adults. As the largest nonprofit for children in Northwest Georgia,

Advocates for Children is able to serve these thousands of children and adults through their programs that keep the community safe. Some of their programs include:

- Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) – the site for forensic interviews of children in possible neglect or abuse cases.
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) – trained volunteers help abused and neglected kids in the juvenile court system.
- Flowering Branch Children's Shelter – a residential program for at-risk youth.



Advocates for Children is the largest nonprofit for children in the Northwestern part of the state.



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- Hope in Your Home – the home visitation program to support parents and caretakers.
- Rainbows for All Children – helps children heal from family transitions such as divorce, death, illness and more.
- RISE – Youth Independent Housing Program – assists youth 18-24 who do not have a permanent home to obtain housing.

While all of the programs are important to the health and wellbeing of children and their families, RISE and the Children's Advocacy Center have shown great strides in the past year.

"RISE is for youth ages 18-24 who are experiencing homelessness," says Rachel Castillo, President and CEO of Advocates for Children. "We provide permanent housing, subsidize rent, and support clients with unique case management. The goal of this program is to equip young people with the skills and support that they need to become self-sufficient and stable."

The RISE program launched in November of 2019, and in one short year the amazing team housed 32 individuals and secured 19 housing units.

When alleged crimes happen against or in front of a child, the minor may be required to give testimony. Typically, children have to sit through many interviews—from law enforcement to medical personnel to child protective service. The CAC serves to consolidate this process. "Forensic interviews are documented in such a way to reduce the need for a child who has witnessed or experienced traumatic events to tell his or her story repeatedly," explains Castillo.

If you are interested in getting involved with Advocates for Children, visit [advochild.org](http://advochild.org) or email [info@advochild.org](mailto:info@advochild.org).

## Bartow Against Drugs

These days, in every state around the nation, there is a lot to worry about when it comes to substance abuse. From vaping to tobacco to alcohol to marijuana—illegal, harmful, and addictive substances are real threats to youth. That's where Bartow Against Drugs (BAD) comes in.

BAD's mission is to ensure Bartow County is aware of the local substance abuse issues facing its kids, as well as to find a way to work together to reduce these problems. In a recent survey, BAD found that parents do believe it is easy for kids to access illegal substances.



Bartow Against Drugs (BAD) brings awareness to the community of substance abuse issues facing its youth.



The Positive Social Norms campaign, is just one of BAD's key initiatives. The multi-year project hopes to change kids' perception of alcohol and drugs. Peer pressure may make it seem like lots of kids are indulging in drinking alcohol, but the reality is much different. Most students say they do not drink, so the Positive Social Norms campaign's purpose is to emphasize that most kids do say "no" using positive posters and social media posts as mediums.

BAD Program Manager Scott Sherwin says, "Once we change a student's perception that 'everyone is drinking' to a more realistic view of 'not everyone is drinking,' then they feel less apt to give in to peer pressure when faced with deciding to use alcohol."

Because their work is ongoing, BAD is always looking for people to join their important cause. If

you're interested, email Sherwin at [\*bartowprevention@gmail.com\*](mailto:bartowprevention@gmail.com).

## **The Bookmobile**

Famous children's book author Roald Dahl once said, "If you are going to get anywhere in life, you have to read a lot of books." The Bookmobile makes sure every person, no matter their economic status, has access to books. The Bookmobile isn't just following Roald Dahl's advice. According to the American Library Association, kids who read independently become better readers and generally do better in school. The trick is to bring books into kids' lives early, and often. By making reading a regular part of your child's day, they are more likely to become independent readers who thrive later in life.

The Bookmobile accomplishes their mission by bringing

books to low-income families that do not have reliable transportation or are unable to visit Bartow libraries. The Bookmobile also offers reading programs in the summer. Soon, The Bookmobile will offer a mobile computer lab.

Bartow residents interested in helping The Bookmobile can volunteer at or donate to The Bookmobile program. There are also sponsorship opportunities for business owners. Visit [readingtogoplaces.com](http://readingtogoplaces.com) for more information.



The Bookmobile offers reading programs and will soon have a computer lab.



The Bookmobile brings books to low-income families as well as those that do not have reliable means of transportation. They also stock "little libraries" for their Take a Book, Share a Book program.

## **Etowah Scholarship Foundation**

The tagline of the Etowah Scholarship Foundation says it all: "Connecting Bartow County students with community-funded scholarships since 1982." The foundation is able to provide these scholarships thanks to donations made by local businesses, individual donors, civic groups, churches, and more.

"It's very rare to see a scholarship organization that is fully financially supported by a particular community that is able to use those funds to help our local students pursue higher educational opportunities in the capacity that we do," says Leigh Welch, executive director of the Etowah Scholarship Foundation.

The foundation awards more than 200 scholarships each year ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,000. Since its inception, the foundation has awarded more than \$6 million to more than 7,000 Bartow County students.



The Etowah Scholarship Foundation provides scholarships that are fully funded by the Bartow community.