

Stonecom Quarterly Issues Report

Fourth Quarter, 2022

October – December

As part of the company's on-going service to the community, Stonecom addressed these issues of significance to the Upper Cumberland during this quarter:

Issue 1: Mental Health Conversations in 2022

Mental health is becoming a topic that is more talked about today than ever. There seems to be more of an understanding that our mental health should be treated as just as important as our physical health. How do older generations deal with these changes? How do you maintain good mental health?

Issue 2: Tennessee's Efforts To Increase Childhood Well-Being

Tennessee has experienced slight improvement in providing stability for children, families' struggles with poverty, health and security kept the state ranked 36th in overall child well-being, according to a 2022 report. A 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation showed that Tennessee children are still struggling to get access to basic necessities, such as nutritious food, financial stability, stable housing and safe neighborhoods. In addition, children need greater accessibility to mental health services, a nationwide trend.

Issue 3: Has COVID-19 Changed The Way We Give?

COVID-19 changed the way we interact with our families, work, and communities as a whole. Has it changed the way we give of our time, money, and resources? Needs are only increasing in the post-pandemic world and the holiday season is approaching fast so we sat down with charitable leaders in the Upper Cumberland to ask them how COVID has changed their efforts to raise support and awareness in these crucial times.

The stations sought out guests across our region to discuss these issues on our weekly public affairs program. "Today In The Upper Cumberland" airs each weekend:

Saturday at 6am on 96-9 Highway 111 Country (WUCH), at 7am on Rock 93-7 (WBXE), and 106-9 Kicks Country (WKXD), at 8am on Lite Rock 95.9 (WLQK), and 93-3 The Dawg (WKXD-HD2), at 10am on 101.9/AM 920 (WLIV).

Sunday at 5:30am on Sports Radio 104.7 (WKXD HD3), 7am on Rock 93-7 (WBXE) and on News Talk 94.1/AM 1600 (WUCT), at 12pm on News Talk 94.1/AM 1600 (WUCT), at 6pm on Lite Rock 95.9 (WLQK) and on 101.9/AM 920 (WLIV), at 7pm on 106-9 Kicks Country (WKXD) and 93-3 The Dawg (WKXD-HD2), at 9pm on 96-9 Highway 111 Country (WUCH).

In addition to these issues, Stonecom Cookeville offers more than 70 local news updates per day across its stations.

The stations air local community calendar announcements multiple times per day across all its stations. We also invite local community members to record public service announcements which air across multiple stations.

We also participate in the Tennessee Association Of Broadcasters Public Service Program.

Our stations serve the Upper Cumberland region of middle Tennessee:

WBXE 93-7 – Baxter

WKXD 106-9 – Monterey

WKXD HD-2/93.3 – Monterey

WKXD HD-3/104.7 - Monterey

WLIV 101.9/920 – Livingston

WLQK 95.9 – Livingston

WUCH 96.9 – Cookeville

WUCT 94.1/1600 -- Algood

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Program Date:

October 29-30

Program Guest:

Ken Lewis of Maranatha Women's Ministry and Autumn Weitzel of UC Foster Closet

Overview:

COVID changed a lot about our lives in a lot of different ways. How did it impact local charities, and have the changes continued? We put that question to Autumn Weitzel, the Assistant Director and Co-Founder of The Upper Cumberland Foster Closet, and Ken Lewis, the President of the Maranatha Women's Ministry.

Key Takeaways:

- Ken Lewis points out that he has found that when a tragedy strikes, people inherently want to help. The issue could be that they do not know where to put this desire to reach out so the help is not focused on the needs at the time. Always reach out to the organization you are giving to and ask the best way to help to fit their current needs.
- Both giving and government support slowed down in 2021 as COVID settled out of the news and community support is often needed now more than ever before due to the still constantly changing landscape of offering help during COVID's progression and effects.
- Time can be more valuable than money. With the changing economy and needs of our communities as we continue to navigate the pandemic's long-term effects, more manpower may be the gift your local charity needs.

Issue 1: Mental health is becoming a topic that is more talked about today than ever. There seems to be more of an understanding that our mental health should be treated as just as important as our physical health. How do older generations deal with these changes? How do you maintain good mental health?

Program Date:

November 12-13

Program Guest:

Kayla Jackson and Ashley Lynch of the Mental Health Cooperative

Overview:

In recent years there's been more and more open communication about mental health. More and more people are equating mental health to your physical health. We talk to two experts in the field about how this is helping them in their work, and how it's helping each of us to be more open about the way we feel. Kayla Jackson is the Child and Youth, and Intensive Care Management Supervisor, Ashley Lynch is the Adult Care Management Supervisor. Both work for the Mental Health Cooperative.

Key Takeaways:

- Judgement and assumptions surrounding mental health issues have decreased a lot in recent years but there is always room for improvement as we continue to work together as a society to learn such new information that affects all of our lives in different ways.
- COVID had a large positive impact on our ability to talk about and empathize with mental health because we were all going through the same tragedy together and could openly discuss our feelings with the people around us knowing they were much more likely to relate to us.
- Physical and mental health are very closely related. Monitoring both with the help of a healthcare professional can make an incredible difference in your daily life.
- Empathizing with friends and family who are suffering mental health struggles should be looked at as you would look at helping them through a physical illness. Both should be taken seriously and supported by their community.
- Just getting people to come in to sit down with a mental health professional is a huge hurdle to cross. Once you take that leap, they are more than happy to work with you at your pace and talk about all the options available.

Issue 3: COVID-19 changed the way we interact with our families, work, and communities as a whole. Has it changed the way we give of our time, money, and resources? Needs are only increasing in the post-pandemic world and the holiday season is approaching fast so we sat down with charitable leaders in the Upper Cumberland to ask them how COVID has changed their efforts to raise support and awareness in these crucial times.

Program Date:

December 3-4

Program Guest:

Max Winitz of Blood Assurance

Overview:

In the season of giving, we examine how giving has changed in the wake of COVID. Just this week, Blood Assurance put out an urgent request for healthy donors with so many cases of flu in our midst. It represents the increasingly difficult job of getting people to give blood, according to Blood Assurance's Max Winitz.

Key Takeaways:

- Blood donations dropped drastically at the onset of COVID in the United States in March of 2020. When the need is the greatest, the donors stepped back. We need to partner with our community blood centers to support our neighbors in need.
- The vast majority of people do not donate blood in their lifetime. Just taking the small step to donate once can save up to three lives in your city. You can donate blood every two months and healthy, lifesaving blood is always needed desperately.
- Blood donated to local community centers stays in that community. Donating to a smaller organization such as Blood Assurance guarantees that you are supplying straight to your friends and family who may find themselves in a sudden emergency or illness.
- Without ample blood supply, hospitals have to consider holding on any elective procedures. Blood Assurance notifies seventy local hospitals when levels are too low to support them. This notification had never been given out before March of 2020 and supplies have still not recovered since COVID began.

Issue 2: Tennessee has experienced slight improvement in providing stability for children, families' struggles with poverty, health and security kept the state ranked 36th in overall child well-being, according to a 2022 report. A 50-state report of recent household data developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation showed that Tennessee children are still struggling to get access to basic necessities, such as nutritious food, financial stability, stable housing and safe neighborhoods. In addition, children need greater accessibility to mental health services, a nationwide trend.

Program Date:

December 10-11

Program Guest:

Sarah Henderson and Mandy Pellegrin of the Sycamore Institute

Overview:

The Sycamore Institute has released its annual report on child well-being in the state of Tennessee. It paints a better picture, however, it's important to note there's still much work to be done. And second, the data is several years old, meaning the effect of COVID, and the effect of the current inflation bout, are not included in this child well-being report. Sarah Henderson is a Senior Policy Analyst for The Sycamore Institute, Mandy Pellegrin is Deputy Director.

Key Takeaways:

- The poverty level is defined by the United States census bureau alongside the federal government. The value is found by looking at the USDA's basic food plan, the amount it costs to subsist on the most basic diet possible, and multiplying that value by three. This value is very imperfect as it does not take housing and other needs into account but it is the value used to determine eligibility for programs and benefits.
- Child poverty has reached a 10-year low in Tennessee as of 2022. However, this data has a severe lag and thus does not show effects from COVID, benefits from new public services, changes in education and health, and other large changes in the recent years that were not able to be included on the county level as the data is still being compiled.
- Child poverty looks very different depending on the urban or rural status of an area. The numbers may look the same but changes in housing prices, food costs, and job availability can make the daily life of families look very different.
- Poverty has a major impact on childhood performance in school. When children's minds are distracted by worries about home or unmet needs of their own, they find it very difficult to reach their full potential and thus can damage their ability to excel later in life.

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Program Date:

December 17-18

Program Guest:

Shirley Jennings, President, and Mark Allison, Vice President, of NAMI Cookeville

Overview:

As more and more attention is focused on mental health in our society, the work of organizations like NAMI come more into focus. The National Alliance on Mental Illness has a Cookeville branch led by Shirley Jennings, its President, and Mark Allison, Vice President of NAMI Cookeville.

Key Takeaways:

- Mental health care can be expensive, just like any healthcare. However, there are free services in many communities. All the resources NAMI provides, such as support groups, are free to help welcome people into their organization and decrease the stigma of asking for help when you need it.
- Each person's journey to asking for help is personal to them and is shaped by the people around them. The way you discuss mental health with your friends and family is very important because our communities create or dispel our personal stigmas and assumptions about mental health. Using phrases like "those people" or "crazy" can stop someone from getting the help they desperately need.
- Mental health is just as varied as any other physical ailment. Not all treatments are the same and it is becoming more and more obvious that it is important to treat people as individuals and take everyone's experience at face value as opposed to lumping everyone in this industry together. We all have our own individual mental health needs.
- It's incredibly helpful to educate children in schools to begin dispelling their stigmas early and to teach children what resources are out there. NAMI provides peer-to-peer help in schools to assist in educating and reassuring children from a young age that they are not alone and that mental health is just as important and real as any other illness.

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Program Date:

December 24-25

Program Guest:

Richard Kennedy, Executive Director and Kristi Pailing, UC Regional Coordinator of the Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth

Overview:

The Volunteer State has made big strides in making sure that children have a chance to succeed. Rankings that look at the wellbeing of children have increased significantly over the last several years, but there's work left to be done. Richard Kennedy helps direct efforts at the state level, Kristi Pailing is the Upper Cumberland's Regional Coordinator.

Key Takeaways:

- The TCCY is part of the official TN state government. Their work is solely focused on improving the lives of children in Tennessee.
- Poverty is a universal struggle. The impact of a community falling onto hard times directly affects families which then cannot provide for their children.
- As Tennessee grows as a state, its communities are becoming more and more individual. Because of this growth, they are each developing their own complex needs and challenges.
- Governor Lee has had a great focus on providing support to rural and distressed counties in Tennessee.
- There is a major focus on informing school staff on trauma and how to engage with the students on a more personal level to ensure students are not only present at school, but also ready to learn. Students who arrive worried about basic needs such as food or shelter cannot perform well.

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Program Date:

December 31st

Program Guest:

Shane Ferris, Center Director and Anne Stamps, Senior Director at Volunteer Behavioral Health

Overview:

Pro-athletes, musicians, and other celebrities have helped destigmatize mental health struggles, often through social media. However, technology is a double-edged sword when it comes to mental health. Although people are able to connect with others online, having unlimited, constant access to the entire world is anxiety-inducing. Unplugging and maintaining self-care is key to a healthy lifestyle; we cannot care for others if we do not care for ourselves.

Key Takeaways:

- Younger generations are more willing to discuss mental health issues than older generations because they're often more educated in what mental health symptoms can look like and have more access to telehealth.
- Children are experiencing anxiety at an increasingly young age; it's important to make sure our youth are consuming safe and age-appropriate media
- Mental health disorders are biologically-based brain disorders and must be treated with the same regard as a physical injury as well as empathy
- The individualization of our culture has left younger generations with less family to lean on while experiencing a mental health crisis
- Everyone experiences anxiety, depression, and trauma differently

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Program Guest:

Shane Ferris, Center Director at Cumberland Mountain Mental Health Center and Anne Stamps, Senior Director at Volunteer Behavioral Health

Overview:

In order to ensure maximum mental health in children, it's important for parents to recognize mental health struggles, create a safe home environment, and constantly engage with their children. Therefore, parents should educate themselves and their children about the warning signs of mental health issues. Open lines of respectful communication and constant reassurance from adults are key to a child's wellbeing.

Key Takeaways:

- Children must feel like they can speak freely about their feelings to family members
- Talking about your feelings, anxiety, and struggles builds resilience
- Volunteer Behavioral Health immediately connects individuals in distress with therapists, care managers, or medical providers
- The new TN mental health crisis line is 988
- Entering mental health treatment can be difficult and confusing for patients; care coordination helps provide support and advocacy to help
- As you start to own your negative experiences, you will feel empowered and find you have more in common with others than ever before

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Program Date:

December 31st

Program Guest:

Tammy Hogan, Executive Director of Mustard Seed Ranch; Rob Wright Executive Director of Keep Putnam Beautiful Clean Commission; Jennifer Tracy, Director of Cookeville Put Co Animal Shelter

Overview:

In response to the pandemic, local nonprofits have had to reorganize, restructure, and rebuild their organizations. Educating the public on environmental, social, and animal issues is key to the survival of local nonprofits, as well as our community's wellbeing. Funding enables these organizations to deepen their impact.

Key Takeaways:

- Local non-profits are using social media to reach a wider donor and volunteer base
- The animal shelter aims to develop educational programs for the youth in order to invest in long-lasting volunteers and ambassadors for the shelter
- Nonprofits heavily rely on government grants, which take a considerable amount of time and effort to write and pitch