

# UAB-AMERICORPS VISTA STATEWIDE PROGRAM



## 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

**UAB**

THE UNIVERSITY OF  
ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM.

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# Meet Our Staff



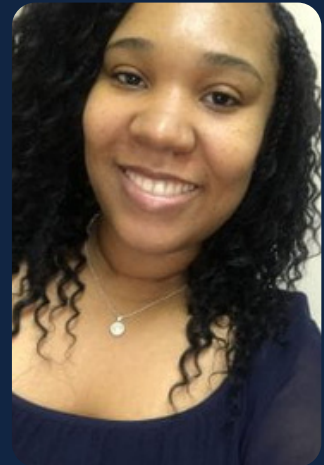
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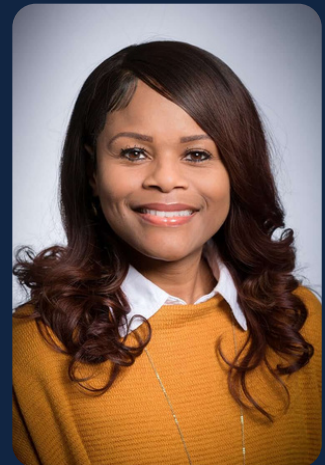
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# A Letter from the Director

I am pleased to report that throughout 2022, the UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Program continued to expand, strengthen, and serve communities across the state of Alabama! Our team, including staff, VISTA members, and sub-site partner organizations, has worked to advance the mission of national service through our flourishing relationship with AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) by supporting efforts to alleviate poverty. Individuals from all walks of life are encouraged to engage in a year of full-time service to build capacity for our partner organizations through creating and expanding programs in the following areas: Education, Food Security, Healthy Futures, and Public Health.

With an amazing team based at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and in Alabama's Black Belt region, we have committed to advancing five goals parallel to those set by the AmeriCorps 2022-2026 Strategic Plan as we:

1. Partner with 35 community-serving agencies to alleviate poverty and advance racial equity
2. Enhance the experience for our AmeriCorps VISTA members
3. Unite participating Alabama nonprofits and VISTA members by bringing them together in service
4. Steward federal resources while leveraging them to make the largest possible impact
5. Make the UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program a meaningful and equitable place to serve

It is vital to note that it is the commitment of the VISTAs who devote a year of their lives to serve and the community-based nonprofits that host them that make this program successful. Our hope is that this collective commitment over time will make Alabama a more equitable and healthy state as we continue to advance our mission to address social issues to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement.

Thank you so much for your interest in the UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide program.

In Service,



Amy Hutson Chatham, Ph.D.  
Director, UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program





# About the UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program

## Our Mission

The AmeriCorps mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

The UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program aims to address social issues in Alabama, placing year-long capacity-building volunteers in service positions with community agencies to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement.

VISTAs (Volunteers In Service to America) develop and complete projects designed to build capacity and address pressing community needs to transform the Birmingham metro area and the Black Belt region of Alabama.

## Our Goal

The UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program is a year-long service and leadership program. Our goal is to provide opportunities to create and sustain effective and mutually beneficial collaborations throughout the state of Alabama.

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## Our Focus

Our VISTA program aligns primarily with education, food security, public health, and healthy futures focus areas. The VISTA program also develops programs designed to address educational inequity, environmental sustainability, and economic initiatives in collaboration with community-based organizations.

# The University of Alabama at Birmingham

The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) is a world- renowned research university and medical center, occupying 100 city blocks in Alabama's largest metropolitan area. UAB is currently the state's largest single-site employer with over 23,000 employees. UAB has seen record enrollment in recent years, with almost 22,000 students enrolled in 2022, and is recognized among the top 100 universities in the world for life sciences. The Princeton Review has ranked UAB among the top ten universities nationally for diversity.

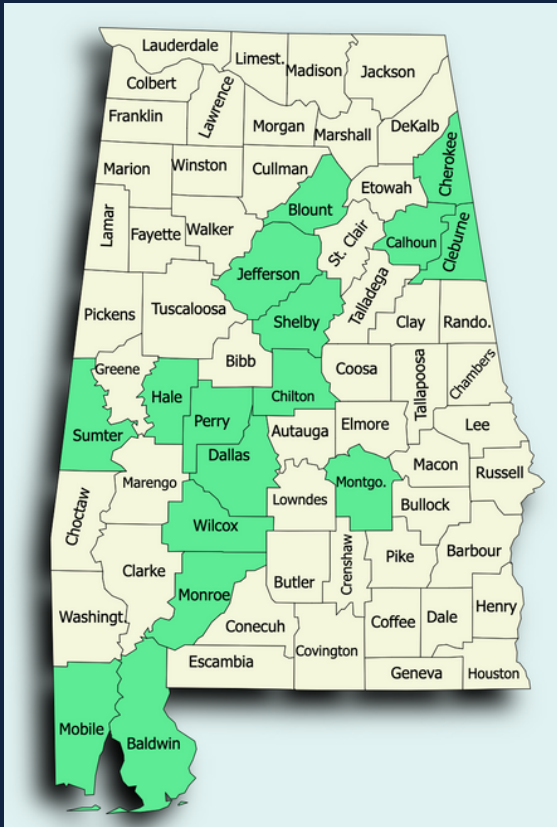
The UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program was first established in 2014 through the Office of Service Learning and Undergraduate Research and we are now based in the UAB School of Public Health. Over the past 9 years, we have spread our efforts across campus and collaborated with many departments and programs including Blazer Kitchen, Student Counseling Services, Office of Sustainability, Collegiate Recovery Center, and Wellness Promotion.



## UAB Declaration of Commitment to Public Health

By declaring our beliefs, we affirm our commitment, as students, as advocates, and as citizens to work in partnership with the women, men, and children of our community in order to protect the common health, the common rights, and the common good. We believe that every member of our community is valuable.

# VISTA Service and Impact Areas



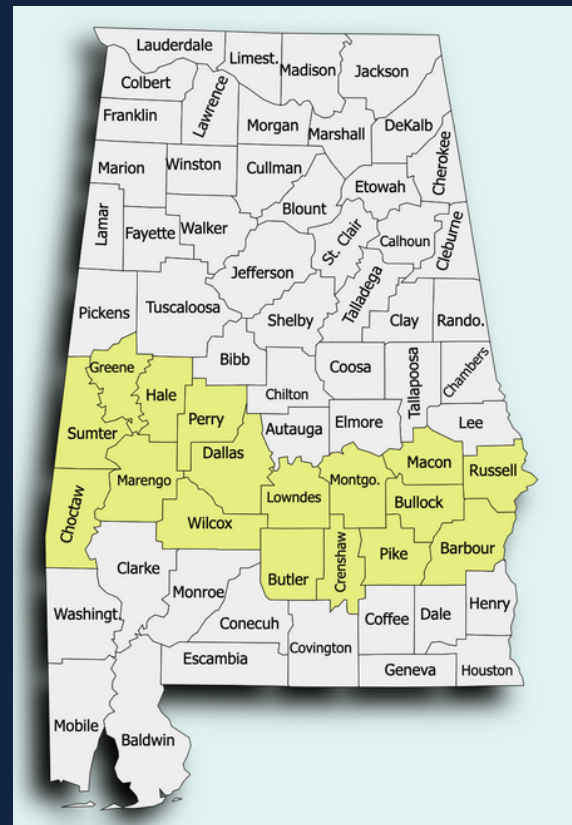
In 2022, UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA service impacted all 67 counties of Alabama. With sites located in 16 of the 67 counties, our VISTAs went above and beyond to reach the entire state of Alabama.

The majority of our VISTAs are placed in the Birmingham metro area and in the western portion of the Black Belt region.

The green counties note where our sites are located.

The UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program currently serves many of the counties in the Black Belt region with the intent to expand. We are committed to placing 30% of our VISTA members in the Black Belt region.

The UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program currently has VISTA members placed in 6 of the Black Belt counties.



This map outlines the Black Belt



# Alabama's Black Belt

Alabama's Black Belt area is part of a larger, national Black Belt region that stretches from Texas to Virginia. This region has historically been home to "the richest soil and the poorest people" in the United States. The term originally referred to the exceptionally fertile black soil, and has also been used by social scientists to note where slaves were forced to work in plantation systems before the Civil War.

Nine out of Alabama's ten counties with the highest poverty rate are in the Black Belt. The area is challenged by declining populations, a primarily agricultural landscape with low- density settlement, high unemployment, substandard housing, high rates of crime, and poor access to education and medical care,.

The UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program serves many of the counties in Alabama's Black Belt, with the intent to expand. Our efforts in the region began in 2017 with 6 VISTAs serving the area, and have continued to grow with 18 VISTAs serving in 2022, over 30% of our entire team. We prioritize placing VISTAs who are from the Black Belt region in these placements in order to best identify and meet the needs of the community.



On January 6, 2023, the designation of the Black Belt National Heritage Area was signed into law to assist in efforts to protect this culturally, historically, and environmentally distinctive region. With the National Heritage Area designation, conservation can lead to higher property values and increased tax revenues, more jobs, revitalized neighborhoods, and economic growth.



# UAB's Food Security Initiative

In 2021, the UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program was awarded a grant through AmeriCorps's historic \$1 billion American Rescue Plan that has allowed our program to expand its reach throughout the state of Alabama. Our Food Security Initiative (FSI) VISTA Members collaborate with community partners, farmers, food banks, and other community resources to identify funding opportunities, develop marketing materials, and conduct outreach activities to promote food resources.

Our program is dedicated to placing 30% of our VISTA members in FSI programs. In the past year, we have partnered with many local organizations including Blazer Kitchen, Grace Klein, UAB Sustainability, Love Is What Love Does, West Homewood Company, and the Community Food Bank of Central Alabama,

We have joined other universities and organizations across the country through this initiative including the University of Alabama, Alliance of Arizona Nonprofits, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, and the Arizona Food Bank Network.



# Funding and Resource Development

## Acquired Funding

Total Funding  
Leveraged

\$48,741

In-Kind Resources

\$67,741

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## Hours of Funding Efforts

3,739 | Hours Researching  
and Writing Grants

1,378 | Hours Planning and  
Executing Fundraisers



## Community Impact

24,025 | Hours dedicated to  
community service

7,029 | Youth supported in  
our communities

4,437 | Adults served by  
opioid programming

206 | Adults in job training or  
placement programs

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## Hours of Service

15,488 | Administrative Tasks

11,361 | Organizational  
Development

9,147 | Professional  
Development

4,896 | Tracking Systems and  
Resource Mapping

2,884 | Curriculum/Training  
Development



# Volunteer Development

## Impact of Volunteering

Volunteers are an essential resource for a sustainable nonprofit community. Recruiting and managing volunteers helps community partners and partner sites build capacity for their organizations, maintain and grow projects, and boost visibility. The work that volunteers complete has a clear and direct effect on the people and communities they serve.

**8585**

Total Volunteer Hours Served

**2835**

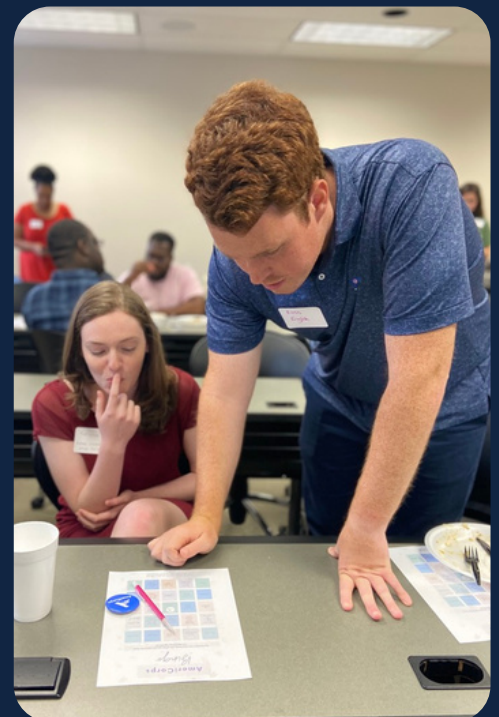
Recruited Volunteer Hours

**5810**

Volunteers Managed

**1903**

Volunteers Recruited



# Program Growth

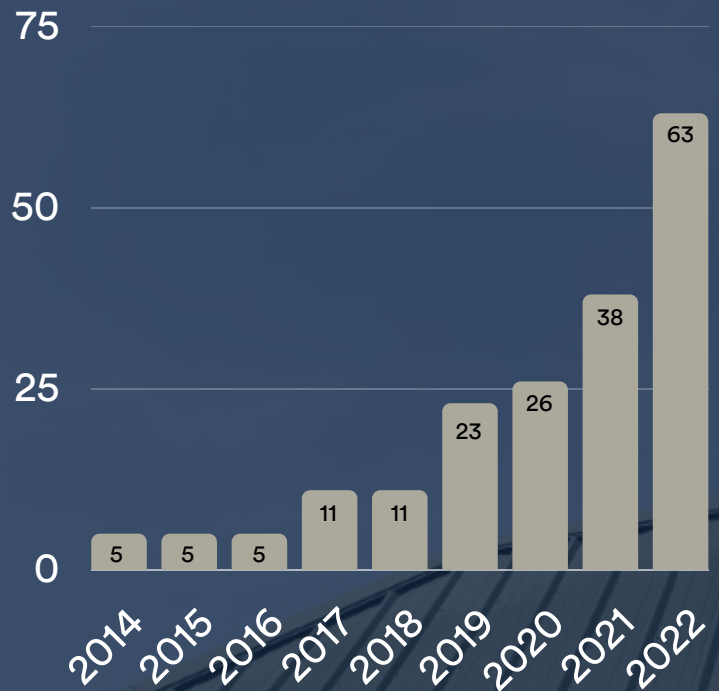
The UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program began in 2014 with 5 VISTAs placed in the UAB Office of Service Learning and Undergraduate Research. In 2018, we started placing Summer Associates with our sites. Then in 2019-2020, we received a \$1 million operational grant that allowed us to expand. We have successfully increased our VISTA program by 1560% over the past 9 years and increased the Summer Associate Program by 320% over the past 5 years.

## VISTA Members and Summer Associates

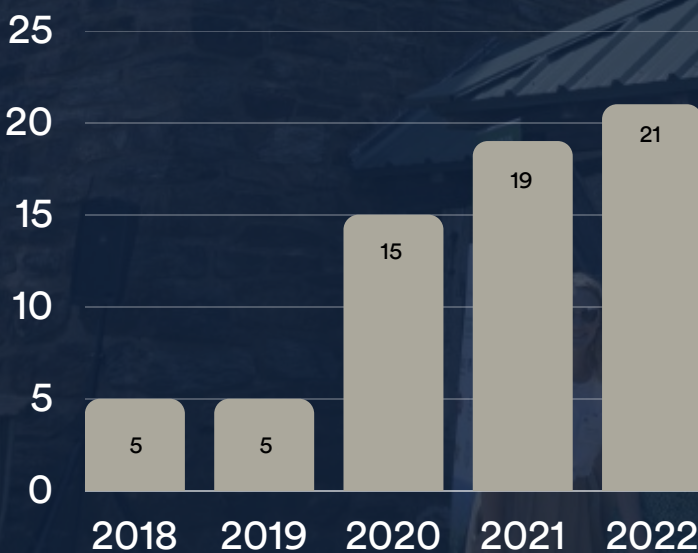
Full-time AmeriCorps VISTA Members serve 35-40 hours per week for a full year. Nationally, over 7,200 VISTAs engaged in activities such as fundraising, grant writing, research, and volunteer recruitment in Alabama. These opportunities prepare VISTAs for commitment to service in the public, private, or nonprofit sectors.

The AmeriCorps VISTA Summer Associate Program offers opportunities to engage with the community through existing VISTA projects for 10 weeks during the summer. Summer Associates are able to assist partner organizations with direct service, which helps to meet crucial needs during the summer months.

## VISTA Members Per Year



## Summer Associates Per Year



## Our Commitment to Diversity

AmeriCorps has a commitment to advance racial and economic equity through service and volunteerism. These efforts are designed to expand pathways to opportunity for all Americans. Racial and economic equity is central to our planning and implementation of all priorities, including ensuring AmeriCorps members and volunteers reflect the diversity of Alabamians and the communities in which we serve.



# Highlighted VISTA Stories



"CHOICE has provided me with an opportunity to become an integral part of the community. I have worked diligently in preparing summer events and workforce development events, as well as in the development of progressive resources that will enhance the organization's outreach and communication. CHOICE has given me a new perspective on the need for resources in Alabama's Black Belt region. My knowledge of organizational growth and the education system has positively impacted CHOICE and its ability to obtain resources, which has led to increased growth and sustainability within the organization. My favorite events that I worked on at CHOICE are the RISE Up Summer Experience and Hear Here Alabama. I have especially enjoyed connecting with the overall community and seeing the looks on the faces of those we've impacted. The experience is all about the community!"

**Kenesia Cade**

"During my VISTA year, Blazer Kitchen was able to form a partnership with the Birmingham Islamic Society and obtain a regular Halal chicken delivery. After polling our clients for what they needed most, we discovered we have a large Muslim population in need of Halal meat. My supervisor and I discussed our options to fulfill the need, outlined how much was needed, and defined exactly what people wanted. We met with representatives of the Birmingham Islamic Society at one of their mosques to explain the need for Halal meat, and our desire for a deeper understanding of the community we serve. Our partners promised a monthly Halal meat delivery that I organized the logistics to ensure a standard of respect for the cultural needs associated with the items would be met for both our providers and shoppers. We received positive feedback from our shoppers, including comments that the Halal meat delivery provided a specific nutritional need that was not previously being met, while allowing them to honor their beliefs."



**Sean Dowd**



"I serve with BAMA Kids, Inc. as an engagement coordinator in Camden, Alabama, in Wilcox County. BAMA Kids serves as the lead organization for the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative (SRBWI) for the state of Alabama. SRBWI works to alleviate the obstacles that prevent rural Black women from realizing their full potential. This is a perfect partnership because it provides BAMA Kids the opportunity to expand its outreach to the mothers of the children it serves. We recently opened the SRBWI Hope Center where I work to provide assistance to women in our community. Serving as an AmeriCorps VISTA gives me the opportunity to do this work that I love and have always wanted to do—helping women move to the next level."

**Alicia Foster**

"In October 2022, I visited three middle and high school classes at Francis Marion School in Perry County. The Cahaba Riverkeeper's Swim Guide School STEM (SGSS) Program provides a full water science curriculum to teach students about the importance of our rivers, how to become citizen scientists, and even includes a hands-on lab opportunity. During my visit, I assisted the students with taking water samples, conducting experiments, and analyzing results. Being at Francis Marion was a valuable experience for both me and the students because I was able to teach them something new, and they were able to learn more about the world around them, including clean water and public health implications. The students were enthusiastic and willing to learn! Educating them on the importance of water and on science-based skills will provide them with resources and opportunities for success in the future."



**Nicole Tran**



# Highlighted VISTA Member: Katherine Fulcher

Katherine Fulcher served with Alabama Interfaith Refugee Partnership in 2022. She is a native of East Tennessee, Knoxville where she studied political sciences and Hispanic studies. She developed an interest in immigration and border patrol after spending a semester in Oaxaca, Mexico where she researched how media influences perceptions towards Central American migrants among Mexican university students.

Hear more about Katherine from her site supervisor -- "The Alabama Interfaith Refugee Partnership (ALIRP) has benefited enormously from our first AmeriCorps VISTA Service Member, Katherine Fulcher. Katherine joined our team in August 2021. She has worked closely with our board members and committees on all aspects of the organization including communications, fundraising, education, advocacy, volunteer engagement, and direct support. She took the lead in preparing and submitting a grant proposal to the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, which was funded in May. Katherine has worked closely with interns and service learning students and helped to coordinate the translation of the ALIRP website and supporting materials into Spanish. She has provided direct support throughout the year to several asylum-seeking families including weekly tutoring of school-aged children and becoming certified by the Jefferson County Literacy Council in the teaching of English as a Second Language. She has worked closely with our Education and Advocacy Committee to plan two exciting events for June. The first event, on June 1, 2022, was a Virtual Book discussion to celebrate International Children's Day. The second event, on June 25, 2022, was a Refugee Simulation held at Homewood Central Park, in honor of World Refugee Day."

Upon completion of her VISTA service year, Katherine was accepted to the Fulbright Program - one of the most prestigious programs worldwide. She moved to Nijmegen, the Netherlands to study at Radboud University where she will receive her Master's in Human Geography with a specialization in "Europe: Borders, Identity, and Governance."



Katherine attending "Alabama Sin Miedo" hosted by Birmingham Civil Rights Institute where she attended panels discussing the impact of HB-56 on immigrant communities and shared information about ALIRP



Katherine assisting in collecting donations from The Episcopal Church of The Epiphany in Guntersville, AL for asylum seekers and refugees in Alabama! They collected houseware, personal hygiene items, and other necessities



Katherine volunteering at The World Games where she served and represented ALIRP and AmeriCorps. Katherine helped recruit and manage many ALIRP volunteers throughout the week



# Highlighted VISTA Site: Grace Klein Community

Grace Klein Community's mission is simple: "Love. Serve. Share. Repeat." They seek to share resources for the purpose of building relationships to ignite restoration of individuals, families, and communities. Their values include embracing community through building and treasuring relationships; radiating compassion by caring deeply for others; demonstrating respect by honoring diversity; cultivating teamwork by working together towards a common vision; and inspiring resourcefulness through stewarding every gift wisely.

UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA formed a partnership with Grace Klein in 2021 as a part of our Food Security Initiative. We have hosted five full-time VISTAs and one summer associate at Grace Klein. VISTAs participate in almost every aspect of Grace Klein's operations, including volunteer coordination, meal delivery, food rescue, fundraising, and event planning. In 2022, Grace Klein shared 228,051 food boxes, provided 1,700,000 meals, and provided 2,250 home deliveries. Visit their website to learn more about their efforts in Alabama.

## Grace Klein in Action





# VISTAs in Action



Giavanna Griffin and Deidra Sanderson organize donated food at Grace Klein for the MLK Day of Service



VISTAs and UAB VISTA program staff met with AmeriCorps CEO Michael Smith and his team at Blazer Kitchen to discuss growing the Food Security Initiative efforts in Alabama.



Katherine Fulcher serving at the Refugee Simulation held at Homewood Central Park, in honor of World Refugee Day.



Our June cohort of VISTAs on their first day of service after their swearing-in and taking the Oath of Service.



VISTAs serving at the UAB Student Counseling Services host a Collegiate Recovery Community table with volunteers and staff at a UAB football game.



# VISTAs in Action



Blazer Kitchen staff and VISTAs participate in Ramadan festivities with the UAB Higher Education Administration Program.



UAB Sanitation Health Program hosting a health fair and promoting their project to screen residents of Black Belt Counties for intestinal parasites and related infections.



VISTAs, site supervisors, and our director gather at Wilcox Central High School in Camden, AL for a health fair.



Summer Associate, Emerson Neely, at a tabling event for the Cahaba Riverkeeper's program to recruit volunteers and share their goals with the community.



Heustis Pledger, III and Camilla Phillips, serving at BAMA Kids, participate in the Back to School Rally.

# 2022 Partner Organizations

## Economic Development

Bundles of Hope Diaper Bank

C.H.O.I.C.E

Lower Peachtree Community Recreation Center

Offender Alumni Association

University of Alabama Department of Economic Development

Wilcox Works, Inc.

## Environmental Sustainability

Cahaba Riverkeeper

Coosa Riverkeeper

UAB Sustainability

## Opioid Response

New Awakening Recovery Services

UAB SOPH-Health Behavior

## Food Security

Community Food Bank of Central Alabama

Grace Klein Community

Love Is What Love Does

New Life Pantry

UAB Blazer Kitchen

West Homewood Co

## Education

AlaQuest Collaborative For Education (ACE)

BAMA Kids, Inc.

LifeCrafters Foundation

Lily Baptist Community Center and Youth Development

UAB Office Of Service Learning & Undergraduate Research

West Central Alabama Area Health Education Center

YouthServe

## Healthy Futures

Alabama Interfaith Refugee Partnership

Alabama Statewide AHEC

H2 Alabama

Prism United

UAB Family Clinic

UAB RURAL Grant

UAB Sanitation Health Study

UAB Student Counseling Services

UAB Student Health and Wellness

West Central Alabama Community Health Improvement League





# Getting Involved

For more information on the UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Program, please visit our website:  
[sites.uab.edu/uabamericorpsvista](https://sites.uab.edu/uabamericorpsvista)

**Host VISTAs:** The UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program is seeking interested higher education, nonprofit, faith-based, or government agencies to serve as host sites for VISTAs. If you are interested in learning more, please visit our website.

**Join VISTA:** As a member in the VISTA program, you serve full-time for one year. You will build capacity in nonprofit organizations and public agencies to help them more effectively generate private sector resources, encourage volunteer service, and empower individuals and communities. You can find more information on our website.



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# UAB-AmeriCorps VISTA Statewide Program



# AmeriCorps

**UAB** THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

