

AGENCY HIGHLIGHT: UNITY WELLNESS CENTER

Unity Wellness Center is a subsidiary of East Alabama Medical Center and provides HIV testing & counseling; HIV primary medical care; medical case management services; and HIV prevention, education, and awareness programs. They serve Lee, Macon, Chambers, Russell, and Tallapoosa Counties residents in East Alabama. Their goals include increasing testing, awareness, and education in our communities in order to reduce new infections; providing high-quality, compassionate care so that people with HIV never develop AIDS; and advocating for funding and laws that improve access and quality of HIV care. Services provided by UWC include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Case management as well as access to medical care
- Access to the Alabama Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) and Compassionate Use Programs for HIV
- Variety of education and awareness programs and events
- Oral Fluid HIV-antibody Testing

They provide all of these services with low to no cost to the recipient regardless of health care insurance. They are located in Opelika at 122 N 20th St Building #26.



HOW YOU'RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE

A female Client initially came into Unity Wellness Center in 2016 with a new HIV diagnosis. Prior to her HIV diagnosis, she had already been taking medication for diabetes and high blood pressure. She did not know a lot about HIV when diagnosed and was shocked to learn she was positive. Her initial reaction was one of fear and uncertainty about what her future would hold. She was disappointed thinking that she would never be able to have a family. She was unaware that HIV positive mothers will not transmit HIV to their child as long as they maintain an undetectable viral load. She was very receptive to the HIV education provided by UWC and successfully started ART (antiretroviral therapy) during which she took one pill per day. Within the first few months of starting her medication, she achieved an undetectable viral load and has maintained it ever since. UWC has become her medical home, treating not only her HIV but her other comorbidities. After a few years in care, she made the decision that she was ready to become a mom. UWC supported her through the process, answering her questions and working with her OBGYN to ensure a healthy pregnancy. This year, she gave birth to a healthy baby. She is thriving, healthy and enjoying her life as a new mom.

Agency News

- The Lee County Literacy Coalition moved into a new building at 505 W Thomason Circle.
- The Lee County Literacy Coalition was chosen as a recipient of the Toyota "Need a Nudge" program grant.
- Project Uplift matched 10 new mentors with their little brothers/sisters.
- The Child Advocacy Center of Twin Cedars named their new director: Tori Mayers.
- The Lee County Court Appointed Special Advocates swore in 12 new volunteers. The largest group in three years.
- The Food Bank of East Alabama is holding their Empty Bowls Fundraiser at Kiesel Park on March 25, 2023 from 5-7PM.
- The Boys and Girls Club of East Alabama is having a Spring Break Camp at both the Auburn and Opelika clubhouses. Go to their website, bgceastal.org, for more information.

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

Alabama Head Injury Foundation is planning several events with the hope to educate people about traumatic brain injuries:

- February 28: AHIF's Scott Powell will be on WSFA 12 News
- March 9: AHIF will meet with Alabama legislators in Washington DC about TBI advocacy
- March 23: TBI and severe weather with WBRC Fox 6
- March 25: 7th annual Beer, Band & BBQ at Ghost Train Brewing Company from 12-5PM.
- March 30: AHIF Annual Survivors Panel

Also thanks to the support of the Lee County DA, AHIF is working with Sheriff's Departments across the state to conduct trainings that allow officers to understand and respond appropriately to individuals with TBIs.