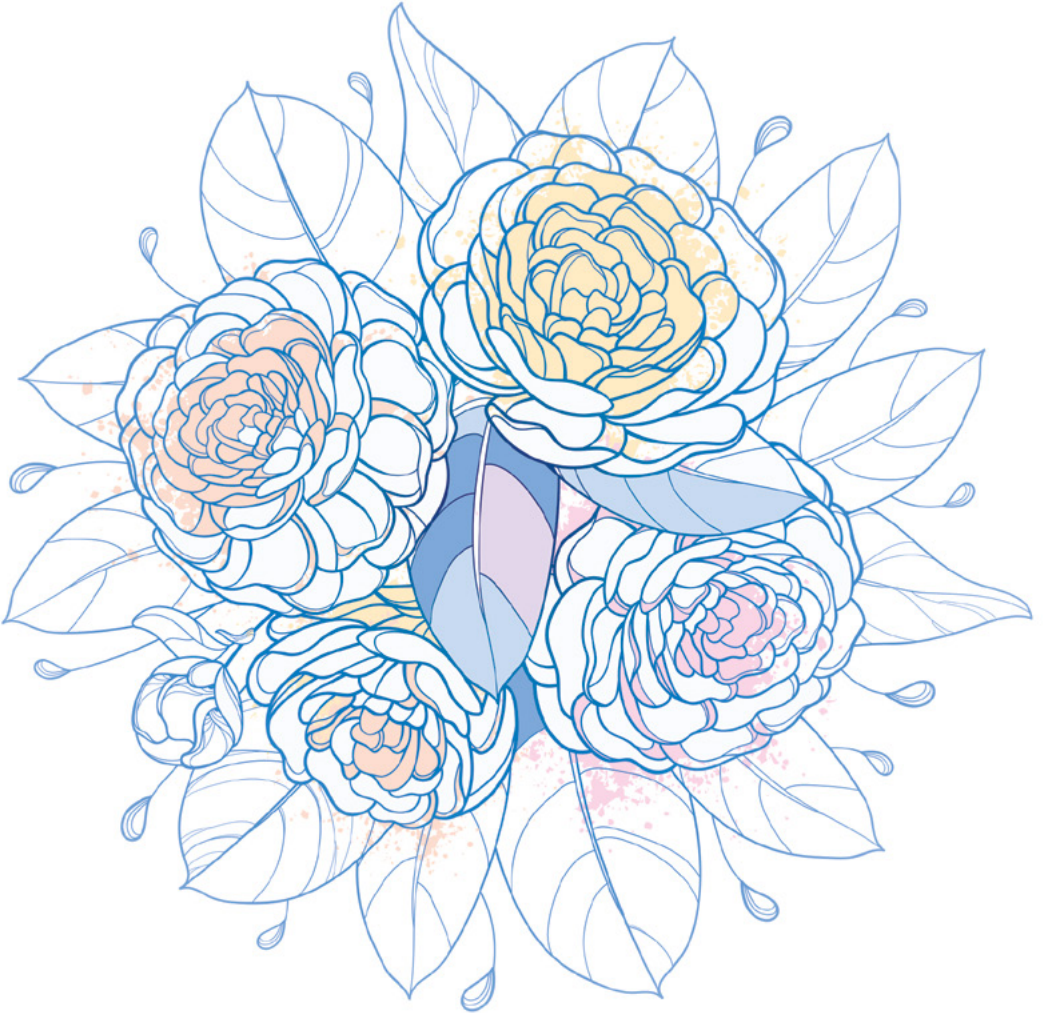


# Growing Together

— Year in Review —  
2023



**DAVID MATHEWS**  
CENTER *for* CIVIC LIFE



## Letter from DMC Chair of the Board

Greetings from the David Mathews Center for Civic Life on the beautiful campus of the American Village in Montevallo, Alabama.

I'm often asked: "what exactly does the David Mathews Center do?" In this 2023 annual report, you will get a glimpse into the many projects that keep us busy and on the road. But, put succinctly, we promote the civic life and health of our great state. We do so by working closely with Alabamians and Alabama communities throughout the state to name and frame issues of local importance, equip them with the skills and resources to address local concerns, and facilitate the development of civic skills and civil discourse to make our communities better by working together. We are proud that we are at the forefront of helping local citizens work across differences to address real-world problems with workable solutions.

This has been a year of joy as our director, Rachel Mosness, welcomed baby Adaline Jensen to the world on July 15th. Several years ago, the DMC adopted a very generous family leave policy, so our staff could enjoy a work-family balance conducive to their well-being and to our overall productivity. Thanks to that policy Rachel was able to enjoy the first five months of Adaline's life unencumbered by work responsibilities. A big thanks to Lauren Lockhart, Education Coordinator, who served excellently as interim director during Rachel's absence. We are happy to welcome Rachel back!

The Center has also had the opportunity to work more closely with our namesake, Dr. David Mathews, who retired from his more than 40+ year tenure as President of the Kettering Foundation, thus leaving him more time to focus on other issues near and dear to his heart and ours. One of those projects has been the Applied Democracy Exchanges that we have hosted with the help of Dr. Mathews. Congratulations to Dr. Mathews who was selected as one of the 2023 Alabama Humanities Fellows.

On a sadder note, the DMC lost a board member and dear, dear friend, Roger Bedford in October. It is not an overstatement to say that without Roger there would be no David Mathews Center. During his tenure as a state Senator, he led the efforts to gain bi-partisan support to fund the David Mathews Center. Roger will be sadly missed. Look for more information in the next few months about how you can join us in our celebration of Roger's life and give to the David Mathews Center in his memory.

We hope to see you at the Civic Institute on February 2, 2024, which will center around the theme of Community Empowerment: Thriving Together. And, when you get a chance, look at our new website at [mathewscenter.org](http://mathewscenter.org) to find out more about what we are doing and how you can partner with us to make Alabama better together.

Warmly,  
Natalie Adams, Board Chair



"We are proud that we are at the forefront of helping local citizens work across differences to address real-world problems with workable solutions."

In 2023 the DMC hosted six Applied Democracy Exchanges, monthly conversations, held every third Thursday from January until June. These conversations focused on the current perils and future promises of democracy. Each month, these discussions highlighted a different democracy-related theme. Exchanges featured guest speakers, including journalists, educators, researchers, and researchers, and everyday people with various diverse backgrounds. Dr. David Mathews also joined us for these great conversations and shared valuable insights.

### January - A Free Press: Examining the Role of Journalism in a Functioning Democracy

Our inaugural Applied Democracy Exchange session featured speakers Nan Fairley from Auburn University and Laura Anderson from the Alabama Humanities Alliance who discussed the Democracy and the Informed Citizen Podcast. This podcast shares the stories of the PACERS network of community journalists who use local newspapers to help revitalize their rural Alabama towns.

### February - Research and Reckoning: Uncovering the Hidden Histories of Marginalized Communities

Description: In recognition of Black History Month, the Mathews Center invited Dr. Kathy King to share the work of the Montevallo Legacy Project, which protects, preserves, interprets, and educates about the history and culture of under-represented communities in Montevallo.

### March - 100 Years and Counting: Women's Advancement in Alabama

Dr. Valerie Burnes, professor of history at the University of West Alabama and executive secretary for the Alabama Women's Hall of Fame, and Heather Daniels-Whitson, Director of Digital Media at Alabama Public Television and contributor to Votes for Women: Suffrage 1915, joined March's exchange to share their organizations' work in uplifting Alabama's most inspiring women throughout our state's history.

### May - Trust & Justice: Reviving the Public Responsibility to Maintain Legitimate Legal Systems

Carla Crowder, Executive Director of the Alabama Appleseed Center for Law & Justice, and Thomas Rains, Executive Director of the Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr. Institute, shared about the work they are doing in their communities and the people of Alabama to promote the connection between the justice system and citizens' trust in the institution.

### April - Healthcare & Civic Engagement in Rural Areas

April's exchange featured Kristin Boggs, Executive Director of the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, and Dr. John Dorsey, Founder and Executive Director of Project Horseshoe Farm. Both guests shared about the work that they are doing in their communities to promote the connection between physical and civic health.

### June - Communities as Classrooms, Students as Citizens

The Mathews Center welcomed faculty mentors, Mark Wilson and Nan Fairley, from Auburn University's Living Democracy program, an immersive summer civic experience serving the communities of Camden, Chatom, Collinsville, and Elba. The exchange featured previous and present student interns as well as community partners to discuss more about the impact of the students' civic learning experiences.



Dive into these insightful sessions on our YouTube channel using the QR code below.

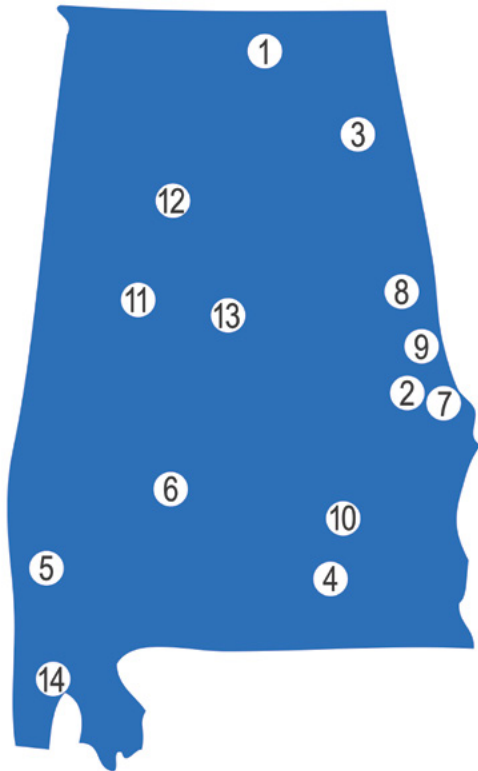


# Jean O'Connor-Snyder Internship Program

The Jean O'Connor-Snyder Internship Program (JOIP) is the DMC's longest-running program and provides experiential learning opportunities that promote civic education and engagement. Recruiting students from Alabama colleges and universities, JOIP works with interns and faculty mentors from participating schools to design civic education programs in communities across the state.

2023's JOIP cohort comes from seven institutions of higher education in Alabama. While the interns come from a variety of different academic backgrounds, they all are dedicated to working alongside communities to be of service and gain a better understanding of what it takes to build capacity at the local level. Students build civic skills and work towards specific goals established by the communities where they serve.

1. Alabama A&M University (Huntsville)
2. Auburn University (Auburn) with students in
3. -Collinsville
4. -Elba
5. -Chatom
6. -Camden
7. Southern Union State Community College (Opelika) with students in
8. -Randolph County
9. -Chambers County
10. Troy University (Troy)
11. University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa) with students in
12. -Jasper, AL
13. University of Montevallo (Montevallo)
14. University of South Alabama (Mobile)



## Alabama A&M University

JOIP Interns immersed themselves into the historic community of Edmonton Heights by engaging with the residents, learning the history, and building relationships. Interns partnered with the community to serve as advocates by conducting needs assessments and hosting round neighborhood meetings while learning, documenting, and retelling the history as told by the community elders in the Edmonton Heights Community.

## Southern Union State Community College

The Southern Union Community Engagement Internship Program offered community college students the opportunity to work in east Alabama communities served by Southern Union. Working with community partners, the interns conducted a needs assessment to identify a community need and shared that assessment with community partners in written and oral presentations. Interns used writing and journalism skills as tools for community development and as a means of chronicling their experiences in civic engagement.

## Auburn University

Each student chosen to be a Living Democracy intern participated in a ten-week immersive summer civic experience in one of four host communities: Camden, Chatom, Collinsville, and Elba. In these rural towns, students spent time living, learning, and working under the guidance of community leaders and reflecting on their experiences through writing.

## Troy University

The Troy "Real Talk on Race" Internship program hosts two student interns. This program focused on how communities and institutions can address issues through community outreach and education that lead to civic learning and deliberative dialogue. Interns also were responsible for organizing and leading the annual "Civic Heroes Camp."

## University of Alabama

The Walker County Internship is an eight-week community-embedded service-learning internship fostered by a partnership with the Walker County Area Community Foundation in Jasper, Alabama. Students worked 25-30 hours a week for a Walker County nonprofit organization to address one of three areas: health, education, or community development.

## University of Montevallo

UM's "Falcon Facilitators" is a public deliberation and civic engagement program in which university students engage each other, local students, and local community members in community forums that focus on a variety of issues of shared concern. Critical features of the program include an opening retreat, moderator training sessions, and public forums on the UM campus and in the surrounding community.

## University of South Alabama

The Delta Fellows Internship Program strived to capture the oral histories of members of their community from throughout the area. By examining and learning about the shared culture of the community, this program has the capacity to foster a deep-rooted pride in one's heritage and facilitate cross-community understanding that strengthens civil society.



## 2023 JOIP Intern Retreat

On Friday, January 27, 2023, the Mathews Center traveled to Montgomery, Alabama to host the 2023 Jean O'Connor-Snyder Internship Program Intern Retreat! Over 40 students and faculty mentors from the seven schools met to get to know each other, learn about the DMC, and share their upcoming projects for the Spring semester. Students received a wealth of knowledge about the history of the Mathews Center, the use of dialogue in the classroom and beyond, and how their unique community projects contribute to the overall civic health of our state. Participants enjoyed tours of some of Montgomery's significant cultural attractions, including the Alabama Voices gallery at the Alabama Department of Archives and History and the Equal Justice Initiative's Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

## DMC and PACERS Partner to Host 2023 Conference & Writing Workshop

The David Mathews Center for Civic Life and PACERS Rural Community Newspaper Network hosted the 2023 Conference & Workshop on Friday, April 14th, and Saturday, April 15th. Over 45 journalists and Jean O'Connor Snyder interns across the state met at the Rotunda and the Mathews Center office at the American Village to get to know each other and learn about the techniques and importance of rural journalism. The DMC is thankful for our partnership with the PACERS Network and each university participating in the JOIP program, and we look forward to our future work together.



## Note from the Executive Director

The DMC experienced a handful of staffing changes throughout 2023. We bid farewell to some valued team members, expressing gratitude for their contributions. However, amidst these farewells, we witnessed the growth of our own Lauren Lockhart. Lauren transitioned from a one-year fellowship role to the position of Education Coordinator. Lauren's dedication and leadership became even more apparent during my maternity leave when she seamlessly stepped into the role of Interim Executive Director. The DMC team also welcomed Cameron Brown as Operations Coordinator this past summer. Cameron is thriving in her role, and together, Lauren and Cameron continued DMC's programming this fall without missing a beat!

### Welcome Cameron Brown, DMC's New Operation Coordinator

Cameron Brown, is from Birmingham, Alabama, and graduated from the University of Alabama in Birmingham in December 2022, where she majored in Political Science (with a concentration in Human rights and Social justice) and minored in African American studies. During her time at UAB, Cameron gained extensive research and analytical experience working as an Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) Analyst at UAB's Computer Forensic Research Lab for two years. She is thrilled to join the DMC and learn from the amazing people and communities across Alabama.



### Reintroducing Lauren Lockhart, Education Coordinator & Interim Executive Director

Lauren Lockhart serves as the DMC's Education Coordinator and previously held the position of the 2022-2023 McKenzie Fellow at DMC, showcasing her commitment to civic engagement. Additionally, she served as the Interim Executive Director from September to November 2023 while Rachel Mosness was away on maternity leave.



Raised in Bethlehem, Georgia, Lauren pursued her academic endeavors at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Public Administration, complemented by a minor in Peace, Justice, and Ecology. During her time at UAB, she enrolled in courses within the Master of Public Administration department, effectively blending her research-oriented background with a fervent dedication to the nonprofit sector.

As the McKenzie Fellow, Lauren displayed an unwavering dedication to community involvement. In her current role as the Education Coordinator, she continues to manifest this commitment by spearheading initiatives to make educational experiences not only informative but also engaging.



# Summer Highlights

## The DMC at Blakeley State Park

On Tuesday, June 13th, the David Mathews Center for Civic Life joined Auburn University's Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities at Blakeley State Park for an immersive learning experience for educators in the Mobile and Baldwin County area. Attendees participated in a deliberative forum using "The Creek War of 1813-14: What Would You Do?" issue guide followed by a moderator development workshop.

The DMC provided resources for educators to use to incorporate deliberative practices in their classrooms. We are thankful for our partnership with the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities, the Blakeley State Park staff, and all the educators who participated in the workshop. We look forward to joining again next year!



## Summer with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute!

The Mathews Center had the exciting opportunity to partner with the Greater Birmingham chapter of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Alabama to teach Developing Deliberative Skills: Weekly Conversations on Topics of Public Concern, a new course that was piloted during this summer semester.

Over the eight-week course, participants worked through a variety of published issue guides that focused on different concerns and affected every person in a different way, such as mental health, immigration, and climate choices. Utilizing methods of public deliberation, citizens were given a space to define the problem and talk through rather than about the issue, working together to find common ground for taking action. This created an environment where citizens could become actors in addressing community issues, rather than passive recipients, and left the participants excited for more the next week.

After a productive semester, the OLLI members were eager to share new ideas on how to continue adapting and developing the course for next year. The Mathews Center is so glad that we could partner with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Alabama and are very thankful for the OLLI staff and amazing members. We cannot wait to join again next year and hope to see some familiar (and new) faces!



## Innovators in Civic Education Fellowship

On Thursday, June 29th, the David Mathews Center for Civic Life held its fifth annual Innovators in Civic Education Workshop, welcoming four new teacher fellows. During the workshop, teacher fellows assisted the DMC in educational programming by providing important viewpoints on how to generate the most relevant and valuable resources for educators, both in the classroom and in the community. These educators were chosen for the fellowship because they are dedicated to developing and implementing skills-focused and inquiry-led social studies curriculum.

### Danielle Seymour: Baker High School, Mobile County Public School System

Danielle Seymour currently teaches at Baker High School in her hometown of Mobile, Alabama. Danielle holds dual certification in English Language Arts and Social Studies, and has a National Board Certification in Social Studies. Danielle commented during the workshop that her favorite part of her job is seeing understanding develop in students.



### Jacob Goodwin: Cooperative Middle School, New Hampshire

Jacob Goodwin is a Social Studies educator with over a decade of experience in public schools. He focuses on engaging young people in renewing civic life in and out of the classroom. Mr. Goodwin has facilitated service learning across the US. Mr. Goodwin was the 2021 New Hampshire History Teacher of the Year.



### Caitlin Halperin: Auburn High School, Auburn City School District

Caitlin Halperin teaches AP US History and US History 11 at Auburn High School. She was nominated Gilder Lehrman's 2022 Alabama History Teacher of the Year and is a James Madison Fellow for the state of Alabama. Ms. Halperin's deep love for history and the inventive ways she uses to communicate that history to her students create a classroom full of discussions, debates, investigations, and real-world dilemmas. She strives to prepare her students to be civic-minded participants in America's present democracy.



### Mindy Walker: Holt High School, Tuscaloosa County School System

Mindy Walker, originally from Pickens County, Alabama, graduated in 2004 with a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Minor in English from the University of Alabama. After teaching in private and religious based high school institutions, she decided to pursue her Masters in Teaching History at the University of West Alabama which she completed in 2010. Mindy is interested in Holocaust education and strives to ensure that teaching tolerance and civility for all must be interwoven into all of her courses, no matter the topic. She writes grants in order to take her students on a variety of field trips to learn in-person about content taught in her classroom.





# Remembering Senator Roger Bedford



The David Mathews Center for Civic Life celebrates the life of Board member Senator Roger H. Bedford, who died on Tuesday, October 10, 2023.

Roger was a graduate of the University of Alabama where he worked closely with civic leader and educator Jean O'Connor-Snyder. Soon after graduating from Samford University's Cumberland School of Law, Roger was elected to the State Senate at age 25. He served as a Democratic state senator from 1982 to 1990 and 1994 to 2014. Roger spent his life in public service and was instrumental in the establishment of the David

Mathews Center. Dr. Cathy Randall, a longtime friend and DMC board member with Bedford, explains "There would be no David Mathews Center for Civic Life as we know it without the extraordinary efforts of Sen. Roger Bedford."

The David Mathews Center greatly appreciates the contributions of Roger Bedford to the state and to our Center. The Center is planning a formal tribute to his life as part of our Civic Institute in February 2024. More details to follow.

Roger is survived by his son, Roger Bedford, III.

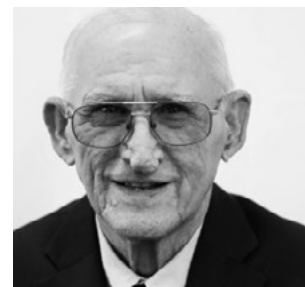
"Roger was a compassionate supporter of the Mathews Center. In the early stages of the Center's development, Roger called me from the Amazon saying he was working on funding for the Center. On his return home he secured substantial funds for the Center. We are forever grateful for his support."

-Ray Minor, Ph.D, Founding President and Chairman Emeritus.



"Roger never gave up in his support for Jean O'Connor-Snyder, the David Mathews Center, and American Village. What a friend!

-Robert (Bob) McKenzie, Ph.D., Chair Emeritus



"Jean O'Connor believed passionately about the DMCCCL, and near the end of her life, she asked me to arrange a meeting with Roger Bedford. Roger adored Jean, so grateful for her mentorship, and was eager to see her. Jean asked Roger to promise her that he would work to secure funding to launch and sustain the Center, to which he eagerly agreed...and the rest is history.

As arguably the Alabama Senate's most powerful member at the time, Roger worked hard to keep his promise to Jean, and the DMCCCL was launched on the campus of Roger's beloved American Village and continues its mission statewide today of strengthening civic life."

-Cathy Randall, Ph.D., Chair Emerita



# Looking Forward

As we conclude this Year in Review, we want to invite you to join the Mathews Center at our 8th annual Civic Institute, "Community Empowerment: Thriving Together." This daylong event will be held on February 2nd, 2023 on the beautiful campus of the American Village. The day will be filled with engaging speakers presenting interactive sessions on issues that directly impact Alabamians.

This year, Kristin Scroggin with GenWHY Communications will be joining us as our Keynote Speaker to discuss the current barriers facing communication between generations, and how we can overcome these to promote a more productive dialogue.

Our Civic Institute will also feature speakers and conversations on topics regarding placemaking, small town tourism, rural health, and more, so be sure to keep an eye out on our social media to learn more as the date approaches. We look forward to seeing you on February 2nd, 2024!



Use the QR code below for more information and to register for our upcoming Civic Institute!



## Make a Donation

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Join us in investing in the future of democracy in Alabama! At the Mathews Center, civic education and engagement is at the heart of what we do. We offer workshops for communities and classrooms and internship programs, ensuring that all citizens find their voices and actively engage in their communities. We've been fostering collective efficacy for 17 years, working in every county in the state. Your donation supports us in providing more opportunities and services throughout Alabama. Help us continue to offer our programs for free and support what makes Alabama uniquely vibrant. Partner with us to empower our citizens and promote civic engagement in every corner of the state.



Donate today and be a part of building stronger, more engaged communities for the future!

*Thank You  
for your support*



**DAVID MATHEWS**  
CENTER *for* CIVIC LIFE

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