

# The Vigil

FALL 2022 / WINTER 2023

## Ministry expansion: Donors help fund Ascension St. Vincent's first Freestanding Emergency Department



A groundbreaking ceremony was held October 13.

**“Since the beginning of the pandemic we have seen more patients in our emergency departments, and they are sicker than before.”**

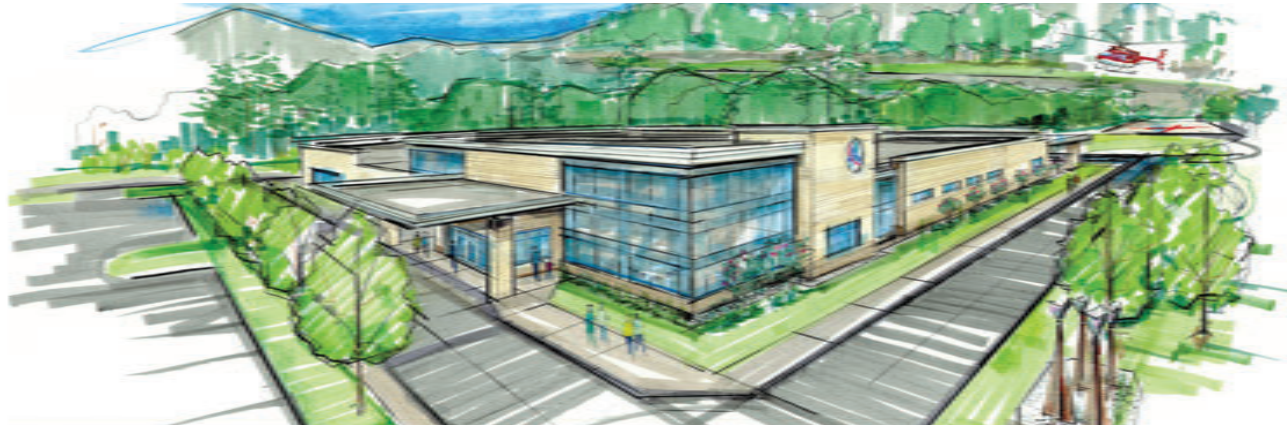
**WHEN THE WORLD SHUT DOWN** in March 2020, hospital emergency departments became more essential than ever. While the emergency department (ED) at Ascension St. Vincent's East has always played a vital community role, the pandemic posed significant challenges. More than two years later, those challenges continue.

“Since the beginning of the pandemic we have seen more patients in our emergency departments, and they are sicker than before,” says Suzannah Campbell,

president of Ascension St. Vincent's East, Ascension St. Vincent's Blount, and Ascension St. Vincent's St. Clair. “This is happening in all of Birmingham's hospitals, forcing EMS providers to take patients to whatever hospital has capacity. It's getting harder to serve our communities.”

That's why Ascension St. Vincent's held a groundbreaking ceremony October 13 for a freestanding emergency department in Trussville, just off Interstate 59. The facility, expected to open in late 2023, will include treatment rooms, diagnostics,

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Ascension St. Vincent's first freestanding emergency department will be located in Trussville.

a lab, and ED-related pharmacy. A helipad will also be onsite. Campbell says area physicians and first responders are among the effort's strongest advocates.

"We have nine acres, allowing us room to expand our services as funding allows," Campbell says. "While emergency departments are expensive, and hospitals across the country are struggling to make ends meet, we are determined to extend our existing Ascension St. Vincent's East emergency department services by delivering care closer to our patients."

That determination is fueled by support from Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation. Campbell is counting on donors to help provide the structure and everything else needed, from equipment to furniture.

"Whatever anyone feels led to give, no matter how great or small, we want to offer that opportunity," Campbell says. "We are dreaming about what this can be, and we would love to share with donors not only our immediate needs, but our future mission."

That mission includes expanding healthcare access for everyone, including the poor and vulnerable — who have the most difficulty accessing care. "By providing this comprehensive, freestanding ED, donors can help us better serve all people in this community," Ascension St. Vincent's President Andy Bell says.

**"Whatever anyone feels led to give, no matter how great or small, we want to give them an opportunity to do that."**

Bell says every contribution is welcomed, including year-end gifts in honor or memory of a loved one. "There are even naming opportunities for those who want to be in on the ground level of helping us place a high-quality facility in this area. There are lots of ways donors can advance this important initiative. It's going to be a great win for this community."

## Honor a life. Save a life.

There is no better way this holiday season of honoring a loved one's life — or a family's legacy — than to help equip a ministry dedicated to saving lives. Individuals, families, clubs, civic groups, teams, Sunday School classes, and others can contribute, challenging others to follow their lead. To learn more, contact Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation Director of Donor Engagement Jennifer Carter at [Jennifer.Carter4@ascension.org](mailto:Jennifer.Carter4@ascension.org) or call 205-558-3850.

## Honorariums

*The following individuals were recognized through a gift in their honor.*

**Dr. James R. Andrews  
Dr. Mack N. Barnes  
Dr. Stephen B. Beck  
Walter M. Campbell  
Wayne Carmello-Harper  
Olivia Davidson  
Dr. John L. Edwards  
Dr. Robert E. Foster  
Dr. Jay C. Long**

**Dr. Ronald W. Orso  
Julian K. Post  
Maverick R. Post  
Hatton C. Smith  
Dr. David Whitley**

## Memorials

*Lord, may our prayers come before you in memory of those we entrust to your eternal care.*

**Mary Adams  
Virginia Barnes  
Julia H. Bradley  
Jim Champion  
James Chapman  
Toni D. Crutchfield  
Jacob Eaton  
Edgar E. Echols  
Dr. Richard A. Elkus**

**C.T. Ethridge  
Natalie Hooks  
Charles A. Maddox  
David W. Maddox  
Manley Naramore  
Julia Parsons  
Carolyn A. Pence  
Teddy Raley  
Caroline Richardson**

**Helen E. Rozendale  
Joyce Runyon  
Ambers Self  
Jimmy Simpson  
Elizabeth Sterling  
Lana B. Wilborn**

# Why I Volunteer: Ruth White's time-talent-treasure mission investment



Ruth and Melvin White

**WHEN RUTH WHITE** retired as director of Ascension St. Vincent's Birmingham Emergency Department last year, she thought she had closed her 41-year chapter of "serving all persons with special attention to those who are poor and vulnerable." However, after being asked to serve as a hospital volunteer, she remembered how her personal and professional goals were "married together" in faith-based health care. "So, just because my nursing career is over, my personal ministry doesn't have to be over. I can still support the mission."

White's support includes weekly volunteering and orienting/educating volunteers. White's service in the hospital's information station provides other opportunities. "When I was working, I very rarely got to go to daily Mass. Now Mass is part of my on-campus routine when I come to volunteer."

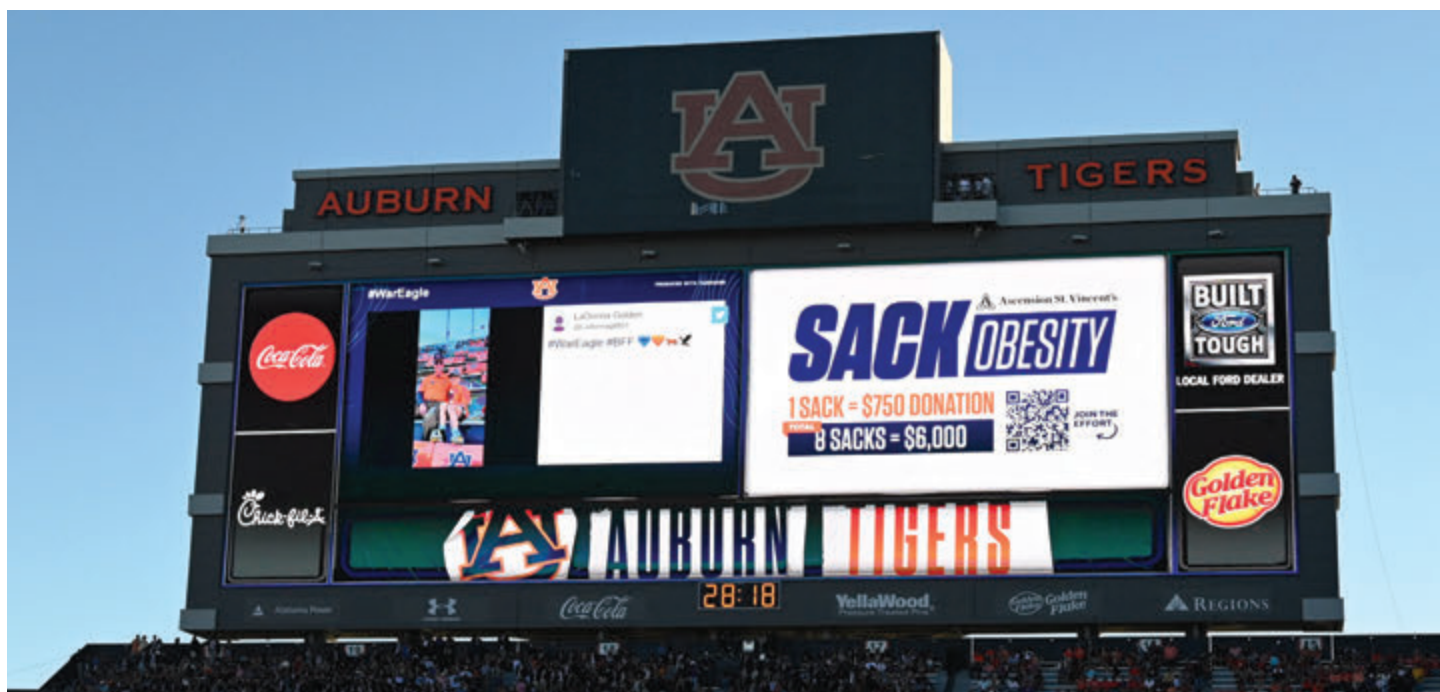
White's next goal is to help Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation plan a retiree reunion that re-introduces the rewards of mission involvement. "I've come to realize that just because someone retires professionally doesn't mean

they must retire from serving this ministry. If I worked there because of the mission, I'm not going to just stop supporting the mission because I stop being a nurse."

**"I've come to realize that just because someone retires professionally doesn't mean they must retire from serving this ministry."**

White and her husband Melvin, married 42 years, also support the mission financially. Their next-generation commitment not only includes their three children (all born at Ascension St. Vincent's) and five grandchildren, but monthly Foundation gifts and an estate gift. "Over my career I've seen how the Foundation has provided everything from waiting rooms to medical equipment to support through the St. Louise Associate Assistance Fund," White says. "The Foundation supports the mission. That is why I volunteer and give."

# Sack childhood obesity: Auburn football partnership funds wellness program for elementary students



**THERE'S NOTHING LIKE COLLEGE FOOTBALL** in the state of Alabama. That's why Physicians Realty Trust President and Chief Executive Officer John Thomas thought there might be a way to "capture" that passion for a healthy cause — boosting physical education programs in underserved elementary schools.

**"We wanted to partner with Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation because we know they will get it organized, manage it, and distribute the dollars to get the maximum benefit."**

"We wanted to find a way to tie football fans' passion with providing P.E. equipment for underfunded schools," says Thomas, a former New York tax lawyer who now heads a firm that partners with medical providers/hospitals to invest in medical office buildings. "I played football all my life and was blessed with a Jacksonville State scholarship. I've also been an Auburn fan since I was born."

Thomas is also a fan of his home state, where childhood obesity rates raise serious health concerns. Since Physicians Realty Trust seeks to multiply its philanthropic

impact by building donor platforms, Thomas created a partnership combining Physicians Realty Trust's donations with Auburn fans' support and Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation management. Thus "Sack Obesity" was born.

"There's nothing more exciting in football than a sack," Thomas says. "We want to capture that excitement with a QR code on the stadium's giant screen for fans to scan and make a donation whenever Auburn sacks an opposing quarterback." Fans can therefore support Sack Obesity as Physicians Realty Trust donates \$750 per sack. "We anticipate contributing more than \$25,000 to this campaign. That goal will be multiplied if the 88,000 fans attending each game contribute just a bit." The Foundation will use resulting contributions to purchase physical education equipment in selected Greater Birmingham and Lee County elementary schools.

"We wanted to partner with Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation because we know they will get it organized, manage it, and distribute the dollars to get the maximum benefit," Thomas says. "We have a long, good history with Ascension, and we know they're going to do a great job distributing these funds to attack obesity."

[Learn more at stvfoundation.org.](http://stvfoundation.org)

# Why We Give: Ascension St. Vincent's shows the love of Jesus



Rebecca and Trey with Noah and Lucia

**REBECCA DIPIAZZA** thought she knew Ascension St. Vincent's. After all, she was project director for an Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation-initiated breast cancer survivor program. She serves as Foundation Junior Board chair. She and her husband, Trey Hamer, included the Foundation in their wills and funded NICU cameras. DiPiazza, a cancer survivor, knows the Foundation's influence extends through programs "unlike anything else you see in Birmingham."

But as this family pursued the open adoption of their second child, Lucia, they learned much more.

"From the beginning, we were intimately involved with Lucia's birth mom. I went to every doctor's appointment. But a month before delivery she had her Monogram Maternity appointment with Ascension St. Vincent's Women and Children's Services, and Director Madonna Nichols brought an in-person Spanish translator. That changed the trajectory of our lives." For four hours the translator ensured Lucia's birth mother understood all options, including keeping her child. She helped her not only formulate her own birth plan, but her long-term plan for herself and her baby.

**"The coordination of her care and the respect shown to her in such a vulnerable and traumatic time was just unbelievable to witness."**

"We never, ever wanted her to feel coerced, but because of the language barrier she didn't know she had these options," DiPiazza says. "The coordination of her care and the respect shown to her in such a vulnerable and traumatic time was just unbelievable to witness."

Lucia's birth mom elected to proceed with an open adoption and continuing contact with Lucia's adoptive family. She also wanted DiPiazza with her throughout labor, delivery, and recovery. That process taught DiPiazza even more about Ascension St. Vincent's mission dedication.

"Absolutely everyone treated her with so much dignity and respect. Lucia was in the NICU for 48 hours, so we visited her there, and it was the same. People prayed with her. They showed her the love of Jesus."

Now this family wants to ensure every mother has in-person Monogram Maternity translation access, rather than translation via iPad.

**Will you help fund this program? Call 205-558-3850 or visit [stvfoundation.org](http://stvfoundation.org).**

# Answering the call: New president, new board members, and new Foundation staff roles



**MEET ANDY BELL.** Andy Bell answered the call to serve as Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation president because he grew up in a family of educators and civic leaders. "They always gave of themselves to improve the lives of others. I was taught to add value to the community," Bell says.

For 14 years Bell contributed as an executive for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society in its Birmingham office. Now he seeks to serve his Central Alabama neighbors.

"Through the great work of Ascension St. Vincent's and the gifts of our donors, we can improve the lives of our neighbors, and we can connect others to our mission of serving the poor and vulnerable. We want to provide compassionate care to everyone we serve, regardless of who they are or where they are from. That really is what motivated me to accept the call."



**Will Baker**, Walker & Dunlop's senior managing director of real estate finance, answered the Foundation Board's call because of family ties. "I learned a lot about the Foundation through my father, Allen Baker, who was on the board for a number of years." After moving south from Washington D.C., the Bakers elected to raise their three children in Birmingham. "Ascension St. Vincent's is one of the reasons we moved back here. I know first-hand how important this health system is."



**Peppi Talley**, Raymond James' senior vice president of investments, accepted the Foundation Board's call because Ascension St. Vincent's is part of her family story. "My mother, who passed away in June and was treated at Ascension St. Vincent's Birmingham, went to nursing school there. I was born there. Later in life I went through chemo for ovarian cancer at Bruno Cancer Center. They saved my life. So, since they gave me life twice, it's time for me to give back."

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**Jennifer Carter** has been promoted to become the Foundation's director of donor engagement. She may be reached at 205-558-3858 or [Jennifer.Carter4@ascension.org](mailto:Jennifer.Carter4@ascension.org).

**Ashley Carter** is now the Foundation's development analyst. She may be reached at 205-558-3859 or [Ashley.Carter3@ascension.org](mailto:Ashley.Carter3@ascension.org).



**Ascension  
St. Vincent's  
Foundation**



Van provided by Foundation donors serves vulnerable patients in Blount County.

## Because you gave: Recent examples of why donor dollars matter

**EACH DONATION MAKES A DIFFERENCE.** Each donation to Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation remains local to Central Alabama and meets local individuals' needs. Here are three recent examples of why donor dollars matter.

**"This gift truly serves the most vulnerable."**

**Elderly patients at Ascension St. Vincent's Blount** can now return home, thanks to a donor-provided Dodge Caravan equipped for wheelchairs. "Two or three times each week, a family drops off an elderly relative, but doesn't return to take them home," says Ascension St. Vincent's Blount Administrator Greg Brown. "We've had those patients spend a night in our waiting room. Our physicians and Associates have taken them home after their shifts. We've paid ambulance services \$400 to take them 10 miles. With no evening public transport in this rural area, this gift truly serves the most vulnerable."

**Cancer patients at Ascension St. Vincent's East** now have access to

real-time 4D tracking of their body movements as they breathe, resulting in more exact radiation treatments. Donors provided \$50,000 for the Gating software designed for patients with breast, lung, stomach, liver, and other torso tumors. "Delivering radiation treatments is part of the core work at our Cancer Center, but this software makes that treatment more precise, sparing the surrounding healthy tissue," says Ascension St. Vincent's East President Suzannah Campbell.

**Trauma patients at Ascension St. Vincent's Chilton** now have helipad access via an EMS transport cart. Donors provided \$28,000 to replace a 2016 retrofitted golf cart formerly used to transport stretchers 200 yards. "Replacing the aged retrofit helps us to better send 12 to 15 patients each month to a higher level of care, or to receive patients who are being transported here," says Ascension St. Vincent's Chilton Administrator Shanon Hamilton. "Since EMS staffing issues have limited our ground transportation, an air ambulance is often our only option. That makes this cart very important to our ministry."

## Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation

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Sisters' Vigil



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## Year-end Calculations: Three Smart Ways to Give

**FINANCIAL ADVISORS** often field clients' questions about fulfilling year-end philanthropic goals. While advisors like Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation Board Member Peppi Talley, Raymond James' senior vice president of investments, always encourages donors to consult their own advisors on their situations, many investors consider the following strategies as three smart ways to give:

- **Qualified Charitable Distributions.** Within certain limits, Individual Retirement Account (IRA) owners age 70.5 or older can contribute some or all of an IRA to charity, sometimes realizing significant tax benefits.
- **Charitable Gift Annuities (CGAs).** CGAs can provide fixed income streams in exchange for sizeable gifts — and can be simpler than naming a charity in a will.
- **Designated Life Insurance.** Designating a charity as beneficiary to an existing or new life insurance policy can provide significant contributions at minimal costs.

**Need other smart ideas? Visit [stvfoundation.org](http://stvfoundation.org).**

The holiday season brings out the angels among us who step forward to support the Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation community impact through year-end giving. Please join us in our mission. You can help bring the power of hope, healing, and new beginning to our community.