



2025 SGA Awards Finalists: Community Service

Entry: Southern Star Cares: Fueling our Communities

Your Company: Southern Star

Linking people, ideas and information:

The Southern Star Cares program continues to expand and evolve, distributing funds that support the organizations that serve and protect our communities and populations in need. Through Southern Star Cares, the Southern Star team is able to broaden our impact as a premier community partner.

From upgrades to facilities to much-needed equipment, Southern Star Cares empowered eight nonprofit organizations and their ability to give back to those in need – our stakeholders, our neighbors, our communities.

Name of Your Project / Initiative

Southern Star Cares: Fueling our Communities

The solution

What is Southern Star Cares?

Southern Star Cares is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization formed by Southern Star Central Gas Pipeline, Inc. and its employees located in Owensboro, KY. The team member organization is led by a board of directors made up of 11 Southern Star team members. The board of directors ensures good stewardship of team member donations while also creating positive impacts within our communities.

What is the vision of Southern Star Cares?

To lead the way in enhancing the quality of life for Southern Star families and communities where our team members live, work and play.

How are Southern Star Cares funds raised?

Southern Star Cares is funded by Southern Star team member contributions pledged during a fundraising campaign held annually each fall. After initially launching in Owensboro, KY, the program expanded to include all Southern Star team members and locations in 2024.

How much of pledged money goes directly to nonprofit programs?

100% of all pledged donations from Southern Star team members goes directly to funding non-profit projects/programs.

How are recipients chosen?

The 2024 grant application window was open from August 12 through September 6, with more than 50 nonprofit organizations submitting applications. A thorough review took place through the Southern Star Cares Board of Directors and focus groups composed of 25 Southern Star volunteer team members. Grant finalists presented their projects in person at a Southern Star Cares donors' luncheon. Donors then voted for the agencies they wanted their campaign dollars to be awarded to. 2024 grant winners were announced on December 18.

When will grant recipients receive funds?

Southern Star Cares disburses grants to team member-selected organizations in Q1 of the year following the collection of pledges. Grant recipients then provide regular updates on the progress of their projects.

Results of your project / initiative.

Southern Star Cares celebrated its second round of grant recipients in 2024, awarding more than \$128,000 to eight nonprofit organizations in Owensboro, KY. Any tax-exempt, 501(c)3 organization serving Daviess County, Kentucky, was eligible to apply. Our team is incredibly proud of the impact these grants will have in enriching lives across our community.

Southern Star Cares is excited to share our 2024 grant recipients:

- Crossroads Inc. - \$3,078 for Hope Kitchen appliance upgrades to support meal preparation for homeless women and children
- Dannheiser Fund for Kids - \$2,737 for C.R.E.A.T.E. youth program and shoes for at-risk and underprivileged children in our community
- Fresh Start for Women - \$10,000 for critical apartment siding replacement for women transitioning into society after who've completed addiction recovery programs or faced other life challenges
- Puzzle Pieces - \$20,000 for STAR (Skills Training and Readiness Initiative) program vocational room to support children with disabilities
- Senior Community Center of Owensboro-Daviess County - \$50,000 for new vehicles to deliver lunch to senior citizens through their Meals on Wheels program

- Shepherd's Hand Clothing Ministry - \$9,500 for equipment supporting item donations and distribution for low-income populations to have proper seasonal clothing
- Thruston Philpot Volunteer Fire Department - \$9,601 to replace life-saving Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) units in 2025
- Whitesville Fire Department - \$23,357 for a life-saving Lucas Automated CPR device for emergency response events

Six of the eight recipients received full funding. Other grant recipients received partial funding to help bring these great projects to life.

"It's incredible to be able to award more than \$128,000 in grants, pledged by our team members, to support the Owensboro community in 2025 and beyond," said Rita Daming, President of Southern Star Cares. "The Southern Star Cares board was excited to be able to support funding to multiple additional organizations this year. We can't wait to see the impact these groups will make in our community."

Southern Star Cares' grants are funded entirely from our team members' contributions. Every dollar raised by Southern Star Cares goes to grant recipients, with no administrative fees or deductions. Through Southern Star Cares, our team has a chance to fuel positive change for our communities and our neighbors.

Southern Star Cares also held its annual fundraising campaign in Fall 2024 with an exciting new initiative. The program was expanded to the entire Southern Star team which will create lasting impact to organizations in Missouri, Oklahoma, Kansas and Wyoming. Thanks to the generosity of our team, more than \$186,000 was raised from team member contributions, surpassing the campaign goal by more than \$50,000.

Funds will be distributed in Q1 of 2026 to grant winners selected in late 2025. Our team is eager to expand our reach and continue to spread our care across every Southern Star community.

[Watch the video.](#)



Entry: BGE Youth Energy Day: Connecting Youth to Utility Careers

Your Company: BGE

Linking people, ideas and information:

BGE, a subsidiary of Exelon Corporation, is a leader in corporate citizenship and community impact through the intersection of their philanthropic initiatives, employee volunteerism, and workforce development efforts that frame BGE's community engagement. In 2024, BGE invested nearly \$8 million in local nonprofits and workforce development efforts, facilitated more than \$1 million in employee giving, and spent more than 30,000 hours volunteering with more than 300 community projects and nonprofits.

BGE's Youth Energy Day has made significant contributions to connecting people, ideas, and information. Through longstanding partnerships with vocational trade high schools within our service territory, we have increased awareness and access to career opportunities within the utility industry. This event demonstrates to students how the skills and knowledge they are acquiring in their vocational programs position them for meaningful careers in the utility industry directly from high school. Additionally, vocational instructors have the unique opportunity to engage directly with BGE's field operation teams, gaining firsthand insights into industry innovations and best practices. This valuable information is then brought back into the classroom, enriching the educational experience, and preparing the next generation of utility trade professionals.

Name of Your Project / Initiative

BGE Youth Energy Day

The Solution

BGE's workforce development programs power the economic health of the communities we serve by driving awareness and exposure to the industry through STEM education, high school internship experiences, college schools, and adult career pathway planning and training. BGE's High School Career Academy serves as an entry point from career technology education programs into entry-level roles at BGE with a journey that begins at Youth Energy Day.

BGE's Youth Energy Day is a transformative event designed to inspire high school students enrolled in vocational trade programs by showcasing career opportunities within the utility industry and highlighting BGE's paid summer internship program. During the event, students and their instructors engage with BGE employees who began their careers as high school interns, learning about these opportunities at previous Youth Energy Days.

BGE's CEO and leadership team also participate, sharing their career journeys and emphasizing the importance of a skilled workforce to tackle today's and tomorrow's utility challenges. Students rotate through various utility operations stations, interacting with employees who explain their roles in maintaining a safe and reliable system. They also experience hands-on activities, such as trying on personal protective equipment (PPE) and using virtual reality technology to simulate real-world tasks.

Youth Energy Day is supported by 11 operational areas, including gas operations, ensuring that experienced trades professionals can share their firsthand experiences and encourage the next generation to pursue careers in the utility industry.

Results of Your Project / Initiative.

Youth Energy Day is a pivotal program within BGE's workforce development strategy which powers the economic health of central Maryland by promoting economic equity, empowerment, and employment opportunities, particularly in underserved and under-resourced communities. BGE's workforce development strategy focuses on equipping unemployed and underemployed individuals with valuable job skills while preparing the next generation for careers in STEM fields. By doing so, it ensures both work-ready adults and youth are prepared for family-supporting careers.

Youth Energy Day plays a crucial role in driving awareness and access to careers within the utility industry. Each year, it engages over 200 students from 11 regional high schools that offer relevant vocational trades programs. As part of Youth Energy Day, students learn about BGE's paid summer internship program, which recruits from these engaged high schools and can lead to full-time career opportunities at BGE directly out of high school. In 2024, BGE hired 13 employees from the high school internship program, many of whom discovered the opportunity through their participation in Youth Energy Day.

Recognizing the financial constraints of schools serving economically disadvantaged communities, BGE ensures that participation in Youth Energy Day is accessible by offering the event at no cost to the schools. Additionally, BGE provides free transportation to and from the event and lunch for the students and instructors, removing barriers to participation and fostering an inclusive environment for all attendees. This comprehensive approach not only supports immediate workforce development but also builds a sustainable pipeline of skilled professionals for the future.

BGE's unwavering commitment to community economic equity is exemplified through Youth Energy Day, a program that can transform lives by ensuring awareness of career opportunities is accessible within communities that need it most.



Entry: Fueling Hope: Summit's Fight Against Hunger

Your Company: Summit Utilities, Inc.

Linking people, ideas and information:

At Summit, we believe our success is directly linked to our community investments and commitments. Through volunteerism and charitable giving, we aim to create healthy, vibrant communities for our friends and neighbors. Supporting food insecurity is a key part of our community giving strategy.

In 2024, Summit engaged team members, customers, and community partners to rally around a common cause: fighting hunger. Volunteering at donation drop-off sites and participating in support efforts provided a tangible way for individuals to come together and make a real impact. Team members weren't just writing checks and buying non-perishable foods; they were rolling up their sleeves and building relationships with philanthropic organization staff members, fellow donors, and families in need.

By participating in the Arkansas Foodbank Summer Cereal Drive, Summit provided morning fuel for children to start their day off right and helped elevate the conversation around food insecurity in Arkansas. Summit's involvement reinforced that corporate social responsibility isn't just about financial giving—it's about fostering long-term community well-being. Donations from the Summit, including both volunteer hours and cereal boxes, helped provide essential breakfast items to families in need, ensuring children have access to nutritious meals, especially during the summer.

Summit proudly participated in The Summer Cereal Drive to aid families in the Arkansas Foodbank's 33-county service area. Summit donated 200 boxes of cereal and \$1,000 to the efforts and offered volunteer support at nearly all community drop-off sites. These sites allowed individuals and teams to drop off cereal donations that were then distributed to local food bank partner agencies.

Summit values strengthening our community by addressing key issues fundamental to economic opportunity and social progress. By partnering with the Arkansas Foodbank, we strive to provide food, hope, and security to Arkansans facing hunger.

Name of Your Project / Initiative

Fueling Hope: Summit's Fight Against Hunger

The Solution

One in four children in Arkansas are at risk of hunger, especially during summer when schools close and many lose access to the nutritious meals provided through school programs. To help fill this gap, the Arkansas Foodbank launched the Summer Cereal Drive in 2000, an annual initiative that has since provided over 4 million breakfast items to children and families across 33 counties in Arkansas. This drive plays a crucial role in combating childhood hunger during the summer months.

Results of Your Project / Initiative.

Summit has been a steadfast supporter of the Summer Cereal Drive. In 2024, we not only donated 200 cereal boxes but also contributed a \$1,000 check to the initiative. Our commitment extended beyond financial contributions; Summit team members actively volunteered at nearly all of the 16 community drop-off sites in June. This commitment earned us the prestigious “2024 Community Partner Award.”

During the 2024 Summer Cereal Drive, the Arkansas Foodbank collected a total of 255,510 boxes of cereal. This impressive haul surpassed the previous year's total, showcasing the community's growing commitment to combating food insecurity.

Ensuring Arkansas children have access to food during the summer is just one part of our effort to combat hunger. In 2024 our team also contributed over 400 hours volunteering at the Arkansas Foodbank's warehouse throughout the year.

For Summit team members, it's not just about the money donated or the cereal boxes our team purchased—it's about the time, energy, and heart we put into making a difference. From volunteering countless hours to showing up at every event, our team was committed to supporting the communities we serve.

[Watch the video.](#)

