

Arkansas Climate League Annual Report



arkecl.org

2023



Collaborating for a Just Green Energy Transition

About Arkansas Climate League

OUR PURPOSE

The Arkansas Climate League encourages environmental justice, energy security, and green energy conversations in low-income communities. We connect with grassroots leaders, listen, build relationships, provide information about local energy assistance and energy efficiency programs to low and middle income families, and work with other nonprofits to pursue local clean energy initiatives.

2023 BOARD MEMBERS

- Jo Elsken (Chair) – Fort Smith, AR
- Corey White (Vice-Chair) – Frisco, TX
- Robert McAfee (Co-Treasurer) – Hackett, AR
- Keaton Smith (Co-Treasurer) – Fayetteville, AR
- Shelley Buonaiuto (Secretary) – Fayetteville, AR
- Chris Balos (Director) – Springdale, AR
- Diana Casteel (Director) – Douglasville, TX
- Fay Knox (Director) – Deer, AR
- Herbert McGill (Director) – Fort Smith, AR
- Paulette Ann Meikle (Director) – Fort Smith, AR
- Charles Sisco (Director) – Springdale, AR
- Chris McNamara (Chair Emeritus) – Fayetteville, AR

Table of Contents

3

Letter from the
Board Chair

4

Community
Outreach

6 Collaborations

7

Scholarships

8 Autumn
Vibes

9

Grant

10 Finances

11

Looking to 2024

12 Thank You Donors

Letter from the Board Chair

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our 2023 Annual Report. I stepped into the role of Board Chair in 2024, following in the wise leadership of outgoing Board Chair Fay Knox. I am so grateful for her gentle guidance. Fay is a stalwart supporter of grassroots work that advances individual and community well-being. She and I share this commitment, as well as a deep appreciation for the many hands, hearts, and minds that make the Climate League's work possible.

The theme of our 2023 annual report: Initiating Conversation, Creating Strong Relationships plays out in the community activities, collaborations, and investments you'll encounter in the following pages. There's a lot there, especially considering that in 2023 our paid staff consisted of a single independent contractor working 5 hours per week.

One of my favorite new initiatives was the Kite Creation table we set up at Fort Smith's Darby Middle School in September. The Autumn Vibes House Party recap illustrates the collaborative, can-do spirit of our all-volunteer Board, Resource Development Team, Autumn Vibes House Party Team and Climate League supporters from across the state.



Grant writing is another initiative we launched in 2023. In fact, if you have experience writing grants, we would love to hear from you!. We are very thankful to have received a Giving Tree Grant from the Western Arkansas Community Foundation. These monies went to the purchase of a laptop computer and portable printer, essential outreach tools in our efforts to increase utilization of energy efficiency programs and utility bill assistance. On that subject, looking back at 2023, I am proud and moved by the deepening partnership between the Climate League and the Elizabeth McGill Drop In Center.

I am optimistic as I look ahead! Thanks to the support of generous donors, we were able to hire Herbert McGill as an Outreach Coordinator for eight hours/week in 2024.

Sincerely, Jo Elsken
Board Chair

Community Outreach: Delivering Information, Evoking Smiles

Energy drove our 2023 outreach. We tackled energy insecurity, promoted energy efficiency resources and energy bill assistance, played around with clean energy, and deployed Climate League volunteers' innovative energy. Here are the highlights:



We had a blast at our first Fort Smith Cinco de Mayo festival. We chatted with folks about energy bill issues, handed out applications for the Crawford Sebastian County Development Council's energy assistance programs, and made new connections with other essential Fort Smith organizations, including the Libre Institute which now provides citizenship and language lessons in the McGill Center.

In May the Climate League and McGill Center co-hosted a northside Fort Smith community luncheon with special guest Kathy Allen, Director of Weatherization at the Crawford Sebastian County Development Council. Thirty attendees feasted, talked, and learned . . . there may have even been some spontaneous dancing.



"This was an interesting and informative conversation. It really allowed people who weren't familiar with the services offered through CSCDC to get an in-depth understanding of what CSCDC does and what it takes to get assistance. This was a good example of meeting people where they are at. This collaboration between the Climate League, CSCDC, and the McGill Center is a perfect example of how different agencies can work together to inform the people who really need it."

- McGill Center Director and Climate League Board Member Herbie McGill.

Community Outreach

(Continued)

Smiles, wind and whimsy swirled around the Climate League's kite-creation table at September's Celebration of Community Connections held at Fort Smith's Darby Middle School. In addition to helping kids get their kites decorated and aloft, our volunteers shared age-appropriate information in both Spanish and English on the value of clean air and the power of wind.



In late October, we spoke with the sisters at Fort Smith's St. Scholastica Monastery about climate justice, our collaboration with the McGill Center, and our focus on addressing energy insecurity through education, community engagement, and grant writing (e.g. solar and weatherization for the McGill Center).



Collaborations: Educating and Advocating Together

We were honored again this year to partner with other key Arkansas environment and climate justice organizations to deliver the Eighth Annual Arkansas Environmental Policy Summit, held in November at Hendrix College in Conway. The Climate League assisted with planning, funding, getting the word out, as well as staffing the welcome table. Thanks to our friends at Audubon Delta, Arkansas Interfaith-Power and Light, Arkansas Zero Hour, Sierra Club Arkansas Chapters, Arkansas Natural Sky Association, and Arkansas Public Policy Panel.



We have learned so much about grassroots organizing from staff at the Arkansas Public Policy Panel over the years. Climate League board members Fay Knox and Shelley Buonaituo were delighted to attend December's double anniversary gala: 60 years for the Panel and 25 for the Citizens' First Congress. The Climate League participates in the CFC's Environmental Justice Caucus.



Our volunteers wear several hats! For the past two years Climate League volunteers have attended Fort Smith City Council meetings via their participation in the Fort Smith Citizens' Climate Lobby chapter and have built trusted relationships with city directors and staff. In preparing to submit a federal Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Project Proposal, city staff approached our volunteers for input. The Climate League joined with the River Valley Green Energy and Education Project to suggest solutions that prioritize benefits to low income families and neighborhoods.

Scholarships: Building Human Capacity

Climate League donor generosity sent two Arkansans to the 2023 June Citizens' Climate Education Conference in Washington D.C. Shannie Jackson of Conway and Shannon Farhat of Fort Smith returned from the Conference fired up to bring climate conversations and action to their communities and have been doing so. Since the inception of the Climate League in 2017, our donors have invested in opening educational doors for emerging climate leaders across the state.



Scholarship recipients Shannie Jackson and Shannon Farhat lean into the CCE June Conference.

Autumn Vibes: Classy Fun and Fundraising

We had so much fun! On a gorgeous October evening, a powerful mix of Arkansans gathered at the home of John and Leah Lane to network, learn about the Climate League's grassroots work and enjoy the autumn colors. Fort Smith City Directors, solar experts, climate advocates, physicians, faith leaders, non-profit leaders, and all around good folks struck up important conversations about civic engagement, green energy, local needs, and the value of collaboration. Plus we laughed and chatted about everyday life.



We are humbled and honored that Wendy Finn highlighted the Arkansas Climate League's work and our Autumn Vibes gathering in her [Letters from An Arkansan](#) Substack piece.

I was amazed at what a great job this group has done with inclusivity and diversity, and they gave me a good bias check with my own stereotypes of church values and interests. This event brought together citizens, community leaders, and church groups. It was refreshing to see inclusivity done well.



Many individuals, businesses, and groups came together to make Autumn Vibes happen. UAFS students Vanessa Victoriano and Fran Bermudez-Flores brought their volunteer spirit to the event. These dynamic young women are focused and intent on making a difference in the world.

A longtime Climate League friend put forth a \$5000 Autumn Vibes matching challenge. We're incredibly grateful to the Autumn Vibes attendees and open-hearted donors from across the state who pushed us to \$8695. These funds power our grassroots outreach and collaborations.

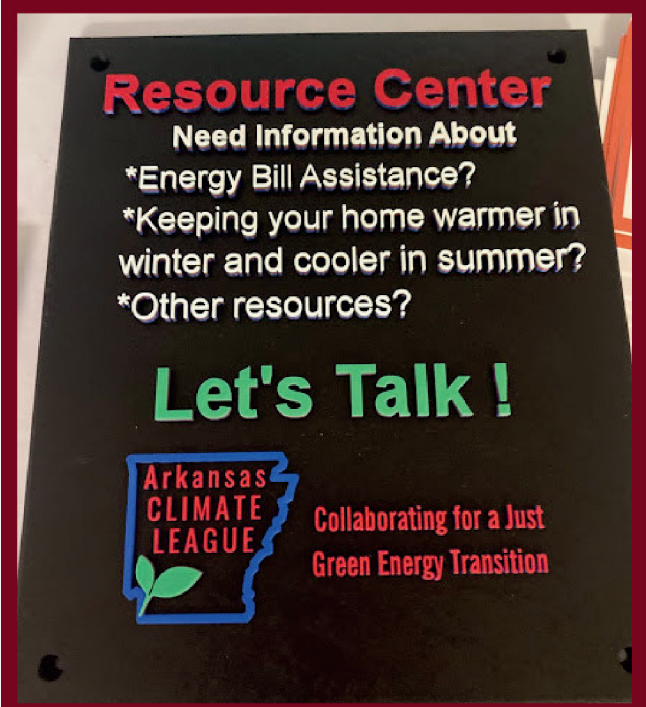
Grant Equips Resource Center

Western Arkansas Community Foundation Grant Equips Climate League Resource Center and Outreach Volunteers

In late 2023 Herbert McGill - Director of Fort Smith's Elizabeth McGill Center and Climate League Board member - invited the Climate League to open a resource office in the McGill Center. The purpose of the office is to provide neighbors with information about energy efficiency, weatherization and other support services in a familiar place and to assist with the application process.

Happily, we received a \$1000 grant from the Western Arkansas Community Foundation to equip our Fort Smith grassroots outreach team with a laptop and portable printer. These vital tools will be well used in the resource center and out in the community, as we talk with and support low-income Arkansans in accessing energy efficiency, weatherization and energy bill assistance resources.


If you have experience writing grants and are inspired to help us further our mission, we would love to hear from you!



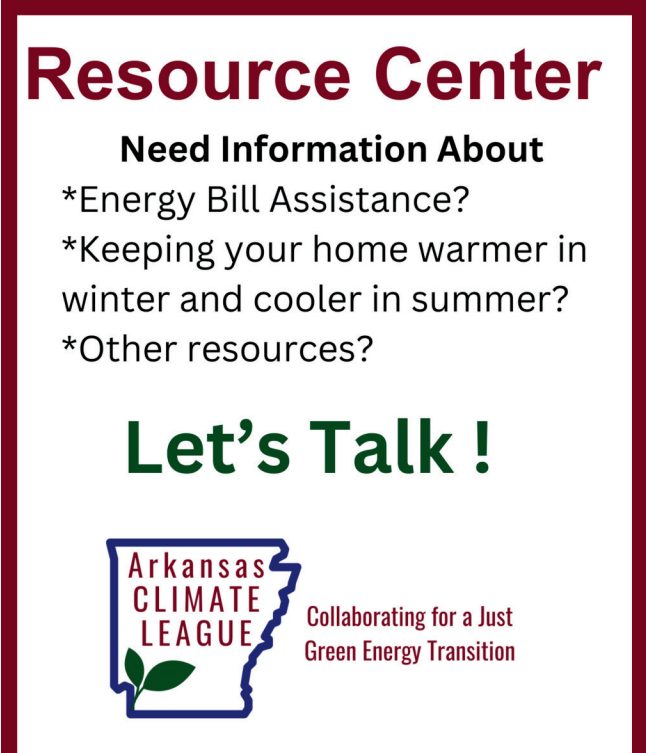
Resource Center
Need Information About

- *Energy Bill Assistance?
- *Keeping your home warmer in winter and cooler in summer?
- *Other resources?

Let's Talk !




Collaborating for a Just Green Energy Transition



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Need Information About

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- *Other resources?

Let's Talk !



Collaborating for a Just Green Energy Transition

Finances

Importance of Monthly Donations

Monthly donors, also known as sustaining donors, play a crucial role in the financial stability of nonprofit organizations. Here are some key points regarding their value:

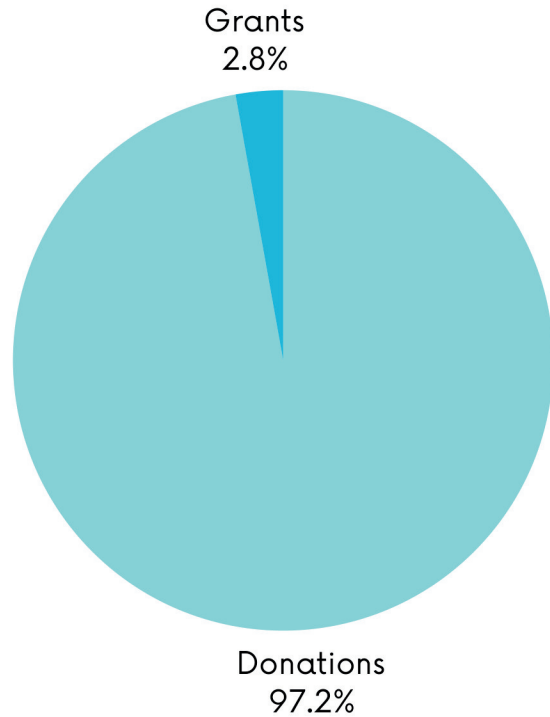
- **Reliable Income Source:** Sustaining monthly giving has become one of the most reliable income sources for nonprofits and higher education advancement organizations.
- **Predictability:** Monthly donors provide a steady income stream that nonprofits can depend on. Their regular contributions make giving more predictable and cost-effective.
- **Lifetime Value:** The average lifetime value of donors acquired as sustainers is significantly higher than that of single gift donors.

Monthly Donations



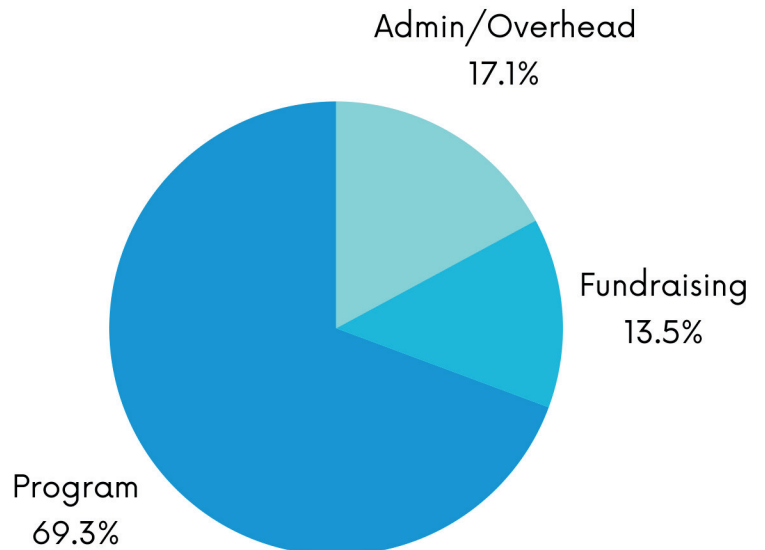
2023 Income

Grants: \$1,000
Donations: \$34,382



2023 Expenses

Admin/Overhead: \$4,535
Fundraising: \$3,589
Program: \$18,367

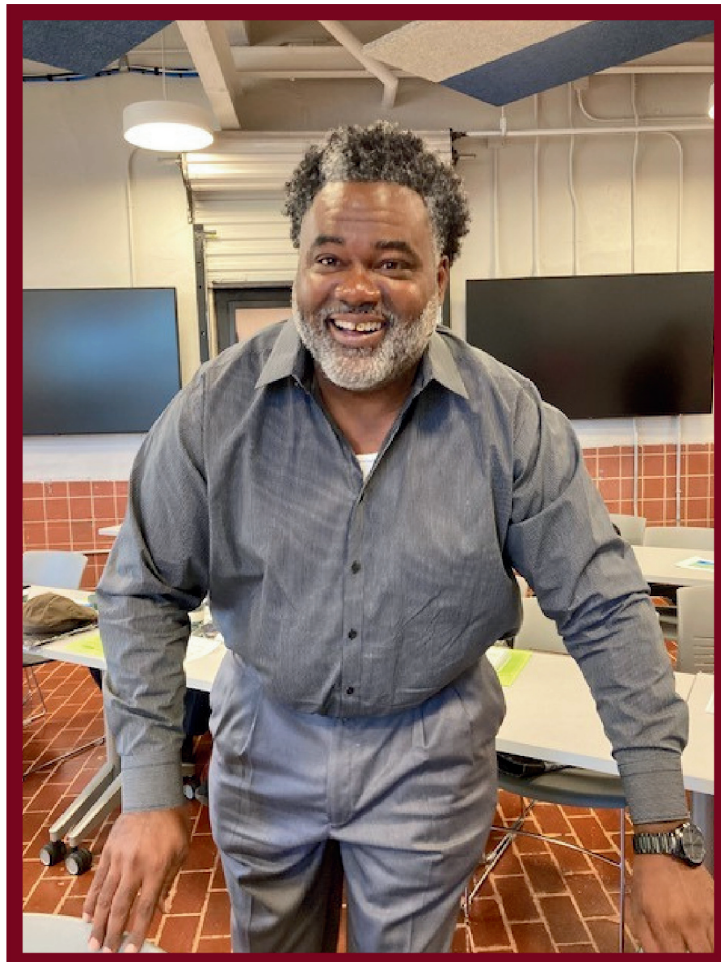


Looking to 2024

Thanks to the support of generous donors, we were able to hire Herbert McGill as an Outreach Coordinator for eight hours/week in 2024!

“Herbie is deeply connected and aware of community needs and promises. His work as League Outreach Coordinator provides a perfect collaborative link that will make a difference in advancing the League’s mission to address energy insecurity and promote a just clean energy transition.” - Robert McAfee Board Co-Treasurer

Collaborations and community outreach will continue to be at the heart of what we do. Volunteers will continue to be the innovators and do-gooders who make the League’s work possible.



Thank You Donors!

2023 Donors

Ann Segura	Doug Skokos	Jo Elsken	Robert & Vicki Long
Barbara Daulke	Earl McAfee	Joanna Person-Michener	Robert & Sarah Leflar
Barry Haas	Fay Knox	John & Leah Lane	Robert McAfee
Bonnie & Rick Murphy	Fran Alexander	Kathy Jarvis	Ruthie McRae
Carol Florida	Gary Kahanak	Keaton Smith	Shelley Buonaiuto
Carol Mckee	Geoff & Leslie Oelsner	Kim Lovely	Sophia Stephenson
Charles & Sara Lane	Holly Childs	Larry Price	St. Scholastica
Charles Sisco	Jamie Childs	Laura & Upton Siddons	Steve Barger
Chris McNamara	Janice Schaper	Marti Olesen	Steven Smith
Cissy & Carl Rose	Jarred Rego	Maryanne Meyerriecks	Vallie Graff
Dick Bennett	Jean Larson	Michael Cooper	Wendy Finn

RECURRING DONORS

Chris McNamara	Keaton Smith
Earl McAfee	Michael Cooper
Fay Knox	Robert McAfee
Janice Schaper	Shelley Buonaiuto
Jo Elsken	Steven Smith

LIFETIME DONORS (2017-2023)

Barry Haas	Fran Alexander
Charles Sisco	Janice Schaper
Chris McNamara	John & Leah Lane
Dick Bennett	Keaton Smith
Earl McAfee	Robert McAfee
Fay Knox	Shelley Buonaiuto