








# GRACE KLEIN COMMUNITY

## A Little Gift From God

By **Laura Pickens**

 **GRACE KLEIN** <COMMUNITY> is an educational and charitable 501(C)(3) nonprofit dedicated to providing relief to the poor, disadvantaged, and underprivileged. Located right here in Birmingham, Grace Klein Community was founded in 2010 by Jenny and Jason Waltman. Grace Klein Community has provided services for 14 years and, in 2023, reached 36 of the 67 Alabama counties.

I am honored to serve as one of Grace Klein Community's board members and also to share some of my experiences with my Dawson family. My husband, Jim, and I first learned of Grace Klein Community in 2013 through the Waltmans' for-profit company, Grace Klein Construction, when we had hired them to do some updates on our home. One of the employees told us about the nonprofit and talked about how Jenny and Jason were the "real deal" in that they love Jesus and always encourage others to join in the efforts to help our neighbors.

Wondering about the name Grace Klein? It means "little gift from God." By giving people who are struggling some tangible help, it is their desire to point them to the biggest gift: Jesus.

Prior to COVID, people in need of food were able to go to the Grace Klein office on Old Rocky Ridge Road in Hoover, but the process changed with the onset of the pandemic. New procedures took shape quickly and Liberty Church Birmingham located off of Old Rocky Ridge Road, graciously allowed Grace Klein Community to use their facility to begin a drive through program.

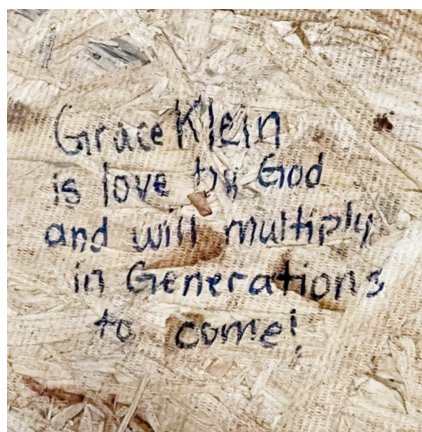
As each of our community friends drove through the line, boxes of food were loaded into their trunk while our volunteers prayed with and encouraged them. That program still serves the community today and is open Mondays through Thursdays from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and is available for anyone in need.





Grace Klein also supports other drive-throughs in the state, including Wylam, Calera, Harpersville, and Alabaster. They also hold monthly events at the Jefferson County Family Court and Bessemer Court House.

Rescuing and distributing food is a huge part of the ministry of Grace Klein, but there is so much more. They distribute diapers and wipes to help support single mothers (currently more than 100 families monthly). The Grace Klein Garden Club help facilitate and manage community gardens. They gave away school supplies to 367 children this past year, and they also house a free "give and take" room for clothing and household goods. The "We Sew Love" sewing groups make clothing for our friends in need and for children in other countries. (Dawson members are very involved with this group.) In 2023, Grace Klein gave Christmas support to more than 1000 children.



For the past three years, the "Grace Klein Community Chef Club" has prepared thousands of small frozen meals from donated non-perishable food, which is given to people in crisis, such as a hospitalization or illness or death of a family member. This is a particular focus for Jim and me.

Jim and I also serve as food rescue volunteers. As "Food Rescue Heroes," we pick up food from 373 area food donor partners such as grocery stores, schools, restaurants, and caterers, and bring it to Grace Klein to be distributed.

This is food that would have otherwise been discarded. Some of this food may be near, or even at, the "Best By" date, but is still good food. In 2022, Grace Klein rescued 2 million pounds of food. In 2023, the total food rescued was more than 2.7 million pounds! When we do receive food that is not good for human consumption, we give it to farmers whose animals love it!





Some volunteers also pick up empty boxes from Chick-Fil-A, which are used as the food boxes at the drive-throughs. In addition to providing food at six drive-through sites, we supply food to our non-profit partners who pick up regularly at our office. We currently have 228 partners who receive food to distribute in their own communities. These partnerships have allowed us to provide food to more than 448,000 unique people!

Last summer, I went with a team to Kwathu Children's Home in Zambia, one of Grace Klein Community's global partners. Our team held nightly worship and praise times with the teenagers, reached out to the women in that community with washable sanitary supplies, prayed with the elderly in a very poor town, and helped on Kwathu's farm. I took a doll with me that was made by Dawson women and used it to tell the Gospel story to the children. Grace Klein also collects gently used shoes of all kinds and partners with Funds2Org to help fund the Kwathu school.

Jim worked in the trucking industry before retirement and is a handyman. These skill sets are helpful at Grace Klein Community. He has built bunk beds for a community home, built a steel handrail for an office, developed a pre-trip inspection sheet for the vehicles' drivers, procured some vehicles, set up a vehicle maintenance schedule, and he troubleshoots when needed. Even in retirement, he stays extremely busy!

Why do Jim and I love Grace Klein Community? We love to serve Christ by serving others, as He taught us. Jim and I have seen miracles. We really enjoy serving together. We also can choose to volunteer at times and places that work for us. We love the relationships we have developed. We get to mentor young people and learn from the aged. We are needed, appreciated, and loved. We are doing this with thankful hearts and hope to serve as long as we are able.

There is certainly more that could be detailed here, but if you would like further information, you can learn more and contact me via [dawsonchurch.org/serve](http://dawsonchurch.org/serve).

It is our prayer that you have been blessed to know more about Grace Klein Community and will share this knowledge with someone who could be blessed by it. You can also be blessed yourselves by serving with us and becoming the hands and feet of Christ throughout our city and beyond.

To His Glory!



**Laura Pickens** and her husband, Jim, joined Dawson in 2007. She has worked as a sales administrator for a chemical distributor while Jim is a retired COO from J&M Tank Lines. They have four children and five grandchildren.



### SERVE JESUS BY SERVING OTHERS. VOLUNTEER AS AN INDIVIDUAL, COUPLE, FAMILY, OR GROUP.

How can you help? Here is a partial list:

- Be a Food Rescue Hero, it's fun! Choose from the available pickups; we have them every day from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. Just go to [app.foodrescue.us](http://app.foodrescue.us) to sign up.
- Help at our drive-throughs. Put together boxes, fill the boxes with food, take the boxes to the cars, pray with the recipients.
- We Sew Love: You can sew if that is your skill set or you can cut out patterns, iron, or organize.
- Help clean our spaces: the drive-through, the offices where we take in the food and send it out.
- At our community homes: clean, rake leaves, pull weeds, paint, and much more!
- Computer/Administration help is always needed.
- Write thank you cards.
- Make encouraging cards with Bible verses.
- Help with incoming donations; they need to be carried in, weighed, reported, and stored.
- Help load outgoing food for the nonprofit partners who pick up at our office.
- Join the GKC Chef Club and make frozen meals.
- Diaper and Wipe distribution to moms.
- HUGE NEED: Pick up food from GKC and deliver to non-driving individuals who are in great need.
- Can you drive one of the GKC trucks or vans to pick up food and take it to the drive-throughs?
- Get to know the staff and volunteers and pray with them, encourage them.
- Hold a shoe drive or a food drive; GKC will provide a bin for collections.

To volunteer, visit [gracekleincommunity.com/volunteer](http://gracekleincommunity.com/volunteer) or email to Carla at [Carla@gracekleincommunity.com](mailto:Carla@gracekleincommunity.com).