

# Positively UC

A moment to focus on the good *our team is doing every day*



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## DUDNEY, PATTEN NAMED TDOT RPO GRANT WRITERS OF THE YEAR



*Pictured receiving the award certificates are Sean Patten and Stacy Morrison, Community Transportation Planning Manager, who accepted on behalf of Mark Dudney.*

This award honors their exceptional work in supporting rural communities across Tennessee through the Tennessee Department of Transportation Rural Planning Organization (RPO) program.

Mark and Sean play a key role in helping local governments secure critical transportation funding, which supports safer roads, stronger infrastructure, and community growth. This year, they were responsible for nearly 50 percent of all grant applications submitted by RPO Coordinators statewide, a testament to their dedication and expertise.

We are incredibly proud of the commitment, knowledge, and hard work Mark and Sean bring to their roles every day. Their efforts have a direct and meaningful impact on the communities we serve, and this recognition is well-deserved.

The Upper Cumberland Development District is proud to announce that Mark Dudney and Sean Patten have been recognized as TDOT RPO Grant Writers of the Year.

## CANNON UCHRA AWARDED \$8,200 GRANT

The Cannon County UCHRA office has been selected as the quarterly funding recipient by 100 Women Who Care – Cannon County, receiving \$8,200 to support local programs and services.

The office was nominated by community partners and presented its mission and impact before the group's membership prior to being chosen through a vote.

The award also carries the potential for a 50 percent match from a private funder, further expanding its impact in Cannon County.



# UCDD LEADERSHIP MEETS WITH STATE LAWMAKERS



Representatives from UCDD and the Tennessee Development District Association (TDDA) recently participated in Day on the Hill at the state capitol, where they met with members of the Tennessee General Assembly to discuss regional priorities and strengthen relationships with state leadership. During the event, the delegation visited with legislators, including Representative Paul Sherrell, Representative Ed Butler, and Senator Paul Bailey, to share insights on local needs and advocate for continued support of programs that benefit communities across the Upper Cumberland region.



## TORTELLINI TRIUMPH! ALLISON WINS 2026 UCDD CHILI COOK-OFF

The votes are in, the bowls are empty, and a chili champion has officially been crowned at UCDD. Congratulations to Melissa Allison of



the Agency's RCP team, winner of the 2026 UCDD Chili Cook-Off! Judges said they had never tasted anything like it, noting that the tortellini made the dish truly memorable.

It was a unique mix of ingredients that, against all odds, worked wonderfully and clearly stole the show.



### WHO WE ARE

#### OUR MISSION

*To help the Upper Cumberland region cultivate self-sufficiency and build true wealth through innovation, collaboration, and leadership.*

#### OUR VISION

*A region abundant in resources, fostering a productive and vibrant life for the people of the Upper Cumberland.*

get  plugged in.

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# EMPLOYEE SHOUT-OUTS

At UCDD and UCHRA, our greatest strength is our people. Across departments and counties, our team members work each day to serve the Upper Cumberland region with dedication, expertise, and heart.

While a few of them may strongly prefer to stay out of the spotlight, we believe great work deserves to be recognized. So, even if it means enduring a little good-natured attention, we're proud to highlight several individuals who consistently go above and beyond to make a meaningful difference in the communities we serve.



When a former UCHRA employee needed to appeal a Medicare Late Enrollment Penalty, Nestor Chavez, Human Resources Coordinator for UCDD and UCHRA, teamed up with our SHIP team to track down 15-year-old records. Thanks to his persistence and expertise, the appeal was won, saving the client over \$800 per year and showing how our teams go above and beyond to support those we serve.

When the Program Manager for Communities in Schools connected with families and grandparents facing high absenteeism, she was referred to our Relative Caregiver Program for support. Thanks to Melissa Allison's dedication, several grandparents have now signed up for services they didn't know existed, expressing gratitude and highlighting how our team goes above and beyond to support the community.



Congratulations to Mary Harris on an incredible milestone of 40 years of dedicated service at UCHRA and UCDD. Her hard work, loyalty, and the impact she has made over four decades have truly made a difference. We thank her for her lasting contributions and wish her all the best in her well-deserved retirement.

# COMPLETE THE 2026 Community Needs Assessment SURVEY NOW!



## INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1** Open your phone's camera app
- 2** Point it at the QR code
- 3** Tap the notification to view and complete the survey

Scan the QR code above or visit the link ([qrco.de/bgdgpU](https://qrco.de/bgdgpU)) to complete the survey now!