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FOUNDATION
WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TN

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DOWNTOWN
FRANKLIN
ASSOCIATION

The
FRANKLIN
THEATRE

FRANKLIN
Cove
ESTATE & GARDENS

The Moore Morris
History and
Culture Center
WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TN

2024 Report to the Community





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A Look Back at 2024



Bari Beasley
President & CEO

Dear Friends,
Looking back, I'm filled with a sense of accomplishment and gratitude for all that we achieved together. This past year was truly transformative for the Heritage Foundation of Williamson County, and it wouldn't have been possible without the unwavering support and generosity of community members like you.

One of my most cherished memories of the year was witnessing the historic relocation of the Lee-Buckner Rosenwald School to our Franklin Grove Estate & Gardens property! After years of planning and perseverance, the Lee-Buckner School embarked on a historic journey in the early morning hours of February 2, 2024. Seeing everyone come together – staff, board members, Lee-Buckner alumni and their families, and so many members of our community – to celebrate this momentous occasion was truly inspiring. This milestone achievement ensures that this vital piece of African American educational history is safeguarded for future generations.

Just days after that incredible feat, we celebrated the grand opening of the Moore-Morris History and Culture Center! It was thrilling to finally share this incredible resource with the community. Watching families explore the exhibits, students discover our shared history, and people of all ages connect with the past has been an absolute joy.

Of course, no year would be complete without our beloved festivals! Together, we celebrated 40 years of Main Street Festival, as well as welcoming a record number of people to downtown Franklin for Dickens of a Christmas. We're honored to host such cherished traditions that continue to bring our community together. The team is already dreaming up exciting new ways to make our festivals even more creative and interactive in the years

to come – stay tuned!

A core element to the long-term success of our work has always been education, and this year was no exception. Under the leadership of our brilliant Director of Education, Rebekah Rush, we expanded our programs, creating engaging online resources, partnering with schools, and developing exciting new curriculum.

We also made significant strides in our preservation efforts, from reviving our popular Building of the Month tours to engaging the community in hands-on learning through our Dry-Stack stone wall workshops.

These accomplishments are a testament to the hard work and dedication of our entire team, the generosity of our supporters, and the active engagement of our community. You are the heart and soul of the Heritage Foundation of Williamson County, and I am incredibly grateful for your partnership.

As we move into 2025, I am confident that by working together, we can achieve even greater milestones in preserving and sharing the unique heritage and culture in every square mile of Williamson County, Tennessee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bari".

Bari Beasley
President & CEO

2024 Highlights

Lee Buckner Photo Exhibit

The community gathered to hear stories and take in a photo exhibit with former Lee-Buckner students.

- Moore-Morris History and Culture Center Opens
- “History in the Making” Mini documentary released
- DFA Hosts inaugural “Local Love” event for Williamson County shoppers

JANUARY

Sheryl Crow at The Franklin Theatre

Sheryl Crow released her latest album at our iconic theatre.

MARCH



- Heritage Foundation hosts Practical Preservation Cemetery Preservation Workshop

Preservation Month

The Heritage Foundation celebrated the annual Preservation Month with a variety of community-focused initiatives.

MAY



- Pour & Explore launched at HCC
- Preserve Williamson Town Hall: Nolensville
- Ancestors in the Archives: A Genealogy Exploration

FEBRUARY

Rosenwald School Moved

In a remarkable preservation achievement, the Lee-Buckner Rosenwald School is moved to Franklin Grove Estate and Gardens.

- CEO Bari Beasley named to Nashville Post’s “In Charge” list
- Downtown Franklin Association hosts 3rd Annual DFA awards



APRIL

40th Main Street Festival

Main Street Festival reached its milestone 40th year, playing host to nearly 130,000 people over two days.

- Warwick Lecture Series: The History & Legacy of Poynor Chairs
- 4th Annual Summer Educator Institute: Cultivating Conversations

JUNE

Summer Sessions

Students from across Williamson County enjoyed world class music business and theatre instruction.



2024 was a year of community engagement and support. The timeline below is just a snapshot of the numerous events and highlights at the Heritage Foundation of Williamson County and our divisions. We're excited for all that 2025 has for preservation in our county.

Warwick Lecture

Maury County historian JoAnn McClellan shared how the county's education system has evolved since emancipation.



- HCC Featured on Tennessee Crossroads
- Building of the Month: Claiborne Kinnard House
- Practical Preservation: The Craft of Dry Stones

JULY

Stack Stone Wall Workshop

Martin Beavers led a community workshop, educating local on how to restore dry stack stone walls.

- HCC honored as "Best New Museum" in Nashville Scene
- Lee-Buckner Rosenwald School honored as "Best Historic Preservation in Progress" in Nashville Scene
- 39th Annual PumpkinFest

SEPTEMBER

Preservation Symposium

Renowned preservationists explored the theme "Common Ground" as we honored local Preservation Award winners.



- Culmination of "Every Square Mile" annual campaign
- DFA hosts Window Wonderland with Downtown Franklin merchants

NOVEMBER

AUGUST

Spring Hill Town Hall

Residents in Spring Hill met to discuss ongoing preservation efforts in their community and their hopes for the future.



- Building of the Month: Rippa Villa



OCTOBER

51st Heritage Ball

Approximately 800 guests gathered to support and celebrate the work of the Heritage Foundation and to raise funds for future preservation projects.

- DFA Small Business Saturday promotion and Hop and Shop Trolley launch



DECEMBER

Dickens of a Christmas

Over 150,000 people visited Downtown Franklin, setting a two day festival record!

Preservation, Education, & Advocacy

In 2024, the Heritage Foundation of Williamson County deepened its connection with the community by hosting Town Halls, sharing timely preservation insights, and advocating for preservation principles at local government meetings.

The Foundation offered a wide array of community education programs, including the Warwick Lecture Series, Timeless Tales, Summer Educator Institute, Practical Preservation Series, and the inaugural Dry-Stack Stone Walls Workshops. In partnership with Martin Beevers of Old England Rock Walls and the UK's Dry Stone Walling Association, these workshops empowered participants to learn foundational dry stone walling techniques while helping to repair and rebuild the historic dry-stack stone wall at Hunterwood.

A major milestone was achieved on February 2nd, with the successful relocation of the historic Lee-Buckner Rosenwald School to the Franklin Grove Estate & Gardens property. After years of planning and collaboration, this historic school is set to undergo restoration, becoming a permanent monument to education and Black history in our community. Franklin

Grove, an emerging cultural landmark, will offer a timeless and inspiring space where people of all ages can connect with education, art, history, and nature.

During Preservation Month, the Foundation released its fourth annual Sites to Save list, highlighting key preservation priorities like the Pryor Lillie Works, Williamson County cemeteries, and Brentwood's mid-century modern homes. The Foundation also partnered with local communities in Nolensville and Spring Hill to host the first of our Town Hall events focused on promoting smart and well-planned growth.

The seventh annual Preservation Symposium, themed "Common Ground," explored the importance of a variety of approaches to preservation. Featuring speakers like Bonnie Seymour of The Parthenon and Jeneene Blackman of the African American Cultural Alliance, the event celebrated recognized exceptional preservation efforts with the annual Preservation Awards.



"We hung in there, and we'll be able to teach the next generation because we hung in there."

-Maudy Adkinson Jonson on the Lee-Buckner Rosenwald School



Community Engagement



Scan the QR code to watch Dolly Parton and Rachel Parton George's video promoting The Heritage Ball

The Heritage Foundation of Williamson County continued its mission to enhance communities by safeguarding and revitalizing historical and cultural assets. This work resonated deeply, earning the support of donors, volunteers, sponsors, and the broader public. In April, Cynthia Stielow joined the organization as Chief Advancement Officer, leading fundraising efforts across all initiatives.

The 51st Annual Heritage Ball was a celebration to remember. Chaired by Steve and Kaye George, the event honored over half a century of community impact. Guests enjoyed red carpet photo opportunities, live broadcast interviews, and a show-stopping performance by Grammy-winning country music artist Marty Stuart.

Young preservationists played a key role this year, as the Next Gen's Late Party and mixers brought together young professionals to engage with and carry forth the Foundation's mission.

Community involvement was at the heart of our efforts, with residents attending Town Hall meetings, volunteering at festivals, ushering at The Franklin Theatre, and spreading the word about our work. Many also voiced their support for preservation online and at local government meetings, demonstrating a shared commitment to protecting Williamson County's rich heritage.



3115

Total Volunteer Hours in 2024

\$104k

Saved as a result of volunteer engagement

Downtown Franklin Association



The Downtown Franklin Association had a standout year, boasting nearly 200 members and strengthening partnerships with key stakeholders, including building owners, municipal staff, and elected officials. These relationships played a vital role in fostering a thriving business community and ensuring the continued success of downtown Franklin.

Throughout the year, we brought members together through monthly meetings, Mixers, Masterminds, and DFA University sessions—offering valuable opportunities for networking, collaboration, and professional growth. These gatherings helped strengthen connections between businesses and build a shared sense of purpose within the district.

Signature programs and annual traditions kept Main Street lively and welcoming for both businesses and visitors. The Downtown Franklin Awards celebrated outstanding contributions

“We’re so honored to be a part of downtown Franklin. It’s an amazing place to be a new store owner. Thank you to everyone and thank you to the Downtown Franklin Association for everything you do. We very much appreciate it!”

- Kristie Dunnigan, 503 Bloomhouse

to the community, while the Franklin Locals volunteer program engaged residents in supporting downtown initiatives. Seasonal favorites like the Holiday Hop & Shop Trolley, Small Business Saturday, and the Window Wonderland storefront decorating contest brought energy and excitement, reinforcing the district’s charm throughout the year.

Further supporting local businesses, we launched the Retail Strategies Small Business Support program in 2024, offering targeted resources for retailers, restaurants, and property owners while enhancing holiday promotions throughout the district. This initiative underscored our commitment to sustainable economic growth in balance with historic preservation.

Looking ahead, we remain dedicated to maintaining the vitality and character of America’s Favorite Main Street, ensuring downtown Franklin continues to thrive for generations to come.

~200	99%	96k
<i>Downtown Franklin Association Members</i>	<i>Ground Floor Occupancy Rate</i>	<i>Followers across all social platforms</i>

Downtown Festivals

349,496

Total Festival Attendance
2024

Our beloved community festivals had an outstanding year. These events welcomed record-breaking crowds to historic downtown Franklin while also generating a significant economic impact across the region.



“[Dickens of a Christmas is] such an amazing event! I look forward to it every year!”

-Kristie K.



Main Street Festival

presented by First Horizon

Celebrating its 40th anniversary with over 128,000 guests, Main Street Festival delivered arts & crafts, food, entertainment, and interactive themed areas such as PetZone, KidZone, and Spring Street which featured collaborative art projects and installations that offered amazing photo opportunities.



PumpkinFest

presented by Atmos Energy

Autumn-themed games, apple cider, local musicians, and the fan-favorite pet and family costume contests once again had Williamson County showcasing its creativity, friendliness, and even spookiness as we embraced the beauty of fall in Franklin!

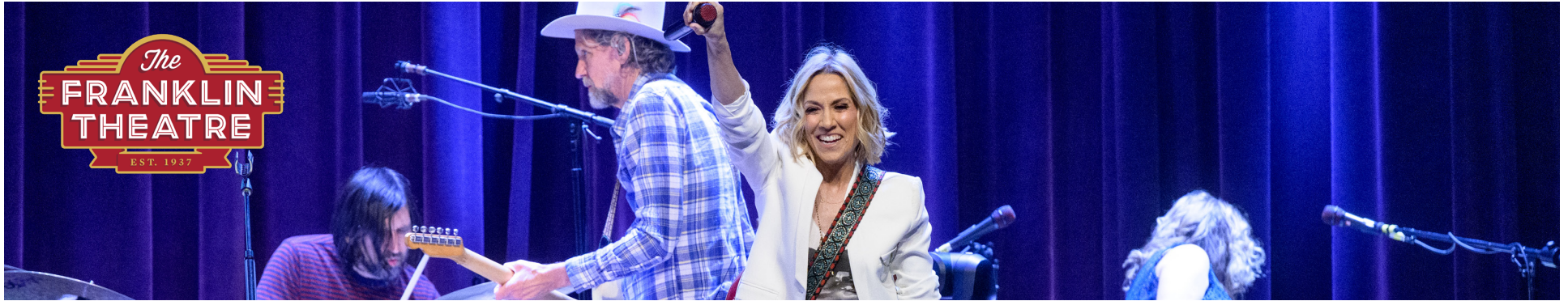


Dickens of a Christmas

presented by Wilson Bank & Trust

Welcoming over 150,000 guests to Downtown Franklin, this **record-breaking** weekend delivered “snow,” Victorian carolers and characters, plenty of musical performances, warm hot chocolate, and ample amounts of holiday shopping opportunities.

The Franklin Theatre



In 2024, The Franklin Theatre continued to shine as Williamson County’s premier entertainment destination. Strategic initiatives and streamlined processes were implemented to further our mission. Our popular holiday season returned with a jolly lineup of shows and movies, generously sponsored by CJ’s Off the Square. During local festivals, we opened our doors to the community, offering free movie screenings, festive cartoons, and engaging tours of our historic venue.

This past year brought new and diverse programming options for the community to enjoy. Our monthly Franklin Theatre Songwriter’s Series continued in its success, hosting some of Nashville’s premier songwriting talents. For the 3rd year in a row, we hosted the Tennessee State Songwriters Week Showcase. In March, legendary artist Sheryl Crow graced our stage for an exclusive album release concert that was broadcast nationally on PBS. We even closed down a section of Main Street and brought the party outdoors!

A few other noteworthy events that took place at the “Jewel of Main Street” in 2024 included John Oates, Mac McAnally, T Bone Burnett, and Charles Esten. Performance-wise, we hosted 383 live events, from international artists to local favorites, and distributed more than 58,682 tickets across our various Jackson®-supported series and other rentals. This incredible lineup of entertainment, along with our commitment to excellence, earned The Franklin Theatre a nomination for an Academy of Country Music Award—an honor that further solidifies our reputation as a world-class venue.

In addition to our wonderful shows and movies, we were able to host students from across Williamson County at our second annual “Summer Sessions” day camp. This four-day, intensive camp allowed local students to learn and receive hands-on experience in the musical theatre and music business world, all within our beautiful theatre.

59k

Tickets Distributed

383

Live Events and Rentals

166

Movie Screenings

51k

Followers across all social platforms

27

Non-Profit Rental Events

\$239k

Raised for other non-profits in rental ticket sales

2024 Franklin Theatre Economic Impact

\$4,674,888

Estimated Overall Economic Impact

97% Are likely to attend next year

58,682 Tickets Sold

Music 79%
Movies 29%
Live Theatre 20%
Comedy 8%
Other 19%

\$1M Shopping

\$2M Food

\$1.2M Hotels

\$374k
Transportation

\$55 Average spending per day-tripper/person

2.2 Overall Group Size

97% Repeat Attendance

89% Franklin Theatre a factor in decision to visit Franklin

87% Shoppers that planned to make purchases

\$371 Overnight guest spending avg.

56% Plan to shop in store in Franklin

7% Stayed overnight while attending event at the theatre

77% Plan to eat at restaurants in Downtown Franklin

3.4 Average events attended at The Franklin Theatre in the past 18 months



“[This was] my first experience with the Theatre. I love the venue and the employees/volunteers were so welcoming. I’m looking forward to many outings there!”

- Anonymous Visitor Survey

Moore-Morris History & Culture Center

Celebrated Grand Opening on Feb. 6 , 2024

In February, we celebrated the grand opening of the Moore-Morris History and Culture Center! This building, located adjacent to our headquarters in downtown Franklin at 108 Bridge Street, has been reimagined to serve as a state-of-the-art immersive experience diving into the history of Middle Tennessee from indigenous people to the modern day. Developed in collaboration with Vanderbilt University and local historians, the Center features engaging exhibits that tell the stories related to Williamson County's social, economic, and cultural history.

Beyond its educational role, the Center is also being utilized as a revenue-generating private event rental space, taking advantage of its character and design. In addition to our many organizational events, we were proud to host 26 rental groups in 2024, including weddings, rehearsal dinners, corporate events, mixers, and more!

The Moore-Morris History and Culture Center will continue to serve as a vital resource for locals and out-of-town guests alike, fostering a deeper understanding of our region's history and inspiring future generations.



The Moore-Morris
History and
Culture Center
WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TN



“The staff was wonderful, knowledgeable, friendly. This is the only museum that enables the visitor to sit down, enjoy the environment and feel ‘at home’ with the history.”

- Anonymous Visitor Survey

Preserving Our Past, Protecting Our Future

Williamson County's history is etched into every square mile, marked by the places, stories, and milestones that define our community's past and shape its future. At the Heritage Foundation of Williamson County, we are dedicated to preserving these "mile markers" of history—landmarks that remind us where we've been and inspire where we're going. From the historic streets of Downtown Franklin to the quiet corners of our rural landscapes, every square mile holds a piece of our shared heritage.

As growth and change continues to shape our landscape, so too does our responsibility to safeguard what makes this place special. Thanks to your support, we are restoring historic buildings, advocating for preservation, and ensuring that the character of Williamson County endures for generations to come. The work of protecting our community and its enduring mile markers is ongoing, but together, we can ensure that every square mile of our community remains a testament to its rich and storied past.

With your support, we can continue this vital work—saving the places that shape our identity and honoring the stories that connect us all. Every contribution brings us closer to securing the future of Williamson County's most cherished landmarks. Join us today in preserving our mile markers for generations to come.

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williamsonheritage.org/donate

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**The Moore-Morris
History and
Culture Center**
WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TN

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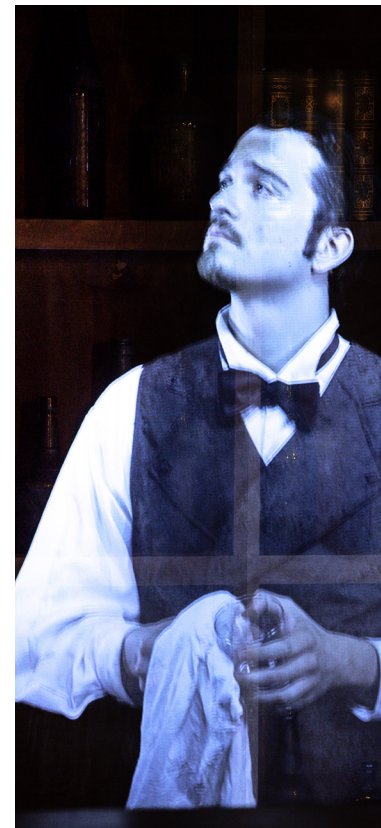
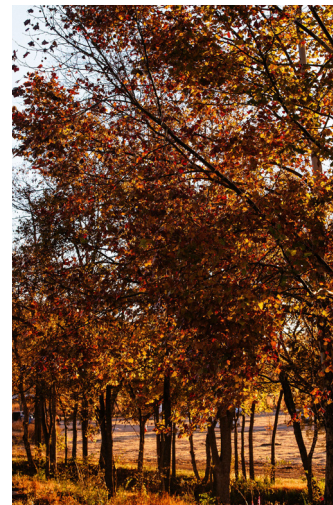
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