

## CORPORATE GIVING

# SHARING SUCCESS

Nearly 90 years ago in a small garage in Savannah, Georgia, Judge Victor Jenkins established the Jefferson Athletic Club for Boys. Inspired by his love of athletics and the belief that boys in his community would benefit from positive, organized activities, Jenkins began the club as a neighborhood boxing program. Throughout his lifetime, the judge expanded the club's athletic offerings and acted as a mentor, counselor and friend to each participant. Today, the re-christened Jenkins Athletic Club (JAC) is a community institution, providing safe, accessible athletic facilities and programs for the youth of Savannah.

Water Utility Management, the largest private water utility company in Georgia and a CoBank customer, has been supporting JAC for years through financial contributions and through the volunteer service of Don Smith, the utility's vice president. Smith, who serves as president of JAC's executive board, practically grew up at the club.

"I started in middle school," said Smith. "I played a lot of basketball and they offered a really high-quality program. I had such a great experience that I came back in my college years as both a

coach and referee. But the club was about more than basketball for me. To this day, some of my best friends are people that I connected with through JAC."

One of those friends is Billy Covington, who has been the club's executive director for more than 27 years.

"I started at JAC when I was 10 years old, and it had a huge impact on my life," said Covington. "The club has always tried to instill responsibility into the kids who participate, and it certainly did that for me. I stayed out of trouble. I was able to start for my high school basketball team and I even got into college on a basketball scholarship. I attribute all of that to my time at JAC, and I could name about 100 other people who have similar stories."

Today JAC is open to boys and girls, ages 5 through 12. During basketball season, the organization serves nearly 500 children per week. In addition to basketball, JAC also offers t-ball, swimming, volleyball, flag football and more. During the summer, the club provides an all-day camp for low-income children.

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While basketball is the club's most popular program, JAC also offers t-ball, swimming, volleyball, flag football and more.

"Most of our summer camp participants are on scholarship, and we never refuse a child because of a parent's inability to pay," said Covington. "We can do that because of the generosity of our members, and the loyal supporters who are dedicated to carrying on Judge Jenkins' legacy."

"JAC is a haven for kids," said Smith. "It teaches them the value of sportsmanship and teamwork and helps them to develop strong values including commitment, perseverance and leadership. Giving every kid a chance is something that is important to me personally and to Water Utility Management. That's why we continue to be such strong supporters of the club."

For the past several years, Water Utility Management has taken advantage of CoBank's Sharing Success program to double its financial contributions to JAC, helping to give the organization a "complete face lift."

"Our partnership with CoBank has not only benefitted our business, but it has also enabled us to increase our support to JAC," said Smith. "JAC is not a huge organization and we run on a very tight budget, so the matching dollars from CoBank have really made a difference. Thanks to our joint contributions, every square inch of the club has been painted and we've been able to do some much needed maintenance and upgrades to the facility."

No matter which causes or organizations they choose to support, Smith encourages all CoBank customers to take full advantage of Sharing Success.

"There are so many people and organizations in need—especially this year," said Smith. "A little bit of money can go a long way and those matching dollars from CoBank make a world of difference. I really want to thank CoBank for making the Sharing Success program available, and for taking the time to learn more about their customers and the programs they support. It's a great reflection on the bank and a demonstration of their commitment to give back to rural America."



The Jenkins Athletic Club has been serving Savannah's youth since 1933 by providing a safe and fun environment to pursue the fundamentals of athletics and life skills.



Patrick Graham, Don Smith, and Billy Covington (left to right) all participated in JAC programs as children. Today, they give back to the club by serving on its executive committee.