We at Downtown Ministries are overwhelmed with God’s blessings upon our ministries. We began the past fiscal year (2017-18) with challenging goals, new programs and exciting projects. **Giving to the organization was up 9.7% last year.** While our budget grew, we realized some savings and ended the year nearly 5% below our budgeted expenses. **Our challenge for this new fiscal year (2018-19) is to increase our monthly donors.** You can see by the graph on the left that monthly donations were 15.4% of our overall revenues. **Our goal is to increase this to 25% so that we can better budget monthly expenses and plan for the future of the organization.** Your gifts, prayers, and service, big or small, will make an impact on those in our community for an eternity.

I would also encourage all to consider the Georgia GOAL tax credit program for 2019, an easy way for Georgia residents to give to Downtown Academy. For more information about Georgia GOAL, visit [https://www.goalscholarship.org/](https://www.goalscholarship.org/). Please feel free to contact me with any questions as well.

Cary H. Rivers  
Director of Development
Dear Friends,

2018 has been a big year for Downtown Ministries, and you have played a significant role in helping us grow.

This year Downtown Academy graduated our first class of 5th graders who have transitioned to other area schools and are building on the foundation they built during their years with us. At the beginning of August, we started a new school year with 68 eager children who are ready to learn and grow.

The Downtown Falcons won city championships in three of the four age groups in which we compete, but more importantly we invested in building consistent relationships with over 300 players, coaches and their families through our football, basketball, cheerleading, golf and other programs. These programs are important avenues for building consistent relationships that provide Christ-centered hope and encouragement for those we serve.

In 2018, we are also preparing to launch new initiatives with Downtown Life, the arm of Downtown Ministries that provides “life-skills” programs that support youth and their families. In addition to sending kids to Camp Grace and improving upon our Lunch Buddy Program for students at Downtown Academy, we are working on new opportunities to provide Bible study and friendship to young mothers and a new job skills program that supports those seeking to enter (or re-enter) the workforce. We are excited about all the support we can offer the youth and families of Athens with these new initiatives through Downtown Life.

2018 has been a big year for me and my family, as well, as I recently retired from my career in university administration and joined Downtown Ministries as Executive Director. My wife Catherine and I have been long-time supporters of Downtown Ministries, and I am thrilled to join this excellent organization that exists to reach Athens youth and their families with the good news of Jesus Christ and to equip them for a life of meaning, purpose and joy. We eagerly anticipate the opportunities and the promise the future holds as we seek to love and serve the city of Athens in the years ahead.

I am also encouraged by the strong support from friends like you in this important ministry. Thank you for all you do to make this possible!

Chris Byrd
Executive Director

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**A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR**

**FALCONS FOOTBALL SCHEDULE**

**AUG 25**
- Athens Christian v. AYO Lions

**SEPT 1**
- Bishop Park v. CC Cowboys

**SEPT 8 & 9**
- Satterfield Field & North Oconee HS v. NO Titans

**SEPT 15**
- Bishop Park v. AYA Trojans

**SEPT 22**
- East Athens Park v. EAYA Dolphins

**SEPT 29**
- Bishop Park v. YP Jaguars

**OCT 6**
- Bishop Park v. SYA Panthers

**OCT 13**
- Lay Park CYA Colts

**OCT 20**
- Holland Park v. HP Ravens

Seniors 10:00 | Juniors 11:30 | Pee Wees 1:00 | Midgets 2:30

We would love for you to join us at football games this fall. This is a great way to support the children and invest in the Athens community. Check our website calendar for updated game information!

**FROM A PARENT’S PERSPECTIVE**

“I love Downtown Academy because it’s more of a family to me. There’s always someone to talk to, a shoulder to cry on, you know, it’s like a family atmosphere. I love the small classrooms. All the teachers are awesome. I love the one on one that you can have with the teachers... Here at Downtown Academy, the teachers are able to touch each child in some type of way and I just love it... Everybody here is helping and loving and caring. What more could I ask for? My daughter loves it and she’s learning... I’ve been blessed in more ways than one by this school. What more can I say? I will fight tooth and nail for this school. This is my school.”

- Shawanda Johnson is a Downtown Academy mother. Her daughter, Janiah, has attended the school and played Falcons sports for 5 years.