



CHAPTER HISTORY

The Hendersonville Area (TN) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated was chartered August 14, 1976, by a group of 36 beautiful and talented Black women who were inducted into the national body by then-Area Director Roberta Basnette, with members residing in both Nashville and Hendersonville. The chapter has made its presence felt in the community and has worked vigorously to incorporate a variety of activities and projects into the five program facets: Services to Youth, The Arts, National Trends and Services, International Trends and Services, and Health and Human Services.

CHARTER MEMBERS

Norish Adams
Chestina Archibald, Co-Organizer
Eunice Bell
Ann Blackshear
Carol Boone
Maria Butler
Yvonne (Y.Y.) Clark
Virginia Crowell
Ruby Delaney
Joan C. Elliott*, Co-Organizer
Ellen Fizer
Loren "L.B." Gaiters

Sandra Grant
Stephanie Griffith
Colette Grimes
Janie Harris
Nadine Hill
Noralyn Hills
Serena Hunter
Rhynette Hurd
Theresa Jackson
Olivia (McKissack) Jeffries*
Mary M. Jones
Vivian Jones*
Jolaine Kelsey

Vanita Lytle-Sherrill
Dolores Mathis
Jacqueline W. Mitchell
Jean Moses*
Delores Pruitt
Harriette Peterson*
Helen P. Smith
Jessie Carney Smith
Irma Stewart*
Stella Tucker
Vesta Wheaton*

**Deceased*

1976-1979

In the Spring of 1976, two young ladies in Nashville met to discuss the need for a cultural revitalization of the city's African American community and the formation of an unbreakable bond for a group of seriously committed women. The Hendersonville Area Chapter of The Links, Inc. held its initial meeting on August 14, 1976, with its founders/organizers, Joan C. Elliott and Chestina Archibald. There were 36 charter members inducted by Area Director link Roberta Basnette. The Chapter soon made its presence felt in the community as its members worked vigorously to incorporate a variety of activities and projects into the four program facets of the National body-The Arts, National Trends, International Trends and Services to Youth.

Support of local charities has been a primary focus of the chapter. Fisk University, Meharry Medical College and Tennessee State University, all HBCUs, have been consistently among the recipients of the chapter's fundraising efforts. In February 1977, in conjunction with the Tennessee Performing Arts Foundation, the chapter brought the musical "Fat Tuesday" and "All That Jazz" to Nashville. The original jazz musicians from Preservation HACL joined Arthur HACL's Afro-American Ballet Company to present a dazzling and culturally oriented production. The program gave a panoramic view of Black heritage from the beginning of the jazz band in New Orleans to modern Black ballet. The community responded positively to the show enabling the chapter to organize larger projects for greater benefit to the community.

With grants ranging from \$500 to \$20,000 awarded by the U.S. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, The Tennessee Humanities Council, the Southern Federation for the Arts and the Tennessee Commission for the arts, the chapter was able to sponsor several public programs. The grant funded by the U.S. Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs was used for an international symposium. Through this grant the chapter presented Madame N'Dye Marie Fall of Senegal. Also, a series of public seminars entitled "A Precarious Balance: Marriage and Career, Progress and Regression, Freedom and Authority" was funded by the Tennessee Committee for the Humanities. In 1977 with this \$20,000 grant, the National Trends and Services Facet led discussions on public policy issues through a humanistic approach in small urban towns of Middle Tennessee.

On March 27, 1977, the chapter presented poet, author and teacher Harriette Bias Allen at a book party. Allen read poems from her book, "Genesis." Her themes included love, marriage, loneliness, motherhood and Blackness, as she interpreted the human predicament with sensitivity and poignancy.

Also, that year, through the chapter's efforts, 50 paperbound books by Black writers were purchased and presented to the "Reading and Rap Program," at the Nashville Public Library. The project was sponsored by the Services to Youth Facet.

As a group consistently committed to issues affecting African Americans and the pursuit of human rights, the chapter joined the NAACP as Life Members and supported the local Nashville branch by donating needed office supplies.

By 1978 the chapter became well-recognized within the Nashville community for its Arts programming. The chapter gained recognition for its "theater brunch" and held the first of many brunches in the newly built Opryland Hotel. The huge crowd reveled in the presentation of "A Kaleidoscope of Skits, Poems and Sounds" brought to life by Pamela Poitier (daughter of Sidney Poitier) and local actress, Diane Dixon. The afternoon netted \$4,000, which was donated to the United Negro College Fund. This success was quickly followed with a performance by Oprah Winfrey (before she became an icon) and Sweet Honey in the Rock, a Washington-based female quartet. Proceeds from the brunch provided \$3,000 in scholarships for students at Tennessee State University and Fisk University.

1980-1989

To continue in this artistic vein, the chapter secured funding from the Southern Federation for the Arts and The Tennessee Commission for the Arts to bring a touring Broadway play

to Nashville. In 1980, Nevis Mountain Dew which was named one of the 10 best plays of the New York season in 1978 was the chapter's fundraiser for not only Tennessee State and Fisk Universities, but Meharry Medical College as well. Although these presentations were successful, the chapter expanded its efforts to include "applause parties" for renowned artists such as piano virtuoso Andre' Watts, soprano Marian Moore and Symphony Maestro Kenneth Schermerhorn following their performance of "Carmina Burana."

By 1981, the chapter had begun to provide programs for the elderly who lived in the Kelly Miller Smith Towers, joining them for parties at Christmas and Valentine's Day. In that same year, as a fundraiser, the chapter sponsored the touring production of the poignant drama "Home," a folk play presented by the Negro Ensemble Company, starring a young, unknown actor by the name of Samuel L. Jackson.

In 1982, the International Trends and Services Facet presented Delores Ashley Harris, an expert in traditional African textiles, and "Roots" author Alex Haley as he toured the U.S. to raise funds for the African Waterwells Project. Further, the chapter hosted an exhibition of the works of folk sculptor Will Edmondson, a presentation of the Clive Thompson Dance company, an evening of song and dance with Harlem Nocturne, a concert by the Ramsey Lewis Trio, and a performance by the Chinese Opera Troupe allowed the chapter to finish out the 1980's in grand style focusing on the Arts to raise and distribute over \$10,000 in scholarships and donations.

In 1986, following the chapter's commitment to meet the national interest of The Links, Inc. toward an Umbrella approach, the membership focused on Project LEAD - a program aimed at issues of alcohol and substance abuse - and joined forces with the Nashville Center for Black Family Life and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation. A joint effort was made with the Nashville and Music City chapters of the Links to secure funds for implementation of such programs. The chapter's participation in another local program, Project PENCIL (Public Education Nashville Citizens Involved in Leadership) brought a strengthening of the relationship between community and the public schools and led to the adoption of Highland Heights middle School by the chapter. Unity with the other local Links chapters led to an outstanding National Assembly co-hosted by all three chapters in the city.

Awards received this decade included a Certificate of Service in the National Arts Program presented "In recognition of unselfish leadership and service to Improving the Quality of life" July 8th, 1984; the Nashville Urban League's Volunteer Award March 7, 1986, for "exemplary volunteer service and participation in the Urban League's community programs".

1990-1999

In the 1990's, chapter programs again focused on the arts. In 1991, the chapter supported Fisk University's art galleries and became the first Africa American organization in Nashville to restore a work of art for the university spearheading support for the restoration of other historically significant works of art housed at Fisk University. Through these efforts, other groups joined in the drive to preserve this part of African American history.

By 1992, the chapter focused internationally on the Jamaican project "Hands across the Water," a workshop for teachers in different schools in St. Mary's Province and provided educational materials and equipment for teachers. The chapter also adopted the National Children's Home in Kingston, Jamaica providing reading materials, clothing, and appliances to teachers and families and sponsoring one child who showed academic excellence.

Following up on a long-term commitment to the Smithsonian Institution's African American Museum Project, seminars were hosted in 1993 and 1994 featuring museum specialist Claudine Brown and Black photography historian Deborah Willis. The following year, the chapter collaborated with the Junior League in the establishment of a Women's Center at Meharry Hubbard Hospital. That same year, a luncheon was held to honor 15 former players of the Negro Baseball League, several of whom had played on the Nashville Elite Giants team. Stirred by the affair, the former baseball players said they had never been so formally honored before.

Beginning in 1999, the Hendersonville Area (TN) Links chose a service project that would enrich student learning experiences by partnering with the Smithson-Craighead Academy (SCA) and its companion after-school program - Project Reflect Education Program (PREP). At the inception of this project, SCA was Nashville's first charter school and the only elementary charter school in the city. The school evolved from the dream of an African American Catholic nun, Sister Sandra Smithson, and her sister, Mrs. Mary Craighead, who had been a career educator in Nashville Metropolitan Public Schools. These programs were incorporated to address the needs of minority and poor populations who had not been academically successful in other Nashville public schools by providing a unique learning environment that encouraged academic success.

PREP and SCA became the chapter's primary focus for their Umbrella program. The Services to Youth Facet took the lead in providing activities for the Academy's student body. Members planned and organized holiday celebrations and student programs to enrich their learning experiences.

The chapter's impactful work earned prestigious accolades, including the Director's Award on June 30, 1994, for "outstanding contributions to the arts"; and the National Eye Health Education Program's Outstanding Achievement Award in 1998 for advancing eye and vision research for the benefit of all Americans.

2000-2009

During the 2000s, the HAC continued its commitment to arts, education and international service. The chapter expanded its support for Smithson-Craighead Academy and Project Reflect Education Program through enrichment programs and fundraisers.

In April 2001, the Arts facet took the lead in the chapter's fundraising efforts to support its selected charities. "A Day in the Arts," a spring arts festival, was initiated displaying the talents of local artists and netting thousands of dollars for charity. In December, the chapter celebrated its 25th Anniversary with a White Rose Luncheon highlighting its achievements and honoring the founders of Project Reflect, Sister Sandra Smithson and Mrs. Mary Craighead.

In 2002, programming and financial support of PREP continued with a focus on the

Young Emerging Scholars program. During that summer, the HAC Chapter members directed a six-week summer program that exposed the children to drama, music, art and technology. Another "Day in the Arts" event in 2003 provided the chapter with more scholarship funds cementing its connection with Arts events in the community.

The most ambitious effort to raise funds came in 2005 with the presentation to the Nashville community of "Links to Legends", a benefit performance of the National Tour of Ailey II of the Alvin Ailey Dance Troupe promoted by the chapter and performed at the historic Ryman Auditorium. This was a high-energy presentation choreographed by famous dance legend Judith Jamison. The chapter was able to complete its \$50,000 pledge to PREP due to the generosity of its supporters. This effort was followed by the Hendersonville Area (TN) Chapter's premiere branded event, "Links to Legends II," a fundraiser featuring Grammy Award-winning jazz musician Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in March 2005. The event was held at the state-of-the-art Schermerhorn Symphony Center and coincided with the chapter's 30th anniversary of charitable and educational service to the community. A smaller fundraising effort consisted of the co-sponsorship of the exhibit entitled "Women of a New Tribe" with The Tennessee Tribune newspaper. This was a photographic tribute to the beauty and accomplishments of Black women. The organizer and artist of the exhibit was Jerry Taliaferro of North Carolina, with proceeds benefiting Smithson Craighead Academy and the Anthony J. Cebrun Journalism Center.

Programmatically, this decade also featured many activities directed toward the chapter's Umbrella project. The National Trends and Services facet took the lead in sponsoring annual fall festivals for the children of SCA with contributions from all four facets. There were activities such as pumpkin and mask decorating contests, games, fire prevention and safety taught by the Nashville Fire Department, African storytelling and an introduction to the renowned South American artist Jorge Yancey who exposed the children to South American culture through art. During these festivals, seminars were held for the parents of students, including HIV prevention, stroke prevention, cancer prevention and dress-for-success presentations.

Since 2004 the chapter has sponsored yearly promotion exercises for the fourth-grade class of SCA students moving on to middle school. The purpose of the program is to highlight student achievements and allows the students to realize that each milestone of success in their educational journey is significant and should be celebrated. The event is held at the Tennessee State University Avon Williams Campus and has featured prominent members of the Nashville community as keynote speakers to encourage the children through words of inspiration. Achievement awards are presented to the top performing students, and the ceremony is followed by a reception for the school community and parents.

At The Links, Incorporated's Central Area Conference held in 2007, the chapter's Umbrella program won the first place "Program Award" in recognition of programming excellence.

The chapter has consistently encouraged the love of reading and has actively participated in The National Education Association's "Read Across America" initiative. In March 2007, chapter members read to students grades K-4th and made book donations, bookmarks and certificates to each child. About 100 age-appropriate books were donated to the school. In March 2009, the HAC Links not only read to the students, but set up props that demonstrated and supported the themes of the stories read to enhance literacy engagement. In addition, facet members engaged the students in the activity by allowing the children to assist with reading the stories.

Over the course of this Umbrella project, and with the leadership of the International Trends and Services facet, the chapter has been involved in a collaborative partnership with the Interdenominational Services Organization of America, Inc. (ISOA). With ISOA, the chapter hosted career fairs at SCA featuring corporate executives, artists, education professionals, law enforcement officials, journalists and entrepreneurs. Field trips were organized for SCA students to visit local universities where the students were able to interact with and ask college students questions.

In addition, the chapter embarked on an ambitious long-term endeavor designed to provide entrepreneurial support to women of color in less developed regions of the world. The support included the establishment of a microloan program for women in Jamaica through a collaborative relationship with the Fergus Simpson Foundation there. A strong working relationship was developed with Vanderbilt University's Institute for Global Health and the programs instituted in Jamaica were presented during a major global health summit held in 2009. Also, during this year, a working relationship was established with Dr. Moses Akpanudo, a native of Nigeria, to determine how the chapter could assist girls in 7th -12th grade attending a school he established in the village of Obong Ntak. Because girls in less developed regions of the world are often denied access to education if they do not have appropriate school attire, uniforms for 60 girls were purchased for the 2009-2010 school year.

2010–2019

The HAC Links continued to promote literacy, the arts, health awareness and civic engagement through the 2010s. In May 2010, "The Art of Cooking" class was held in the SCA cafeteria and was designed to teach children to use kitchen utensils safely, learn about the nutritional value of ingredients used, experience through taste, different international dishes, and how to use a simple food preparation vocabulary. In November 2010, 24 students from SCA were treated to a visit at the Cheekwood Botanical Gardens to experience the Chihuly glass arts exhibit. The students also viewed a portion of the film, "Hot Shop", which showed how Chihuly and members of his team designed and made the glass objects that were on display. The students also had the opportunity to enjoy the works of art featured in Cheekwood's permanent collection.

In keeping with the objective that reading is fundamental to children's growth, the chapter participated in "Read Me Week" in February 2011. The HAC Links had members of the Arts facet read books covering themes relevant to the real-world experiences of the children. The chapter further continued to support the Obong Ntak village school in Nigeria with yearly financial donations, and assisted students of SCA with their writing skills by introducing a pen pal program with the children of the village school in Nigeria, fostering cross-cultural connections.

To expand student's aspirations, the chapter sponsored an annual Black Heritage College Tour which included stops at Fisk University and Tennessee State University. The chapter also continued to support and co-sponsor the Annual BEEM (Business Exchange for the Entrepreneurially Minded) Career Fair.

Because there are many health issues that disproportionately affect the African American

community, the chapter partnered with Meharry Medical College's Women Center to raise awareness in the African American community. Organ donation in the African American community is one such issue. Research has shown that as a group, African Americans have a greater need for organ and tissue transplants due to the number and nature of the medical conditions experienced. Of the 90,000 persons awaiting transplants, 27% of these are African American; yet only 12% of donors come from the Black community. Sadly, 25% of persons who die each year awaiting transplants are African American. In support of The Links, Incorporated's signature program "Linkages to Life," the HAC Links sponsored an educational forum during an afternoon luncheon for 200 attendees highlighting the need for and importance of Black organ, tissue and bone marrow donors. Link Robin Williams, M.D., served as the forum facilitator and outlined the importance of the topic. Mr. Kenneth Walton from Tennessee Donor Services presented a video further explaining the facts surrounding organ/tissue donation. Cecil W. Cone II, M.D., associate professor in the Department of Pathology at Meharry Medical College, served as the keynote speaker. Organ recipients and their families shared what it meant for them to have a donor provide them or their loved one with the gift of life. After a question-and-answer period, audience members were given packets with materials explaining organ donation and a donor registration card. Both the Parthenon (TN) and the Music City (TN) Chapters of The Links, Incorporated sponsored tables at the luncheon.

In 2010, the chapter also partnered with Meharry Medical College and the Susan G. Kamen Foundation to present a workshop to 250 members of the Nashville community on breast cancer awareness. In response to the obesity epidemic, the chapter has worked harder to teach the children of SCA how to make healthier lifestyle choices especially regarding nutrition and exercise.

Other community partnerships included participation by members in October 2011 with the Habitat for Humanity's Women's Build. The HAC continues its tradition of fundraising through support of the arts. In November 2011, the chapter raised funds for charity by sponsoring 300 attendees at the Broadway Production of "Memphis." Members and event attendees were encouraged to share photography depicting the life of family and friends in the 50s and 60s. Photographs of newborns, weddings, graduations and family life were shared. From these memories, renowned artist and Connecting link Ted Jones captured the universal experiences of African Americans during post war America in a colorful and inspiring repose of copper and photography. After 37 years of service, the Hendersonville Area Chapter of the links, Inc. has made a significant contribution to the local, national and international communities as it discharges its obligation to the National body. Going forward, the chapter is continuing to design programs to close the achievement gap of African American children and thereby improve the quality of life for all members of the Nashville community.

In December 2011, SCA students participated in a fun and healthy Christmas party where a local dance instructor taught them how to exercise via line dancing. In 2012, the chapter began its annual Chew and Move program, under the leadership of the Health and Human Services facet. The interactive program, which promotes healthy eating and exercise, attracts children from multiple schools across the community.

The year 2012 was also an important year nationally due to large groups of people who were at risk of disenfranchisement. The chapter focused on strengthening its civic engagement efforts by organizing and participating in local voter registration drives across churches, neighborhoods and schools to combat voter disenfranchisement under new voter ID laws.

Other community partnerships included participation by members with the Habitat for Humanity's Women's Build in October 2011. The Hendersonville Area (TN) Links continued its tradition of fundraising through support of the arts, in November 2011, when the chapter raised funds for charity by sponsoring 300 attendees at the Broadway production of "Memphis." Members and event attendees were encouraged to share photography depicting the life of family and friends in the 1950s and 1960s. Photographs of newborns, weddings, graduations and family life were shared. From these memories, renowned artist and Connecting Link Ted Jones captured the universal experiences of African Americans during post-war America in a colorful and inspiring repose of copper and photography.

In 2015, a dedicated emphasis was placed on enhancing the chapter's technology utilization as well as branding and marketing enhancements with investments in branded banners, table linen and other items. The chapter was highly engaged in community needs and contributed to the \$15,000 that the National arm of The Links, Incorporated provided for purchasing water filters for families impacted by the water crisis in Flint, Michigan. Also, at the 2015 Central Area Conference held in Cincinnati, Ohio, the chapter won two awards.

The chapter started its newest Umbrella project operating a weekly educational outreach program with Robert Churchwell Museum Magnet Elementary School's PNA after-school program designed to enhance academic achievement and technology proficiency of K-4 youth. Professionals serve as speakers to introduce students to various career options. The chapter started a Coding Camp with the program in 2018.

Also, in 2015, the chapter hosted another successful "Links to Legends" fundraiser elevating the arts through the production of *Motown* held at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. The event attracted more than 400 attendees and featured a networking reception, along with the auction of an exclusive art design commemorating the occasion.

The following year, in 2016, the chapter celebrated its 40th anniversary. On November 12, 2016, the chapter hosted its "40th Anniversary Celebration Luncheon" at the Sheraton Nashville Downtown Hotel. The 19th Central Area Director, Link Glenda Masingale Manson, shared a letter of congratulations, and the Reverend Chestina Archibald, one of the chapter's founding charter members, brought words of inspiration at the event. Additionally, the chapter highlighted its work over the years with Smithson-Craighead Academy and Robert Churchwell Museum Magnet Elementary School, as well as presented a salute to charter members and recognition of alumnae members. A special toast to 40 years was extended by charter member, Link Eunice L. Bell. A total of \$27,000 was raised and \$10,000 was presented to Tennessee State University for the Hendersonville Area (TN) Chapter's Joan Elliott Scholarship Endowment.

The HAC Links were selected by the National arm to be among a handful of chapters to pilot the new Young Women's Empowerment Institute (YWEI), a program focused on African America women who were first-generation, first-time freshmen in college. The Services to Youth facet worked with students at Fisk University to prepare them for success in college and in their careers.

From 2017-2019, much was accomplished within membership, programs, service and philanthropic efforts. Members continued to give time to service in numerous ways and participated in national observances around breast cancer awareness, supporting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), heart health, legislative issues and other efforts. There was also a strong focus on friendship activities to initiate bonding within the sisterhood

including holiday celebrations, quarterly Alumna luncheons, planning retreats, worship services, and the first-ever Blues, Jazz and Friendship event held at B.B. King's Blues Club in downtown Nashville.

In 2017, led by the Membership Committee, the chapter also began hosting New Year Sip events for members to celebrate friendship by ringing in the New Year together. The Sips are designed as a party with a purpose and includes guest speakers, with past topics such as HIV/AIDS awareness and supporting women in the military, along with service efforts that have included donations of toiletries and supplies to local nonprofits.

In 2018, the chapter's International Trends and Services Facet, for the first time, hosted a cultural exchange with Latina women to discuss the common challenges among Black and brown women. Also, through the National Trends and Services facet, the chapter partnered with Tennessee State University to host a forum for students interested in legal careers and invited in a speaker to talk to first-year students about making smart choices. Additionally, the chapter donated more than 300 canned goods to the Second Harvest Food Bank to support families in need.

In 2018, the chapter elevated mental health discussions as a priority focus. The first-ever Mental Health luncheon was hosted by the HAC Links during Friendship Month on November 3, 2018, at the University Club of Nashville. The event proved successful with more than 100 people in attendance. Led by the National Trends and Services Facet, Dr. Angela Franklin, president of Des Moines University and a mental health expert, served as the keynote speaker. The event also featured a riveting panel discussion with mental health professionals who shared their expertise around the impact of stress, depression and anxiety and the importance of maintaining a healthy mind, body and spirit. The panel was comprised of HAC Link members: Karen Briggs, M.D. and Janice Y. Walker, Ph.D., along with other guest panelists Ms. Patrice Grant, Ed.S., Ms. Rosemary Jeffries, Ph.D., and Link Sheila Peters, Ph.D. (Parthenon (TN) Chapter).

Among the activities that were new for the Health and Human Services face included participation in the Impressions Day, an event to encourage high school and college students to consider careers in the dental profession. The chapter maintained its involvement with Donor Awareness by teaming up with the other Nashville Cluster chapters to host a Donor Awareness seminar.

In 2019, the Hendersonville Area (TN) Chapter served as one of the host chapters for the 45th Central Area Conference, held July 31-Aug. 4, at Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee. Several chapter members served as committee chairs and co-chairs on the various planning committees to execute one of the Central Area's most successful conferences. The conference hosted Link members from the Central Area's 15 states. During the 45th Central Area Conference, the chapter won several awards for programming, including the "Best Practice Program Award," "Recognition of Records and History," and the "Best Practice Collaboration Award." The conference was hailed by many members as "one of the best Central Area Conferences" matching the high-level organization and excellent presentation experienced at Links National Assembly events.

On November 9, 2019, the chapter hosted its annual Friendship Luncheon at Loews Vanderbilt Hotel. The event attracted dozens of women. As part of the celebration, chapter members donated several large bins of exercise equipment, such as yoga mats, dumbbells and stretch

bands, to benefit women receiving mental health and rehabilitation services at the Lloyd C. Elam Mental Health Center at Meharry Medical College.

2020-Current

In 2020, the HAC Links adapted to new challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring that health advocacy, education, and civic engagement remained at the forefront of its mission. The Health and Human Services (HHS) Facet led efforts to provide accurate information on COVID-19, hosting virtual webinars on dental health, cardiovascular disease, diabetes management, and vaccine awareness, reaching more than 70 participants. The chapter also provided personal protective equipment (PPE) to frontline workers at Nashville General Hospital and Meharry Medical College, as well as to local HBCUs and elementary schools.

To combat pandemic-related learning loss, HAC launched *Links Learning and Enhanced Academic Program (LEAP)*, aimed at improving academic performance in underserved K-5 students. In collaboration with Metro Nashville Public Schools, the chapter supplements curricula through Saturday enrichment sessions and a summer *Learning Loss Academy*. These programs enhance literacy, mathematics, and STEM skills while fostering student confidence and self-esteem. HAC continues to expand stakeholder involvement to further invest in academic and technological proficiency for these students.

In 2020, the chapter took over hosting responsibilities for the annual Links Day at the Capitol, an activity spearheaded through the National Trends and Services facet and rotates between the Nashville Area Cluster chapters every two years. Additionally, after the devastating tornadoes that hit Nashville on March 3, 2020, the four chapters collaborated to form a Steering Committee designed to help organize and distribute supplies donated by Link members across the country, as well as local donations.

HAC also launched *Inspire and Empower*, a mentorship initiative aimed at students from elementary school through college. Aligned with the *LINKED-UP* framework (Lead, Influence, Nurture, Kudos, Educate, Discover, Uplift), the program provides mentorship, career exposure, and academic support to help students set and achieve goals. By addressing barriers such as limited resources and low self-esteem, *Inspire and Empower* fosters resilience and success in disadvantaged youth.

HAC played a key role in the 2020 election cycle, participating in voter registration drives across churches, schools, and neighborhoods to combat disenfranchisement under new voter ID laws. Members also joined Habitat for Humanity's *Women's Build*, contributing to affordable housing efforts.

In 2021, due to COVID restriction, the chapter pivoted hosting the fourth series of its popular "Links to Legends" fundraisers in a virtual format. The event featured guest entertainment and performances from Kirk Whalum and Ruby Camille. Highlights of the chapter's service

programming were also shared, along with acknowledgement of sponsors and donors. More than \$30,000 was raised in this first-ever virtual space.

In 2021, the Health and Human Services facet began its highly-successful virtual Women's Health Series – "Linking Together for Wellness." This program is free and open to the public and features health and medical experts in several fields sharing important information relative to helping to educate Black women on how to live healthier lives and how to manage conversations with health providers and finding the best care. Topics have included discussions around diabetes, heart health, caregiving, domestic violence, fibroids, vaginal bleeding and self-care, to name a few.

In 2024, a planning committee comprised of seven former presidents of the chapter was put in place to plan and execute the chapter's 50th anniversary, which will take place Aug. 15, 2026.

In 2025, the chapter embarked on addressing five opportunity areas identified based on chapter survey feedback. Subcommittees were formed to review the areas and to bring back feedback and/or recommendations to the chapter with the overall goal to align the action items with the chapter's strategic plan, and have corresponding committees and facets incorporate these action items into their current strategies.

After 49 years of service, the Hendersonville Area (TN) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated has continued to make significant contributions to the local, national and international communities as it discharges its obligation to the National body. Moving forward, the chapter is continuing to design programs to close the achievement gap of African American children and, thereby, improve the quality of life for all members of the Nashville community.

Twenty-three (23) presidents have guided the chapter's direction beginning with its founding president Chestina Archibald, followed by Norish Adams, Joan Elliot, Jacqueline Mitchell, Jessie Carney Smith, Vesta Wheaton, Julie Williams, Margaret Turner, Karan Howard, Stephanie Perry, Shelia Hill-Thomas, Cynthia Turner-Graham, Patricia Turner, Carol Lawson, Amber Gooding, Anica Howard, Julie Williams (2nd term), Kristi Faulkner, Gina Gunn, Michelle Viera, K. Dawn Rutledge, Valencia Price, and Leah Dupree Love.

