USA HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

2026 Impact Report

Transforming Medicine *Together*





$4,067,854

RAISED TO SUPPORT CLINICAL PROGRAMS, RESEARCH, ACCESS TO CARE, AND MEDICAL EDUCATION

OCTOBER 1, 2025 - AUGUST 31, 2026

Dear Friends,

One of the greatest privileges of this role is hearing from the patients and families we serve. They share stories of birthdays they weren't sure they'd celebrate, first days of school they didn't know they'd see, and everyday moments that now mean so much more.

Those conversations remind me why our work matters.

As a proud University of South Alabama Jaguar, it's an honor to lead the upper Gulf Coast's only academic health system. Every day, I'm reminded that our mission isn't measured by numbers — it's measured by people, their stories, and the lives we have the privilege to impact.

This year, our new ECMO program at USA Health Providence Hospital is giving patients facing heart and lung failure a second chance without ever leaving home. At the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine, fourth-year student Nia is preparing to graduate, ready to care for the same communities that helped shape her.

Those stories aren't exceptions. They happen across USA Health. It's our mobile health team bringing care directly to students at a local high school so they can visit a doctor without missing class. It's the researchers and clinicians at the Mitchell Cancer Institute working side by side to turn today's discoveries into tomorrow's treatments.

Throughout these pages, you'll meet patients, caregivers, students, researchers, and supporters who make this mission possible. Scan the QR codes along the way to hear their stories in their own words.

None of this happens without you. Your generosity strengthens the people, programs, and innovations transforming healthcare across our region. More importantly, it creates hope for our patients, our families, and our communities.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for partnering with us as we build a healthier future together.

With gratitude,

Natalie Fox, D.N.P.
Chief Executive Officer, USA Health
University of South Alabama

CLOSER TO HOME

A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND PROGRAM MEANS THE REGION'S SICKEST PATIENTS CAN STAY IN MOBILE FOR TREATMENT

>> Watch Darrian Rester talk about her work as a nurse in the ECMO unit and how this technology is saving lives.



The ECMO team works to care for a patient at Providence Hospital.

DARRIAN RESTER was born to be a nurse. That calling carried her through the University of South Alabama College of Nursing's accelerated program and into a decade at the bedside. She spent the last several years in the critical care unit.

Earlier this year, physicians approached Darrian directly, asking her to help launch something new: an ECMO program at USA Health Providence Hospital – the first of its kind in southwest Alabama. ECMO uses a machine to work as a patient's heart or lungs, buying critically ill patients time to heal. She said yes immediately.

Before the program existed, patients needing ECMO were sent to Pensacola, Birmingham or New Orleans. That's if a bed could even be found. Darrian remembers physicians calling hospitals directly while families waited and hoped, only to learn no bed was available.

"We'd cry with them," she says. Now, the program treats patients in-house and accepts transfers from other regional hospitals, becoming exactly the resource southwest Alabama never had.

> "I want to be there when people are at their most vulnerable and make a difference any way I can."
>
> —DARRIAN RESTER

The program is already outpacing its own projections, treating more patients this year than expected. She says that donor support is helping it keep up with that growing need.

Ask Darrian what drives her, though, and it's not the region's first-of-its-kind technology. "I want to be there when people are at their most vulnerable and make a difference any way I can."



Comfort Amid

A NEW MOTHER'S UNEXPECTED HEALTH JOURNEY, MET WITH COMPASSION AT EVERY STEP

Kat Simmons cherishes every moment with her son, Leo. Both are healthy and thriving, thanks to specialized care at USA Health.



Crisis

"It's truly the small things this community of healthcare workers provide that make all the difference in the patient care experience."

—KAT SIMMONS

"I HAD A PERFECT PREGNANCY, until I didn't," Kat Simmons says. At 30 weeks, a gallstone sent her into surgery. Days later came a preeclampsia diagnosis, already turning dangerous. By 32 weeks, her blood pressure spiked so high, doctors induced her immediately.

Her son, Leo, arrived at 3 pounds, 5 ounces, needing the region's only Level 3 NICU at USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital. Kat needed something else: hours after delivery, her liver ruptured, a complication doctors called one in a million. Interventional radiologists at USA Health University Hospital stopped the bleeding, then a cardiovascular and thoracic surgeon treated a second complication. She spent the next several days in its ICU.

Two patients. Two hospitals. Overlapping crises. All under the same health system.

Small acts of care mattered: a nurse who let her shower and cry before an induction she hadn't planned for; her day-shift nurse, who barely left her side for hours, helping her move through labor exactly the way she wanted; ICU nurses who sat and held her hand. None of it was required. All of it gave her control, comfort and peace amid the unknown.

Days later, nurses carried Leo to Kat's room. The instant he touched her chest, both their vital signs, unstable for days, settled within a minute. "It's a testament," Kat says, "to how important it is to be with your baby."

Between them, Kat and Leo needed nearly every kind of specialized care this region has to offer — high-risk obstetrics, a Level 3 NICU, interventional radiology, critical care. They found every bit of it without leaving home.

>> Watch Kat Simmons talk about her patient experience at USA Health and how small touches made all the difference.

HEALTHCAR
Hits the Road

A TRAVELING HEALTH CLINIC MEETS STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE

AT LEFLORE MAGNET HIGH SCHOOL IN MOBILE, students were showing up to class battling untreated health problems that limited their ability to learn. Principal Dr. Antonio Williams knew the problem wasn't a lack of healthcare nearby — it was access to it. Cost, time and transportation stood in the way, and so did a general discomfort some students feel about seeking medical care at all.

A few years ago, Williams brought his concern to USA Health. Today, a mobile health unit parks at LeFlore one day a week, offering the same care as any USA Health clinic: well checks, physicals, sick visits, labs and prescriptions. No student is turned away.

The clinic does more than treat what ails a student. Its weekly presence has sparked something else, too: curiosity. Students ask why the unit is there and what it does. These are questions Williams says are slowly building a culture where health matters, one where kids take an active role in their own health and see themselves reflected in the people caring for them.

It's working. Chronic absenteeism at LeFlore has been cut by more than half in two years, a shift Williams credits partly to campus healthcare. The model expanded into Saraland's school district in September, and Dr. Williams hopes more Mobile County schools will follow.

"I don't think you can put a dollar tag on it," Williams says. "We're really changing lives." For USA Health, that's the promise of community outreach: forming real partnerships that build healthier communities, one neighborhood at a time.

>> Watch Principal Antonio Williams talk about how a traveling health clinic is changing life for students at LeFlore High School and how donor support is helping bring it to even more students.



Principal Antonio Williams stands outside the mobile health clinic, where chronic absenteeism has been cut by more than half in two years.

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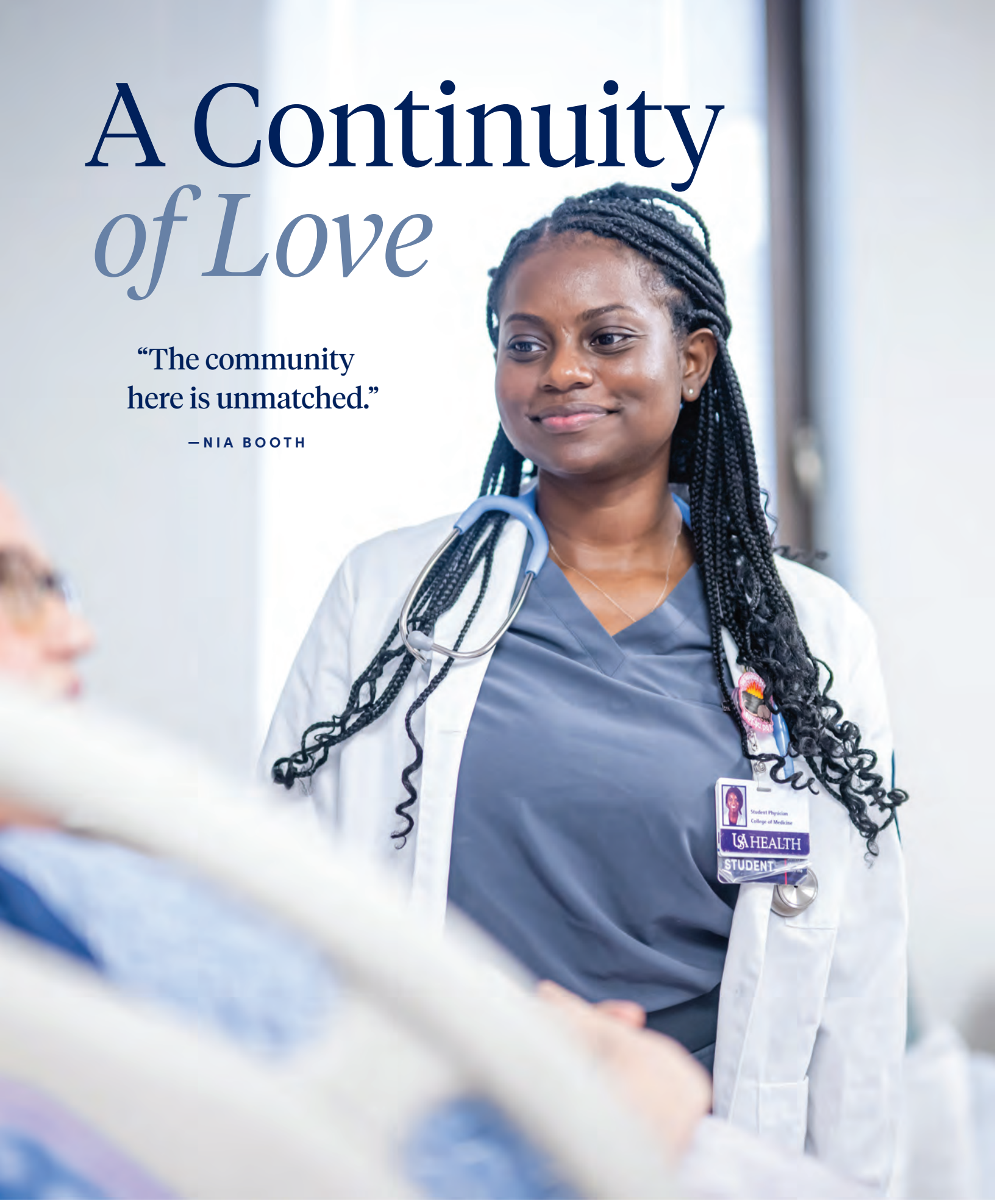
"We're reducing the stress on our families, making sure their kids can succeed. I don't think you can put a dollar tag on that."

—DR. ANTONIO WILLIAMS

A Continuity *of Love*

"The community here is unmatched."

—NIA BOOTH





NIA BOOTH'S PATH THROUGH MEDICAL SCHOOL: BUILT BY MENTORSHIP, SUSTAINED BY SCHOLARSHIP

NIA BOOTH GREW UP A MILITARY KID, moving so often she jokes she can't quite name a hometown. But it was watching her mother navigate complicated medical care, often without the knowledge to ask the right questions, that first pointed her toward medicine.

While studying biology at Tuskegee University, before she'd ever set foot in a medical school classroom, she found a two-year pipeline summer program at the Frederick P. Whiddon College of Medicine that would shape the rest of her path. Mentors helped write her first personal statement, arranged her first shadowing opportunities, and prepared her for an application process that was completely unknown to her.

Years later, as a fourth-year medical student at South, Nia crossed paths with one of those early mentors again — and finally got to say thank you in person. Both women cried. Nia calls it "a continuity of love:" mentorship that carried her through undergrad has kept following her, one mentor picking up where the last left off.

That support has also mattered in practical ways. A scholarship covered roughly half her tuition; loans and long hours covered the rest. "I've seen somebody break down in tears because they received a scholarship," she says. "It lightens the load. Medical school is already hard enough."

Now preparing to match into OB-GYN, Nia hopes to return the favor — teaching, mentoring, and closing the same health literacy gaps she once watched her own family struggle against.

Asked why she chose South, her answer is simple: "The community here is unmatched."

>> Watch future physician Nia Booth talk about her experience at the Whiddon College of Medicine.

Nia Booth, now a fourth-year medical student, examines a patient. Years earlier, mentors helped her believe a career in medicine was even possible.

THE LONG G

DR. ASH PRAKASH CREDITS RESILIENT PATIENTS AND GENEROUS DONORS AS THE FORCE DRIVING CANCER RESEARCH

CANCER RESEARCH RARELY MOVES FAST. It's built one finding at a time, toward a single breakthrough. Dr. Ash Prakash committed her career to that long game after losing her grandfather to a cancer diagnosed too late. She once planned to become an oncologist — until she realized her calling was research, not direct patient care.

A decade ago, a national research grant let her choose where to continue that work. She chose the USA Health Mitchell Cancer Institute because her lab sits in the same building as the patients her research aims to help. On hard days, when an experiment stalls, crossing paths with patients carries her back to the bench. "It gives me a reason to be here," she says, "a reminder of why the work matters."

That proximity fuels discovery, too. A hallway conversation with an oncologist can spark a research question that takes years to answer. One such partnership grew into a four-year study, funded in part by the Mayer Mitchell Award, now headed toward publication in a major cancer journal, expected to change how certain gynecologic cancers are treated.

"I don't know where I'd be without donor support," Prakash says. Research takes patience. Progress usually comes quietly, one finding at a time, long before a breakthrough shows. Donors who keep giving are investing in patients they may never meet — patients who, years from now, may benefit from personalized medicine, cancer treatment built around their own biology, made possible by research happening at the Mitchell Cancer Institute today.

>> Watch Dr. Ash Prakash talk about her cancer research at the Mitchell Cancer Institute — and how your support fuels discoveries like hers.



Dr. Ash Prakash reviews findings with a colleague at the Mitchell Cancer Institute, where lab research often turns into real cancer treatments.

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"It gives me a reason to be here; a reminder of why the work matters."

—DR. ASH PRAKASH

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Questions? Contact the University of South Alabama Office of Medical Affairs Development at (251) 460-7032 or development@southalabama.edu

If you do not wish to receive fundraising requests from USA Health, please email development@southalabama.edu.

SAVE THE DATE | USAHEALTHSYSTEM.COM/EVENTS

PARTNERS IN HEALING
November 12, 2026
Crown Hall

DOC ROCK
February 18, 2027
Soul Kitchen

ANTIQUES & GARDEN SHOW
March 4-7, 2027
Arthur R. Outlaw Mobile Convention Center

LOCAL GOODNESS
May 2, 2027
Magnolia Manor

HOPE IN MOTION
September 2027
Progressive dinner party at various locations

GULF COAST IMPACT

NET PROCEEDS OF $529,486 CONTRIBUTED FROM EVENTS TO SUPPORT USA HEALTH

GO Run
September 27, 2025
$75,892
Benefited gynecologic oncology research at the Mitchell Cancer Institute

A Night Honoring Healers
November 18, 2025
$92,636
Benefited various USA Health priorities

Providence Foundation Clay Shoot
January 16, 2026
$16,000
Benefited Providence Hospital Pulmonary Care

Doc Rock
January 29, 2026
$26,380
Benefited research and critical clinical needs across USA Health

Home & Garden Show
March 19-22, 2026
$171,796
Benefited the ECMO program at Providence Hospital

Local Goodness
May 3, 2026
$146,782
Benefited the Interventional Radiology program at Children's & Women's Hospital

Children's Miracle Network

Fundraising for 2026
January 1 - August 31
$435,600
raised across 90 CMN partner fundraising locations to support USA Health Children's & Women's Hospital