



A Time For Freedom



ALABAMA APPLESEED
CENTER for LAW & JUSTICE

2025 Annual Report



Dear friends and supporters,

Five years ago, Appleseed waded into the despair within Alabama's prison system with a determination to confront unnecessary incarceration one life at a time. Today, we celebrate freedom for 30 people once condemned to life sentences. Not 30 cases. Not 30 wins. These are 30 people, fellow Alabamians who now walk alongside us in our fight for justice. Many grace our report cover.

People like Larry Garrett, who served 36 years in prison for burglaries, then took up truck driving two years ago. He now drives tractor-trailers across the United States at age 72. People like John Meadows, 54, who devoted his incarceration to education and now works as a plumber. And people like our team member Ronald McKeithen, who spent 37 years behind bars and now inspires others by sharing his story across the country. This year, Ron was appointed to the Statewide Reentry Commission and he got married!

Alabama's broken and brutal prison system was exposed in new ways across the United States this year with the release of the HBO documentary, "The Alabama Solution." The suffering displayed in this challenging but important film reminds us why Appleseed remains focused on pragmatic, bipartisan solutions to the state's overreliance on prisons and punishment.

The only way to solve this crisis is to care about our fellow human beings who are incarcerated, to believe in redemption, and to support formerly incarcerated Alabamians as they navigate the worries and the wonders of life on the outside after decades in the darkness of an Alabama prison. We could not be more grateful for the judges, district attorneys, family members, and reentry partners who have made our legal work possible for the last five years. We are indebted to dozens of funders who have invested in this monumental effort.

But there is so much more to do. That's why Appleseed has taken on a new project, supporting criminalized survivors, women whose convictions were driven by domestic violence. We're also stepping up our parole advocacy, representing people with life sentences as they become eligible for parole. This year we took eight parole cases and won release for each person we represented. And we helped two clients earn pardons.

While 30 is a nice, round number worth celebrating, there's another number that tells us so much more about how needless these extreme prison sentences are: zero. That's how many Appleseed clients have returned to prison.

Thank you all for playing a role in their success. Here's to more freedom in 2026!



COVER ART



**From the
Executive Director**

Carla Crowder

People freed through our legal work. From top left to right:

Row 1: Steve Scott, Larry Garrett, Johnny Crawford, Robert Cheeks

Row 2: John Meadows, Michael Schumacher, Lee Davis, Americain Felder

Row 3: Dan Amerson, Alvin Kennard, James Jones, Jerry Boatright

Row 4: Delvecchio Bayler, John Ray, Charles Craig, Ronald McKeithen

Row 5: Willie Ingram, Alonzo Hurth, Ronnie Peoples, Joe Bennett

Row 6: Joe Raines, John Coleman

Justice for People

A Year of Unprecedented Bipartisan Support for Second Chances

At the Alabama Legislature we saw bold, bipartisan support for Appleseed's Second Chance bill, which would provide resentencing opportunities to more than 150 people currently serving life imprisonment without parole for crimes where no one was physically injured.

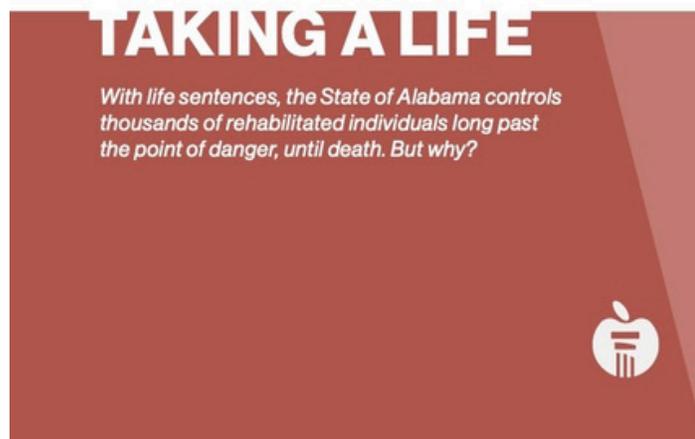
SB 156, sponsored by Republican Sen. Will Barfoot, won support from Gov. Kay Ivey. The bill passed the Alabama Senate for the first time ever. Faith groups, including Prison Fellowship and the Faith and Freedom Coalition, expressed strong support for the bill.

Although we did not make it over the finish line in 2025, Appleseed has built a broad coalition of Alabamians who understand that incarcerating older people under sentences that would not be imposed under current law is fundamentally unfair. Our fight for sentencing fairness continues.



Justice for Alabama

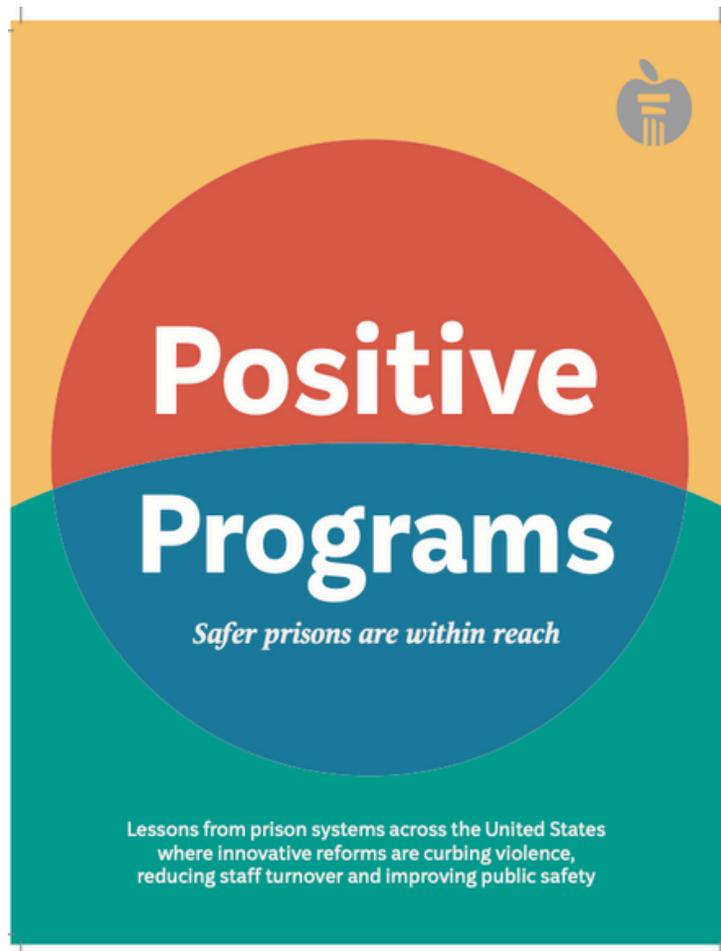
New Research & Reports



Our latest report makes the case for limiting life sentences, reducing endless parole supervision, and recognizing that redemption is possible. Filled with real life examples of how extreme sentences harm people and communities, the report will drive Appleseed's 2026 legislative agenda. Key findings:

- Approximately 6,520 individuals are serving sentences of life with parole, life without parole, or virtual life in Alabama's prisons. Most will never get released from prison.
- Spending by the Alabama Department of Corrections has soared as the safety inside prisons has plummeted. More people serving sentences of life with parole have died in prison recently (115) than have gotten released on parole (75).
- Life-sentenced individuals fortunate enough to earn parole face a lifetime of expensive state supervision. Technical violations, such as missing meetings with a parole officer or falling behind on \$40-monthly supervision fees, can result in parole revocations that send a person back to prison - despite decades of productive employment and faithful reporting.
- Incarcerated people over age 50, the demographic least likely to engage in criminal behavior, are most impacted by lengthy sentences.

New Research & Reports



This report highlights programs in other states, many led by incarcerated people themselves, that are reducing violence in prisons, reducing recidivism and creating safer working environments for prison staff.

Five real-world examples of prison reforms inspire Alabama's leaders to explore real solutions. They're not theories. These are programs already in place that are supporting rehabilitation, cutting recidivism and helping staff do their jobs more safely and effectively.

Take California's GRIP program, where men serving long sentences learn how to manage anger and take responsibility for past harm. Graduates almost never come back to prison. In South Carolina, a pilot program for young adults has cut the use of solitary confinement and assaults on staff. And in Maine, an "earned living unit" features higher education opportunities, a garden, and increased time outdoors. Missouri, Maine and Oregon are trying models that focus on rehabilitation and basic human dignity—with results that speak for themselves.

Read the full reports at alabamaappleseed.org.

Original Reporting

\$5 BILLION IN FIVE YEARS

An Appleseed analysis has found that state prison expenses over five years are \$5 billion. That's right, if you include the annual General Fund allocations to the Alabama Department of Corrections, plus the costs of new prison construction including debt service, the people of Alabama will have handed over approximately \$1 billion per year to ADOC in fiscal years 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026.

Here's the full breakdown based on publicly available spreadsheets from the Executive Budget Office:

\$610.7 million from the General Fund in FY2022

\$663.6 million from the General Fund in FY2023

\$733.7 million from the General Fund in FY2024

\$780.6 million from the General Fund in FY2025

\$826.7 million from the General Fund in FY2026 (which starts in October)

\$1.3 billion authorized for prison construction during 2021 special session on prisons, currently being used to build the Gov. Kay Ivey megaprison in Elmore County, which is expected to cost \$1.2 billion.

\$85 million from the General Fund in FY25 and FY26 for debt service on prison construction bonds issued to build the 4000-bed prison in Elmore County.

By way of comparison, each bed in the Governor Kay Ivey megaprison, comes at a cost of \$300,000, significantly more than the average price of a home in Alabama, which was \$235,066 as of July of 2025.



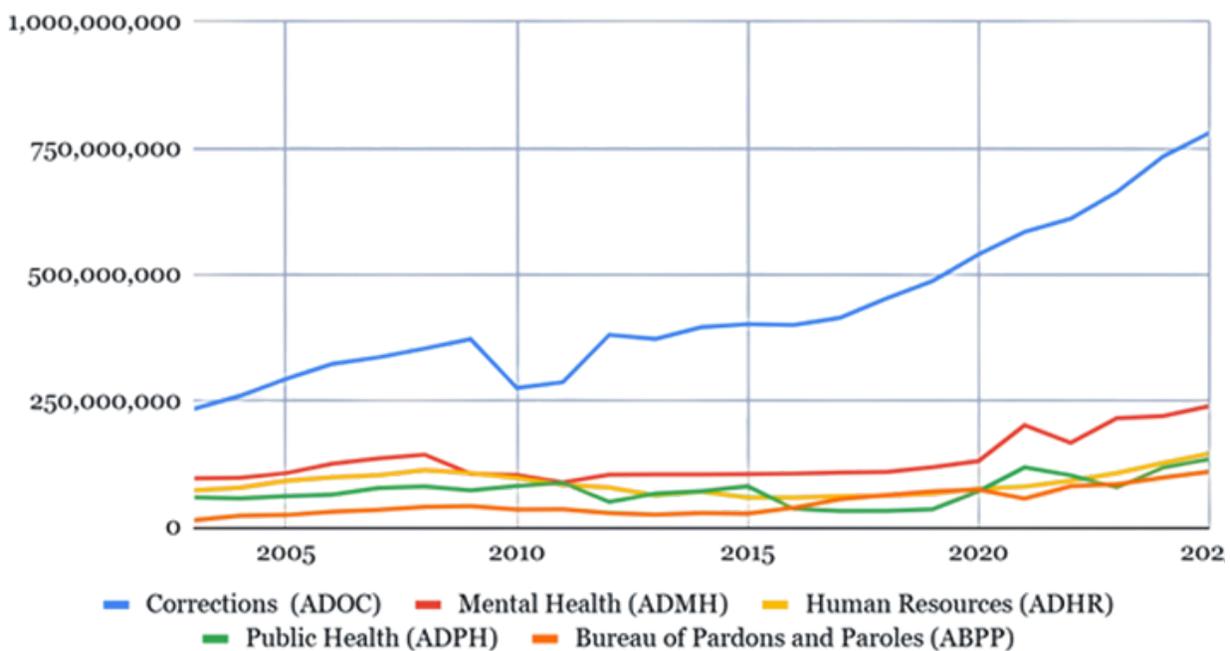
Alabama's \$1.2 billion prison is under construction. The vast complex will house thousands of people, many with cases much like the individuals freed by Appleseed's legal work who are now thriving outside of prison.

Original Reporting

\$5 BILLION IN FIVE YEARS

This \$5 billion tally does not include at least \$57 million paid out of the state's General Liability Trust Fund in recent years on ADOC legal expenses, primarily private contract attorneys to defend officers accused of misconduct and to defend the ADOC in federal class action litigation over unconstitutional prison conditions. ADOC is the second highest General Fund expense in the State; Medicaid is the highest. Medicaid provides healthcare to approximately one million Alabamians at a similar cost to the state for incarceration of approximately 22,000 individuals in custody, plus another 4,300 in Community Corrections.

Snapshot: Alabama General Fund spending 2003-2025



Appleseed believes Alabamians deserve to know the significant costs to our state of consistently having one of the country's highest incarceration rates. Alabama is a poor state when compared to numerous other states with large prison populations; prioritizing expensive prisons swallows resources that could be invested in crime prevention and overall wellbeing, such as mental health care, substance use treatment and prevention of child abuse and neglect. Nearly 25% of the entire General Fund pays for prisons, and these funds do not include construction of new prisons. Critical agencies for prevention and wellbeing combined receive 19% percent of the General Fund.

We encourage Alabamians to contact your state legislators and share your concern that Alabama's dangerous and dysfunctional prison system is swallowing your tax dollars. Alabama taxpayers deserve better from their government.

New Criminalized Survivor Project

With support from our longtime funding partner, the National Football League, Appleseed this year launched Supporting Justice Involved Women–Survivors, Mothers, Communities: An Appleseed Network Collaborative Project. We are identifying incarcerated women who survived violence, then were subject to criminal prosecution for fighting back. And we are fortunate to join with our partners at Oklahoma Appleseed and Missouri Appleseed, who have been on the forefront of advocacy for incarcerated women in those states.

We have also identified our first client, Marguerite Brooks, and visited with her at Tutwiler Prison for Women. Ms. Brooks, who is 61, has been incarcerated since 1993 for the homicide of her abusive husband and has been turned down for parole numerous times, despite documentation of his violence and her strong record of rehabilitation. Appleseed will represent her at her parole hearing in 2026.



Leading this project is new Legal Fellow Taylor Walton, a 2025 graduate of Cumberland School of Law. Taylor was with us as an extern in the summer of 2024, then served as our legal assistant until taking on this new role.

Memorial Survivors Quilt

All year, Appleseed’s Community Navigator, Callie Greer, has been organizing and inspiring groups of mothers who have lost loved ones to violence to join in a quilt project. Callie’s dream of memorial quilts is now a reality in Montgomery and Selma, where dozens of women have participated in this healing exercise.

In Callie’s words: “Because when I think of a quilt, I think of comfort, warmth, a place of healing when something ails you. You know, the kind of calming only your momma or grandmama can give you when you need to hear, ‘Everything’s going to be alright, maybe not right now, but in time.’”

The Memorial Quilt project is part of Appleseed’s ongoing work listening to survivors of violence and lifting up their voices as we seek solutions.



Justice for Survivors



New reports with original research published by Alabama Appleseed in 2025



OFFICE DOGS



4

Appleseed clients who have gotten married



Shoutout of our bill, SB 156, by Governor Kay Ivey in her State of the State address

2025 Expenses \$1.3 million total budget

\$1.14 Program and Services \$162K Management and Administration



\$1,140,000 87.6%



Appleseed client who achieved his dream of recording and performing his own original song



Number of miles our reentry team has driven to take care of our clients



Number of clients freed in 2025 through Appleseed's legal work

116

Public records requests sent to state agencies by Researcher Eddie Burkhalter

Alabamaappleseed.org

Paypal



WAYS TO DONATE TO APPLESEED & ALL THIS GREAT WORK!

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Thank you for standing with us to build a better Alabama! You can donate to Appleseed in one of the following ways:

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SUCCESSFUL PAROLE CASES

November 6, 2025

CELEBRATE JUSTICE

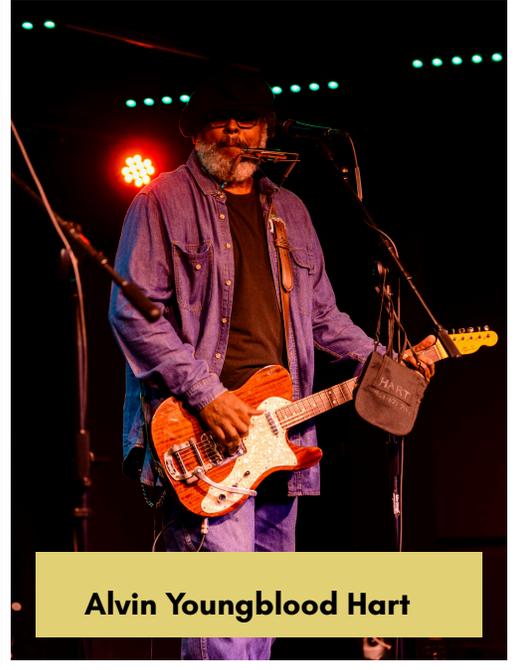
Live at Woodlawn Theatre



McKenzie Lockhart



Ritch Henderson



Alvin Youngblood Hart



We are **incredibly grateful** to everyone who came out and supported us at this year's Celebrate Justice. Headliner **Alvin Youngblood Hart** schooled us all in the blues guitar. Opener **McKenzie Lockhart** had us singing along to her James Taylor cover of "You've Got a Friend." And in between the beautiful collaboration between Americana artist **Ritch Henderson** and his mother, our case manager Kathleen Henderson. When client **James Jones**, 78, joined them onstage to perform a song he'd written at St. Clair prison, it was almost too much.



If you couldn't make it to Celebrate Justice 2025, please try to join us for next year's celebration. You were missed.

**Our Deepest Gratitude:
We Couldn't Do It Without You**

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We'd like to thank everyone for every gift, from \$5 to \$5,000. Your donations do so much: buy clients a hot breakfast or cup of coffee, provide staff with comfortable office chairs, pay for records requests for our research, provide clients with emergency medical care and outfit new apartments, and pay for gas when we travel to Montgomery to talk to lawmakers. Every dollar matters and we appreciate every cent.

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