

Community Heart & Soul®

— Guided by what matters most —

THOMASTON-UPSON, GEORGIA

POPULATION:
26,320

CHALLENGE:
Community
engagement.

FOCUS:
Reaching all
demographics

KEY TOOL:
Community
Network Analysis

Upson County is about 90 minutes southeast of Atlanta and is the first Heart & Soul community in the State of Georgia. The county seat is Thomaston, which serves as a hub for the area. The Thomaston-Upson County School District serves the entire county.

Georgia EMC provided coaching services on behalf of the local electric cooperative Upson EMC. Both city and county government and local organizations, supported Thomaston-Upson's Community Heart & Soul initiative. The Project Coordinator retained her office at the County Clerk's office, which reinforced the collaboration that was essential for this county-wide effort.

Thomaston-Upson "by the numbers":

- 6,770 residents connected through Community Heart & Soul
- 2,817 facts collected from stories that will directly impact local decision making
- 554 responses to the Facebook post, "What type of things do you think our community would benefit from?"
- 758 residents prioritized the top 20 community actions

Volunteer and Community Response:

The Heart & Soul Team focused on creative engagement activities in the community. Each meeting and activity brought new community members and volunteers together to share their stories and thoughts on what matters most to the community. Engagement activities included:

- Story circles connected to annual Emancipation Celebration
- Game-On Arcade Day to reach youth
- Hopes and Ideas jars at public offices
- Large chalkboard to collect ideas at downtown events and festivals



Heart & Soul Outcomes:

- 20 prioritized action ideas, stewarded by the Heart & Soul Legacy Team, IG-Knight Thomaston Upson.
- Commendation from state legislature with a resolution designating Thomaston-Upson Community Heart & Soul Day at the State Capitol.
- Increased volunteerism throughout the community, including the creation of Unsung Hero Awards to honor the contributions of residents.

- An increased awareness of civic engagement and the opportunity to play a role in local decision making.
- Thomaston Chamber of Commerce recognized the Heart & Soul team with a “Unity in Community” Award (2018).