Senior Day At The State Capitol

Seniors from the River Valley Region joined seniors from around the state at the Capitol in Atlanta on February 7 to let the members of the General Assembly know the importance of senior issues. These seniors advocated on behalf of the Co-Age priorities: Additional funding for Home and Community Based Services, Additional Funding for the Aging and Disability Resources Connection, Medicaid Funded Assisted Living, Personal Care Home Requirements, and the Elder and Disabled Abuser Registry. During lunch, which was provided by the Georgia Council on Aging, seniors met with Representatives Patti Bentley and Carolyn Hugley as well as Senator Ed Harbison to discuss these issues.

For more information on these issues, please contact the River Valley Area Agency on Aging at 706-256-2910. Many thanks to everyone who made this event possible.

From The Executive Director’s Desk...

As we gear up for 2018, there are many uncertainties for individuals, as well as for all levels of government. With these uncertainties come fears about the future of our country, our state, our region and our local communities. We must learn to trust each other and put our best foot forward for the future. We must also work together for the betterment of the region. The Regional Plan that staff are working on for 2018 -2022 will provide us a road-map to develop resources to tackle fundamental issues we have in the River Valley region. It is up to you as members of the River Valley Regional Council and leaders in each of our communities to participate in this process and make sure your voice is heard. The strength of this plan will be the diversity of the people who have worked on it and their ability to create a common vision for the region. Without this common vision, we will all just continue to go in many different directions, never reaching our goals.
One Georgia Grant Awarded to Harris County

Harris County has welcomed the newest KIA supplier Daesol to the Northwest Harris Business Park. The Georgia Department of Economic Development, Georgia Power, Harris County, the City of West Point and the Valley Partnership worked together to attract the investment. The RVRC assisted by successfully applying for $150,000 in funding to the ONE Georgia EDGE fund to support the project. The company will invest $35 million in the project and add 110 jobs.

Daesol will produce automotive fiber padding for its nearby sister company, DAEHON Solution, which supplies noise, vibration and harshness system engineering and interior components for the Kia Motors Manufacturing Georgia plant in West Point.

$150,000 Grant!

Bankers Luncheon A Big Success!

RVRC partnered with the Georgia Brownfield Association to hold a banker’s luncheon at the Chattahoochee River Club in Columbus on January 31. This provided an opportunity to bring local bankers together to share information about our Revolving Loan Fund sources, our interest in partnering with local banks to deploy these funds, and an opportunity to showcase the successful work done in the region.

The Georgia Brownfield Association also brought the leading state experts to explain the financial protections the new brownfield laws provide to developers and banks that allow environmentally contaminated properties to be re-developed. These rules will allow for reduced uncertainty and therefore greater comfort in working with properties that may appear to have environmental challenges. The presentation was well received and can be found on the RVRC website.

Pataula Creek Best Management Practices

In December, the Environmental Planning Department completed pre-BMP (best management practice) chemical water quality monitoring and DNA/Microbial source tracking for the Pataula Creek watershed. This monitoring has taken place over the course of one year. Data collected from these water samples will enable staff to have a better understanding of where fecal coliform and sediment contaminants may be coming from as well as provide information to assist in determining the most effective type and location of best management practices to install. Potential sources of pollutants identified within the watershed include illegal carcass dumping, scavenging birds, runoff of poultry litter from agricultural fields, feral hogs, cattle operations, and storm water drainage from dirt roads. Once BMPS have been implemented, post-BMP monitoring will begin to determine the effectiveness of management practices in reducing contaminants and improving water quality conditions.
Staff Spotlight

Kia Barrow has been employed with the ADRC for 11 years. She has been the Intake and Referral Specialist, Gateway Coordinator and in June 2017 she was promoted to the ADRC Program Manager. She enjoys all of her coworkers and loves a good laugh with friends. She is a graduate of Auburn University with a B.S. in Human Development and Family Studies. When she is not at work, she enjoys watching football, A&E Network and spending time with her husband and one year old son, Kaleb.

Will Griggs, Community Planner, was born and raised here in Columbus, Georgia. Will graduated from Columbus State University, with a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science. He interned at the RVRC in the fall of 2016 and later worked part time as Assistant Developer/Planner from September 2017 to November 2017. Will became a full time employee in November, 2017 as a Community Developer. In his free time he enjoys swimming, bowling, watching sports, and spending weekends at the beach.

In November, Emily Chambers, RVRC Fiscal Officer, successfully completed the “Operating and Capital Budgeting” exam, the second in a series of five examinations required by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for obtaining a Certified Public Finance Officer designation.

Congratulations to Eboni Morris Key, former Georgia Cares Volunteer Coordinator/Caregiver Specialist, who is now an ADRC Counselor in the Area Agency on Aging Department.

Safe Kids Columbus Annual Helmet Giveaway

The River Valley Regional Commission partnered with Safe Kids Columbus in their annual Bicycle Helmet Giveaway which took place on Friday, December 15, at the Columbus Public Library on Macon Road. At this event, over 550 helmets were donated and properly fitted for children to use when riding their bicycles.

Parents were also instructed on how to properly fit the helmet on their children and were given educational materials to encourage safe bicycling in their communities. The River Valley Regional Commission has been working with Safe Kids Columbus for several years and was able to sponsor $2,000 towards the purchase of helmets that were donated at the event.

Left to right: Kim Schorr-Clubview IB Coordinator, Pam Fair-Safe Kids Columbus, Teresa Lawson-Principal, Corporal Robert Greene-Columbus Police Department Bicycle Unit and Bicycle Columbus Board Member

Over 550 Bicycle Helmets Given to Children
Grants Awarded to Two Area Senior Centers

The Harris County and Crisp County Senior Centers were awarded grants from the Thanks Mom and Dad Fund. This is a fund honoring parents, grandparents, and mentors by supporting programs and services for older adults. This year, for the first time, the fund partnered with the Division of Aging Services to award grants to senior centers affiliated with Area Agencies on Aging. In the River Valley area, Harris and Crisp County Senior Centers were chosen to receive funding.

Crisp County will receive funding to purchase patio furniture to allow the seniors to enjoy their beautiful garden. Harris County will receive funding to construct raised flower beds as well as games for all of the seniors to enjoy. Grants were awarded on February 14 at a reception hosted by the Thanks Mom and Dad Fund.

Paula Jackson-Walker, Harris County Senior Center Manager, and Scott Bryan, Executive Director, Direct Services Corporation

Randolph County - U.S. Highway 27 Lane Widening - Complete (Photo: GDOT)

It has been five years since the first deposits were made for the groundbreaking “Transportation Investment Act.” Since that time, the River Valley Region has collected $45,324,805. Of this amount $33,993,603 has been allocated to the approved list of projects and the remaining $11,331,202 has been distributed to our 16 counties and 35 cities that makeup the River Valley region. Of the 23 regional projects, four have been completed and eight are under construction. Passing lanes along US HWY 41 in Dooly County, the widening of US HWY 27 and a bridge replacement along this same road in Randolph County, and the improvements to Po Biddy Road in Talbot County have all been completed. This legislation was the first of its kind allowing local jurisdictions to work together to solve their transportation needs. The River Valley region is proving that when we come together as a region we can make great things happen for our communities!

Muscogee County, Custer Road Interchange - In Progress (Photo: GDOT)

Pobiddy Road–Talbot County-Completed (Photo: GDOT)

Crisp County US Highway 280 Bridge Reconstruction – In Progress (Photo: GDOT)

Gwen Ford and Barbara Clay
Cordele Senior Center;
Jenna Sheppard, Middle Flint Council on Aging
**WIOA Participant’s Family Has A Merry Christmas**

Thanks to a partnership with Southwest Georgia Children Alliance and Eckerd Connects Paxen’s Program, one participant and her children had a very Merry Christmas! Breshae Alridge is enrolled in an Eckerd Connects Paxen’s program that provides career pathway training, GED credential attainment, and supportive services to young adults who may face barriers to employment. Breshae Alridge and her four children were selected to receive donations for Christmas. Southwest Georgia Children’s Alliance donated all the Christmas items needed for Breshae and her children. The items included toys, food, and clothes. Breshae stated, “My family is very thankful and grateful for the generous donations that were given to my family during the Christmas holidays.” To learn about the services provided by Eckerd Connects’ Paxen workforce programs, please visit [https://eckerd.org/workforce-development/paxen/](https://eckerd.org/workforce-development/paxen/).

**Sumter Cycling Annual Meeting**

Sumter Cycling celebrated its annual meeting on January 20 at Center Stage Market in Downtown Americus. This meeting allowed community members to enjoy some award winning chili (provided by the City of Americus Fire Department) and to get involved in bicycle advocacy in Americus and Sumter County. Over 50 local community members attended the event including Elliot Caldwell, Executive Director of Georgia Bikes – the statewide bicycle advocacy organization located in Athens, GA. He praised and congratulated Sumter Cycling for all their efforts in developing bicycle initiatives in their community and being a key element of the Complete Streets efforts in Americus. Mayor Barry Blount also attended the meeting and awarded Habitat for Humanity their Bicycle Friendly Business Bronze Level certificate. Habitat becomes the 16th bicycle friendly business in Georgia, five of which are located within the River Valley region. This designation is awarded by the League of American Bicyclists out of Washington, DC and is awarded to businesses that excel in encouraging their employees to commute by bicycle. These companies also provide adequate facilities for their employees to store and access their bikes. Other businesses with this designation in the region include: at Silver Level – River Valley Regional Commission and the Columbus Civic Center, and at Bronze level – Columbus Regional Health and Nonic Bar and Kitchen located in Uptown Columbus.
Senior Medicare Patrol is on the Job!

On January 26, 2018, Dareion Hill distributed Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) brochures to over 200 people at the Open Door Community Center in Columbus. The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Program, which is part of the GeorgiaCares Program, was implemented to help combat the over $12.5 billion lost to Medicare and beneficiaries through fraud, abuse, and billing errors. SMP teaches Medicare beneficiaries how to PROTECT their personal information, DETECT potential errors, fraud and abuse, and REPORT any suspicious activities. The GeorgiaCares program does this through public education events such as health fairs, presentations, published articles in newspapers, and through volunteers dedicated to helping fight fraud within our communities. If you would like to arrange for a presentation at your faith-based or community group, have questions, or would like to become a volunteer, please contact the GeorgiaCares Program at 706-256-2917.

Behavioral Health Forum Brings Experts Together to Strengthen Care for Older Adults

On February 5 experts from the fields of Aging, Disability, Behavior Health, Adult Protective Services, and Public Guardianship came together in Columbus. At this meeting, they learned more about what services each provides and how they can work together to strength the system of care for older adults.

The meeting was facilitated by Eve Byrd with the Georgia Coalition on Older Adults and Behavioral Health. Speakers included Barbara Pastirik, DHS Adult Protective Services; Carlton Coleman, DHS Public Guardianship Office; and Kia Morris, River Valley Area Agency on Aging Program Manager. Each shared information about their particular program and gave the audience ideas about how they can collaborate to improve the lives of the clients. For more information about services for older adults, please call 706-256-2900 or call 1-800-615-4379.

Meet us at Peachtree Mall on Friday, May 4th to celebrate Older Americans Month from 8:00 AM—11:00 AM. Information from local vendors, door prizes, snacks and more. The first 250 to register will receive a FREE T-shirt. For more information contact Franetta Miles at 706-256-2910 or fmiles@rivervalleyrcaaa.org.
What is Work Experience?

It is a career preparation activity that is highly structured to promote learning through paid work. Students participate in planning the work and problem solving. Worksite supervisors act as coaches. The experiences are generally based on projects (instead of tasks) where students interact with other employees, often work in teams, and are paid an appropriate wage. In addition to the desired elements of paid work experience, learning-rich work experiences are designed to promote: facilitation of an active learning process; exploration of a career field of interest; development of research and project-based skills; development of teamwork skills; and development of the competencies. Here a Work Experience student is installing laminate floors at one of our jobsites, The Fuller Center.

COLUMBUS DAY AT THE CAPITOL

Patti Cullen, Executive Director, and Jim Livingston, Community and Economic Development Director, attended Columbus Day at the Capital on Wednesday, February 7th. It was a great opportunity to support the region and meet with our legislative delegation. And as the commanding general at Fort Benning General Eric Wesley stated, “We were all upstaged by a duck!”

The Georgia Safe Routes to School Program

The Georgia Safe Routes to School Program recognized two schools within the region for their hard work at implementing Safe Routes to School Initiatives in their schools. The Americus Furlow Charter School was recognized as Partner of the Year. Elizabeth Knighton, principal of Randolph County Elementary School was awarded the Safe Routes to School Champion of the Year Award. Both of these schools were featured in the 2018 Safe Routes to School Calendar.

Safe Kids Columbus awarded Clubview Elementary in Columbus with the Kids Appreciation Award for their support of safe walking and bicycling initiatives as they encouraged students and parents to walk and ride their bicycles to school. Clubview Elementary had a record number of participants at last year’s International Walk to School Day.
LUCA 2020  (Local Update of Census Addresses)

All of RVRC’s 16 counties are registered to participate in the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) 2020. Fourteen (14) of these counties and 27 cities have designated the RVRC as their liaison. As a liaison, the RVRC will provide guidance, technical assistance and eventually submit the address list to the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau began mailing the address data on February 1st. Local governments will have 120 calendar days from the date data is received to reply to the Census Bureau with an updated local address list.

The RVRC planning and GIS staff are working closely with local governments requesting local address lists. The Middle Flint E911 Center, Georgia Power, EMC and all utility billing companies serving the region have been contacted and residential address lists have been requested. Those address lists will be cleaned up and compared. Address duplications will be removed and a final master address list will be created. The RVRC will submit the local address list to the Census Bureau using the GUPS software provided by the Census Bureau. The RVRC is already beginning to receive census lists. If there are any questions, please contact Mariyana Kostov: mkostov@rivervalleyrc.org or Gerald Mixon: gmixon@rivervalleyrc.org.

Just a reminder... The River Valley RC has loan funds available to assist small, existing and startup businesses. Please feel free to contact:

Sarah Walls swalls@rivervalleyrc.org  (706) 256-2910
or
Jim Livingstonjlivingston@rivervalleyrc.org  (706) 256-2910