RVRC assisted four cities and two counties in successfully obtaining Community Development Block Grant awards during the 2014 funding cycle. The grants will bring more than $3 million into the River Valley region and provide infrastructure and housing improvements. DCA Commissioner Gretchen Corbin presented the awards in a ceremony on September 5 in Savannah.

**Unadilla:** Representative Patty Bentley, RVRC staff members Katie Howard, Cassie Myers, Mia Anderson, Grant Richardson, Unadilla Mayor Bobby West, and DCA Commissioner Gretchen Corbin.

**Clay County:** RVRC staff members Grant Richardson and Katie Howard, Clay County Administrator Ronnie Crozier, and DCA Commissioner Gretchen Corbin.

See more awards and photos on Pages 2 and 3.

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From the Executive Director’s Desk...

Our August 27 Council meeting was very special for two reasons. First and foremost Ilona Preattle, a long-time staff member, led us in the Pledge of Allegiance, as she had just become a U.S. citizen the week before. This is the second time in a year the RVRC has had a staff member become a U.S. citizen. Both of these people are women who provide strong leadership roles to our staff and I am honored to know them, work with them and call them my countrymen.

We also had a special guest speaker, Department of Community of Affairs Commissioner Gretchen Corbin. Commissioner Corbin did an excellent job in describing the many programs DCA offers local governments. She also related several childhood experiences when visiting relatives in Buena Vista and what a special place rural Georgia has in her heart. She talked about the significance of our roots, family and experiences and how they shape our lives.

The day was topped off by going on a site visit to Vienna; the city may be receiving a PlanFirst designation from DCA. The enthusiasm of the local staff for their community and the steps they have made to make their town livable and vibrant demonstrated what the planning process is all about.

Overall, August 27 reminded me of why I became a planner, why I live in the River Valley region, and why I am proud to be a U.S. citizen.

Patti

Buena Vista: RVRC staff Grant Richardson, Cassie Myers, Buena Vista Mayor Ralph Brown Jr., DCA Commissioner Gretchen Corbin.

Richland: (Front row, from left) RVRC staff Katie Howard, Mia Anderson, Cassie Myers, Commissioner Gretchen Corbin; (back row) RVRC staff Grant Richardson, Kenny Green and Chris Poje of Ben Turnipseed Engineers, and Richland Mayor Adolph McLendon.

RVRC received a 2014 Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation for the Hog Removal and Pennahatchee Creek project.

Upcoming Events

- Oct. 18: Fair on the Square in Lumpkin
- Oct. 24-26: Georgia Bike Summit in Columbus
- Nov. 7-9: Tour de Farm

www.activevalley.org
DCA Awards

From Page 1

Shellman received $500,000 for sewer system improvements.

Talbot County received $575,175 for a multi-activity program including street and drainage improvements, home rehabilitation and reconstruction.

Unadilla received $500,000 for sewer system improvements.

RVRC also assisted Vienna in successfully applying for a $323,804 Redevelopment Award.

Additionally, RVRC congratulates the following cities and counties in the River Valley region that received CDBG funding.

Americus: $783,731, housing rehabilitation and reconstruction assistance, street and drainage improvements.

Crisp County: $500,000, sewer system improvements.

Geneva: $500,000, neighborhood revitalization.

Macon County: $500,000, neighborhood revitalization.

Oglethorpe: $800,000, housing and sewer system improvements.

Sumter County: $800,000, housing and street and drainage improvements.

AAA staff locked up for MDA

GeorgiaCares Volunteer Coordinator Shawna Love and Coordinator Shameika Averett participated in the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) Lock-Up for the Chattahoochee Valley Area. During their one-hour sentence the jailbirds raised more than $300. Columbus and Phenix City jailbirds raised more than $76,000 in cash and pledges for the MDA.
Celebrating 102\textsuperscript{nd} Birthday

The River Valley ADRC and GeorgiaCares Program celebrated a special milestone with residents at Franciscan Woods Retirement Community. Agnes Phipps (left photo, seated) was born on Sept. 18, 1912. Vivian Sandera (right photo, seated) was born Sept. 10, 1912. GeorgiaCares Coordinator Shameika Averett and Volunteer Coordinator Shawna Love presented each with a certificate recognizing the special occasion.

Digital Economy
Survey shows people want more training

The results from the Digital Economy survey the RVRC conducted show most people want training to help them use digital resources better.

The good news is that there are many training opportunities throughout the River Valley region to assist with all sorts of computer skills.

Some of the training requested included developing websites, help with Microsoft Office, and working with social media.

All the survey data will be shared with our technical colleges and universities in the region, as well as the local school systems and libraries. If you need particular training, ask locally and there is a good chance it will be made available to you.

The survey results are available online on the RVRC website. (Click on the Digital Resources button on the left side of our homepage.)

For more information on the Digital Economy Plan, visit www.rivervalleydigitaleconomy.info

WIA participants graduate SGTC Nursing Program

Eight WIA participants graduated from the South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) Licensed Practical Nursing program. SGTC nursing instructors presented the graduates with their pins during a pinning ceremony at the college. A special presentation on behalf of the class was made to Sandra Augustin who served as a mentor to the class. The ceremony concluded with the graduates reciting the Nurse’s Pledge.

The nursing students are now eligible to sit for the NCLEX-PN state board exams to become official Licensed Practical Nurses. The exam consists of 85 to 205 questions and tests all areas in the nursing profession to assure practical nurses have obtained the knowledge to practice safely in clinic settings.

Seated from left: Brittany Crawford, Sandra Augustin, Jary Smith, Shyquanda Mahome and Alvina Lester; standing from left: Sandhya Muljibhai (WIA Coordinator), Vanecia Johnson, Alyssa Larkins and Minnie Williamson (WIA Assistant).

The WIA nursing participants presented to the SGTC WIA staff a photo of the graduates to show their appreciation of the WIA program and WIA staff.
RVRC expands mapping options
The River Valley Regional Commission has purchased a large format plotter/scanner/copier. The new Canon iPF825 is a 44” 5-color printer. The machine has the capabilities to collect job information and calculate printing cost. The GIS department will scan all the large format paper maps currently on file at the RVRC and create a digital map library. Call or email Mariyana Kostov if you need your documents scanned or copied.

AAA staff certified to teach Tai Chi for Arthritis
Three River Valley AAA staff members have become certified Tai Chi for Health Instructors. Eboni Holder, Charlotte Davis, and Lacey Pitts completed the training in Macon and are certified to teach the Tai Chi for Arthritis form that is part of Dr. Paul Lam’s Tai Chi for Health series.

Our new Tai Chi instructors will facilitate Wellness Day at the RVRC Columbus office in October and then begin teaching classes in selected senior centers in the region.

The AAA staff join 61 other instructors (45 new instructors, 16 recertified instructors) around the state who will offer the classes thanks to a Systems Integration Grant awarded to the Division of Aging Services by the Administration for Community Living. The purpose for the grant is to bring evidence-based initiatives and programs into Georgia communities.

Tai Chi has been shown to increase muscle strength to protect and support joints, increase flexibility and balance to help reduce falls, and boost overall fitness to help improve quality of life. Tai Chi’s slow movements and gentle application of force make it ideal for seniors or those with limited athletic abilities due to physical restrictions. It can even be practiced while sitting in a chair.

A listing of events is available at: www.livewellagewell.info/.

River Valley AAA welcomes new staff
RVRC welcomes two new staff members to the Area Agency on Aging – Lacey Pitts and Donna McKay.

Lacey is the data resource specialist for the AAA. She was born in Albany and spent a large part of her childhood in Columbus before moving to Cordele. She graduated from Crisp County High School. Lacey earned a B.A. in English from Georgia Southwestern State University in Americus and is a certified classroom teacher. She spent eight years in secondary and post-secondary education before joining the AAA. In her spare time, Lacey enjoys knitting and crocheting, cycling, and collecting Mr. Potato Head figures.

Donna is the options counselor and assists individuals with determining care choices based on their needs, preferences, values, and circumstances. She has eight years of social service experience with senior citizens, developmentally disabled and mental health populations. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in health science from Columbus State University and a Master of Public Administration from Troy University. She is a native of Columbus; she enjoys working out and spending time with her puppy, Beau.
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Macon County receives USDA grant

The Development Authority of Macon County received an $85,000 USDA Rural Development Rural Business Enterprise Grant to establish a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) in order to assist new and growing businesses in Macon County. Georgia Pea and Product Company was the first beneficiary of the RLF and used the loan to buy new equipment to help with the shelling and freezing of peas and other produce grown in the area. The company is now able to run three shifts with a total of 25 employees, 18 of which were former employees of Allen Frozen Foods which closed last year.

WIA participates in Community Resource Fair

The SGTC WIA staff participated in South Georgia Technical College’s Community Resource Fair held September 3 at the Crisp County Center. The event gave community and social organizations the opportunity to increase awareness and showcase support services. Staff members Minnie Williamson and Sandhya Muljibhai displayed information on the WIA Services available through SGTC.

AAA supports Community Service Awards

The River Valley Agency on Aging and Disability Resource Connection was a sponsor of The Courier/Eco Latino newspaper’s 2014 Community Service Awards event. The awards program was held at the Occasions Event Center on July 26 and recognized 25 individuals or organizations from Columbus, Phenix City and Fort Benning for their service to the African-American, Hispanic, and other minority communities.

Certificate of Appreciation presented to Crisp Youth Detention Center

The Middle Flint Workforce Investment Board (WIB) presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Crisp Youth Detention Center (YDC) for its participation with the On-The-Job Training (OJT) services funded by WIA. Crisp YDC has utilized the WIA OJT services to fill employment positions with the Cordele facility.

Vienna improves ISO classification

The ISO classification for the Vienna Volunteer Fire Department has improved from a Class 4 to Class 3. This is an exceptional rating for a small town with an all-volunteer department. Nationwide, there are 2,410 Class 3 fire departments and only 810 departments have classifications lower than Class 3. The Dooly County EMA Director Kenny Calhoun and the City of Vienna expressed their appreciation for the assistance the River Valley Regional Commission provided in updating the city water maps, which led to the improved classification.
WIA participant completes training and gets promotion

Lauren Johnson, a WIA On-The-Job Training (OJT) participant, began her training at Pinehill Nursing Center in Byromville (Dooly County) as an administrative assistant in March 2014. Lauren successfully completed her training and has been promoted to human resources manager, serving a vital role in the day-to-day operations of the facility.

Beverly Mathis is the administrator for Pinehill Nursing Center, a 102-bed skilled nursing and rehabilitation center. Ms. Mathis has used the OJT program for a number of years to fill employment vacancies at the center.

For more information on the WIA OJT program, please contact Dawn Ward at 229-273-4568.

Call Center expands in Americus

The Americus-Sumter County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting on September 18 to celebrate the expansion of PharmaCentra, ConCentra Solutions, and PetCareRX in Americus. Thirty-five jobs will be added over the next six months.

Condolences

RVRC extends its condolences to the family and friends of Delores Felder, a long-time Marshallville councilwoman and mayor pro-temp, who passed away September 18. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and the city.

Sanford speaks at SWGU meeting

Southwest Georgia United held its annual membership meeting and 20th anniversary celebration August 21 at the Gillespie-Selden Administration Building in Cordele. Representative Sanford Bishop Jr. was the guest speaker. The organization’s mission is to work with communities to reduce poverty and improve quality of life in Dooly and Crisp counties.

EDA grant establishes Regional Commission Geospatial Network; RVRC will participate

The Economic Development Administration has awarded $100,000 grant to establish the Georgia Regional Commission Geospatial Network, a statewide initiative between the 12 regional commissions and the Geospatial Information Office for Georgia. The initiative will compile base maps and information needed by all levels of government and businesses to provide enhanced property mapping, detailed hazard mitigation planning, focused economic development studies, and other services for better comprehensive planning. Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia will administer the grant.
Rural Stars in the River Valley Region

The Southern Lower Chattahoochee Council of Governments held its annual meeting August 28 at the Cuthbert United Methodist Church. Area businesses were recognized with the Rural Star designation for their contributions to the community. Kenneth Cutts, District Director for Congressman Sanford Bishop, gave the keynote address. Recognized as Rural Stars were Anderson Construction Company, Clay County (Melanie Williams), D&J Plastics, Quitman County (Joyce and Dennis Montgomery), Peerless Manufacturing, Randolph County (Kadie Phillips and Vickie Andrews), and Richland Rum, Stewart County (Karin and Erik Vonk).

Would you like to receive the RVRC newsletter via email? Please send your contact information to manderson@rivervalleyrc.org