The RVRC will move to its new Columbus office at 710 Front Avenue on November 12.

DCA Commissioner Camila Knowles presented the annual Community Development Block Grant awards in a ceremony September 11 on Jekyll Island. Pictured receiving for Georgetown-Quitman are State Representative Gerald Greene, County Commission Chair Richard Morris, DCA Commissioner Camila Knowles, County Commissioner David Kinsey, RVRC staff Jim Livingston and Allison Slocum. See more CDBG awards photos on Pages 4-6.

RIVER VALLEY RECEIVES $4.5 MILLION IN CDBG AWARDS

Nine communities in the River Valley region received Community Development Block Grant funding from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), which administers the program on behalf of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Seventy-nine Georgia communities received CDBG funding this year.

The RVRC assisted the following cities and county with their successful CDBG applications:

- City of Cordele, $500,000 for sewer system improvements
- City of Cuthbert, $500,000 for sewer system improvements
- City of Ellaville, $372,865 for water system improvements
- City of Fort Gaines, $500,000 for sewer system improvements
- Georgetown-Quitman, $328,407 for street/drainage improvements
- City of Montezuma, $500,000 for water system improvements
- Taylor County, $500,000 for water system improvements
- City of Vienna, $500,000 for sewer system improvements

“These projects enable the cities and counties to meet many critical infrastructure needs, which left unfunded would not be done,” said RVRC Executive Director Patti Cullen. “The implementation of these projects will go a long way in improving the quality of life for many of the region’s low and moderate income residents.”

Additionally, Dooly County received an $800,000 multi-purpose grant.
From the Executive Director’s Desk...

Fall is in the air and with the change of seasons comes new opportunities to celebrate our region! Many communities have fall festivals and events which showcase their downtowns, their heritage and their cultural resources.

I grew up in a family that always had fall cleaning …we cleaned the house extra well and even washed the windows to prepare for company that would be coming during the holidays. I relate this to what our cities and counties are doing to spruce up their communities for the visitors who will travel to the region over the next few months.

Whether it is a Friday night football game or one of the numerous festivals in the region, we have an opportunity to showcase our region.

Let’s work together to put our best foot forward and welcome the many visitors who will come to see us. Fall brings a certain atmosphere of excitement, enthusiasm and pleasure, so get out and enjoy what our region has to offer!

Patti

Planning Department receives GPA Award
The Georgia Planning Association presented RVRC an award for best Plan Implementation at the fall GPA conference in Savannah. The award recognized work stemming from the Digital Economy Plan, which included a suggestion for the creation of a makerspace in Columbus. ColumbusMakesIt is now up and running and is one of the largest makerspaces in the south. The makerspace is located in the warehouse section of the new RVRC building located on Front Avenue in Columbus. Jim Livingston accepted the award on behalf of RVRC.

Staff Spotlight

RVRC announces the promotions of Katie Howard to Area Agency on Aging director and Jim Livingston to Community and Economic Development director.

Katie Howard was born and raised in Columbus where she lives with her husband and two children, David and Meagan. Katie received her B.S. in industrial management from Auburn University and a master’s in business administration from Columbus State University. From 1985-1994 she served as the Area Agency on Aging director until her husband was transferred to Hawaii. Upon returning to Columbus in 2000, Katie came back to the RDC as the director of Economic Development. Later on she became the director of Community and Economic Development. She is excited to return to the field of Aging after a 20-year absence.

Jim Livingston spent time working in rural North Carolina and New Orleans on redevelopment, planning and economic development issues before joining the RVRC in 2013 as a special projects coordinator. His work has been recognized by the City of New Orleans, the New Orleans City Council as well as local newspapers for his leadership in the redevelopment and revitalization of New Orleans post-Katrina. At the RVRC, Jim is responsible for addressing the community, infrastructure and economic development issues in the region.

Jim is a graduate of Davidson College with a degree in history, and a graduate of the University of Florida with a MA in political science and a certificate in public affairs. Jim is also an Eagle Scout and volunteers his time coaching soccer, chess and helping with Boy Scouts.

REVERSING LOAN FUND
The RVRC has funds available to assist start-up and existing small business. For more information on how you can qualify, contact: Sarah Walls (swalls@rivervalleyrc.org) or Jim Livingston (jlivingston@rivervalleyrc.org).
South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) and the Middle Flint Workforce Innovations Opportunities Act (WIOA) program have worked together for more than 30 years to educate and prepare citizens in the area for employment. Sparky Reeves, who retired as SGTC president in September, has been a dedicated supporter of the local Middle Flint Workforce system. Together SGTC and the Middle Flint Workforce system have helped improve the lives of many community citizens.

The Middle Flint WIOA funds two SGTC staff positions, which provide ITA (Individual Training Account) case management and service coordination for students attending SGTC under the WIOA-funded training services. President Reeves was a true partner in that he always wanted to know how SGTC could help Middle Flint WIOA services. He served as member of the Middle Flint Workforce Investment Board for six years.

The Middle Flint WIOA services and River Valley Regional Commission thank President Reeves for his dedication, leadership and support. He leaves behind a wonderful legacy in the community and the State of Georgia. Best wishes in your retirement, Sparky. You will be missed!
2015 Community Development Block Grant Awards

Cuthbert: Mark Stalvey (SRGR Architects), State Representative Gerald Greene, City Councilman Jimmy Rice, DCA Commissioner Camila Knowles, RVRC staff Jim Livingston, Grant Richardson, Allison Slocum.

Vienna: Joel Hanif (RVRC staff), City Administrator Michael Bowens, DCA Commissioner Camila Knowles, and Jim Livingston (RVRC staff).

Taylor County: Commissioner Camila Knowles and RVRC staff Grant Richardson and Jim Livingston.
2015 Community Development Block Grant Awards

Fort Gaines: State Representative Gerald Greene, Mayor Terina Kenyon, DCA Commissioner Camila Knowles, and RVRC staff Jim Livingston and Allison Slocum

Cordele: City Manager Edward Beach, Director of Housing and Urban Development Irene Cantrell, Community Development Secretary Rita Bass, DCA Commissioner Camila Knowles, and RVRC staff Jim Livingston and Mia Anderson. The City of Cordele also received a certificate for renewing its Revitalization Area Strategy.

Medicare Open Enrollment

Medicare Open Enrollment continues through December 7. The River Valley AAA’s Georgia Cares office is available to assist with enrollment questions. Call 1-866-552-4464 (Option 4).
2015 CDBG awards

Ellaville: Mayor David Theiss, DCA Commissioner Camila Knowles, and RVRC Staff Jim Livingston.

Montezuma: Superintendent of Water and Wastewater Jim Copland, DCA Commissioner Camila Knowles, RVRC staff Jim Livingston and Joel Hanif.

New RVRC mission statement

The mission of the RVRC shall be to create, promote and foster the orderly growth and economic prosperity for our region.

Vision Statement

A region where current and future generations succeed at home, at work, and in their communities.

Core Values

Accountability
Collaboration
Community
Innovation
Diversity
Integrity
Good Stewardship

Mapping Harris County

The Harris County Board of Commissioners approved a contract on August 12 that will allow the RVRC to update the county’s tax parcel data. RVRC will send the GIS files to qPublic (the online parcel portal), which will provide up-to-date online access to citizens.

Please contact Mariyana Kostov at mkostov@rivervalleyrc.org if you have any parcel-related requests or questions.
Schley County students learned about water pollution and the correct ways to collect and monitor water samples during an Adopt-A-Stream monitoring workshop presented by RVRC and Chattahoochee RiverWarden.

Environmental staff trains students in Adopt-A-Stream monitoring

On September 21, the River Valley Regional Commission hosted an Adopt-A-Stream workshop at Schley County High School.

Lance Renfrow from the RVRC and Cassie Renfrow from the Chattahoochee RiverWarden organization trained 18 students on proper bacterial monitoring using the Adopt-A-Stream protocol. The students learned about contributing factors of non-point source pollution that may be found in our creeks and rivers, which can include fecal coliform and dangerous bacteria. The focus of the training was proper collection of water samples, the growing of indicator E. coli bacteria cultures, and accurate interpretation of results.

These students may now collect water samples from their local streams and post their results on the Adopt-A-Stream database, which currently shows data collected by volunteers of 572 active sampling sites across Georgia.

This workshop was conducted as part of a contract with the RVRC and Georgia Environmental Protection Division to write a Watershed Management Plan for the Kinchafoonee Creek watershed, which is approximately 5 miles southwest of Ellaville.

Lance Renfrow conducted monthly sampling of the watershed using the same Adopt-A-Stream method that was taught to the Schley County High students. Because many of the samples collected from the Kinchafoonee Creek watershed yielded low counts of E. coli, suggesting low probability of the presence of pathogenic bacteria, the RVRC plans to apply for funds from GA EPD under Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act and the Healthy Watersheds Initiative.

These federal funds may be used to install best management practices throughout the watershed in order to help ensure that Kinchafoonee Creek and its tributaries remain healthy and continue to have low bacteria counts.

Staff participates in AIDS Walk/Run in Columbus

River Valley Aging staff participated in this year’s AIDS Walk/Run at the Riverwalk in Uptown Columbus. Jeremy Hobbs from the Columbus Better Way Foundation has hosted the walk in Columbus for the past several years. The Better Way Foundation provides information and resources relating to the HIV/AIDS population. Hobbs wants Columbus and surrounding communities to know that HIV/AIDS is no longer a “death sentence” and that with proper treatment and a vigilant care plan, people are living longer, healthier lives.
WIOA On-The-Job Training presents check to Tyson Foods

The Tyson Foods Inc. plant in Vienna received a $20,976 employer reimbursement check as part of its participation in the WIOA On-the-Job Training program.

Tyson Foods increased its number of employees recently when it expanded the Vienna facility. The Middle Flint WIOA assisted the company with its expansion by offering On-the-Job Training (OJT) services. Heart of Georgia Regional Educational Services Agency is the OJT training provider and worked closely with Tyson Foods human resources staff who referred WIOA-eligible individuals in need of employment opportunities.

The WIOA OJT services enrolled 23 people in employment opportunities with Tyson Foods. The program reimburses an employer 50% of the wages (up to $2,000) for each individual trained under the OJT activity.

An OJT training agreement was developed between Tyson Foods and RESA OJT staff for each eligible individual. The agreement detailed Tyson Foods’ required job duties and the skills needed for employment. Tyson staff supervisors implemented the training plan to ensure the OJT participants received proper training. The Tyson supervisor and participant completed a mid-point training evaluation to ensure the participant achieved the desired job duties and skills.

WIOA participants who successfully complete the OJT training activity are retained in permanent employment positions with Tyson Foods.
South Georgia Tech Parkway Groundbreaking

The groundbreaking for the improvements to the South Georgia Tech Parkway was held September 29. Officials and guests gathered on the campus of South Georgia Technical College to celebrate the project that will utilize $15 million of Transportation Investment Act (TIA) funds.

CARE-NET offers training on new Dementia Behavior Guide

The Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving partnered with the Georgia Coalition of CARE-NETs and the Area Agencies on Aging around the state to offer training to family caregivers for a new tool: The Dealing with Dementia Behavior Guide (DDB). Local CARE-NET Coordinator Linda Harris conducted the dementia training on September 17 for members of the West Central Georgia CARE-NET.

During the afternoon session members participated in the “Understanding Medicare” training presented by Shameika Averett, River Valley’s GeorgiaCares coordinator.

Donovan Granville, assistant district manager of the Social Security Administration, provided caregivers information related to qualification for different types of Social Security benefits.

To learn more about the West Central Georgia CARE-NET, contact Linda Harris at 706-256-2937, or by email at lharris@rivervalleyrcaaa.org
Innovative Senior Solutions Fall Festival

The GeorgiaCares program and ADRC (Aging and Disability and Resource Connection) participated in the annual Innovative Senior Solutions Fall Festival at South Georgia Technical College in Americus. More than 1,000 seniors were in attendance for the largest health fair and BINGO game in our 16-county area. GeorgiaCares played a Medicare puzzle game at its table and provided giveaways to all the participants. Pictured is Lacey Pitts, ADRC resource specialist, helping at the resource table.

“Caring for Caregivers” luncheon

The Greater Columbus Chapter of AARP held a caregiver luncheon on September 12 at the Medical Center Conference Center. The theme for the event was “Caring for Caregivers.” One of AARP’s initiatives focuses on caregiving and the challenges caregivers face. Former Columbus Mayor Robert Poydasheff was the speaker for the event. Categories recognized were a caregiver who cares for a child with special needs and a student pursuing a career in caregiver studies. AARP Greater Columbus Chapter nominated Glenda Boynton for the “Caring for the Caregiver Award” in the category of caring for a special needs child. She and her husband John Boynton are caregivers for their son, John Boynton Jr., who is diagnosed with Cerebral Palsy.

Pictured at left are Glenda Boynton, Linda Harris, RVRC’s caregiver specialist, and Katie Howard, AAA director.

Sumter and Taylor County students participating in REACH program

The Sumter and Taylor County Boards of Education have joined in Georgia’s REACH (Realizing Educational Achievement Can Happen) Program which was officially launched by Governor Nathan Deal on February 6, 2012.

REACH’s mission is to provide Georgia’s academically promising students with academic, social and financial support needed to graduate from high school and college and to be prepared for work in the 21st century. It is the first public-private needs-based scholarship opportunity.

Three students from Sumter County Middle School will participate in the program: Keyara Williams, Keyandria Green, and Alexis Salazar-Sanchez. On September 30, 2015, the three students and their parents signed contracts agreeing to partner with their school throughout the REACH process.

Five students from Taylor County will participate in the program: Catya Allen, Tanner Allen, DaeQuan Duggar, Chance McCants and Jy’kel Thomas.
The Southern Lower Chattahoochee Council of Governments (LCCOG) held its annual meeting August 27 at the Richland Hotel. Area businesses receiving the Rural Star designation for their contributions to the community were B&S Air, Fort Gaines Health and Rehabilitation, Michelle’s Restaurant, and Whatley Oil. Pictured above are Wayne and Sue Perryman of Michelle’s Restaurant with LCCOG Chairman Richard Morris.

BRI Care Consultation now available for Georgia caregiving families

Submitted by The Rosalyn Carter Institute for Caregiving

The Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving in partnership with the Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging (BRI) has completed the initial training in BRI Care Consultation for six Georgia Area Agencies on Aging.

BRI Care Consultation is evidence-based information and coaching service delivered by care consultants by telephone and online communication that was developed through a series of research studies by BRI. The program supports caregivers and care receivers with chronic physical or mental health conditions by empowering them to manage care and decision-making more effectively by assisting them in finding simple and practical solutions to their caregiving challenges.

Following the completion of a successful three-year implementation study of the effectiveness of this model of service through three Georgia Area Agencies on Aging, the Georgia Department of Aging Services has added BRI Care Consultation to Georgia’s statewide menu of services.

For more information, contact Cindy Holloway at 229-931-2238 or email cynthia.holloway@gsu.edu.
Cycling through the River Valley

(Above) The Find Your Park Centennial Bike Ride brought 45 riders to the River Valley August 28-30 to explore our two National Historic Sites, three State Parks, and take a ride on the SAM Shortline Excursion Train.

(Left) The annual Fair on the Square Carter Butts Memorial Ride in Lumpkin on October 17 had another successful year with 95 riders registered.