The OneGeorgia Authority held its quarterly board meeting on December 7, 2009 in Thomasville, Georgia. At that award ceremony, Governor Perdue announced awards across the state including four in the area. RVRC staff were actively involved in the development of three of these awards.

The Randolph County Development Authority received a $500,000 loan from the OneGeorgia Authority. This loan will be used by A.G. Daniels Company (formerly known as AgPro Industries) in the start-up of their cotton gin reclamation business. This project will create 70 jobs with a private investment of over $5 million.

The City of Vienna received a grant of $500,000 as part of a major effort to upgrade the city’s sewer system. The sub recipient for this grant is Tyson Foods located in Vienna. This project will retain 600 jobs with a private investment of $5 million. Sumter, Crisp and Dooly Counties were a co-applicant on this project.

Season’s Greeting!

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S DESK:

The Holiday Season is upon us which makes us all take time to count our blessings.

At the River Valley Regional Commission we are thankful for our staff of dedicated professionals who consistently go the extra mile. We are also thankful for the elected officials in all sixteen counties for their hard work and commitment. The newly formed Regional Council has worked hard to provide leadership for the Regional Commission and we appreciate all that they do.

I encourage you to take time to count your blessings. We all have much to be grateful for, even in these difficult economic times.

My wish for you this season is a safe and happy holiday.
Each issue of News in the Valley a different development authority will be spotlighted. These volunteers and paid staff provide critical services to existing businesses as well as working to recruit new businesses to the region. This month Cordele-Crisp County is the featured Development Authority.

Cordele’s industrial parks are booming. Bruce C. Drennan, Executive Director of the Cordele-Crisp Industrial Development Council, attributes Cordele’s success to two key elements: A strategic plan and being designated a federal empowerment zone. The Cordele-Crisp County Industrial Development Council is a strong Economic Development Engine in Crisp County. Bruce Drennan, Executive Director of the Cordele-Crisp County Industrial Development Council (IDC), has been an aggressive and effective economic tool for the region while State of Georgia. He worked efficiently to bring new jobs and private investment to the region while expanding local businesses. One example of his success is Crisp Power’s number one customer for electricity, Cordele’s Norbord Inc., a Canada-based manufacturer of oriented strand board used in roofing and a tongue-and-groove flooring material, both used in the construction of residences. Norbord finished a $135 million expansion of its Cordele plant earlier this year, essentially doubling its floor space and adding 120 workers to bring total employment to about 250. The expansion came as Norbord was shutting down two other locations in the South, making the company’s growth here especially significant.

The IDC was founded in 1987 by the City of Cordele, Crisp County Board of Commissioners, and Crisp County Power Commission to promote, develop, and expand industry, agriculture, trade, and commerce for the citizens of Cordele / Crisp County, Georgia.

On November 4-6, 2009 the Georgia Association of Regional Commissions held its 11th Annual Training Conference at St. Simmons Island. The River Valley Regional Commission was well represented by both staff and Council members. Council members attending included Chair Wayne Anthony, Columbus City Councilor; Vice Chair Terrell Hudson, Commissioner Dooly County; Secretary Clinton Perry, Commissioner Taylor County; Councilor Eloise Paschal, Americus City Council, Walt Rosso, Chair Unified Government of Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, Harry Lange, Chair Harris County Board of Commissioners, and Andrea Brooks, Sumter County Board of Commissioners. RVRC staff members attending were Patti Cullen, Gerald Mixon, Rick Morris, Tiffany Ingram, Allison Siocum and Tina Rust. The conference was attended by 300 plus people throughout the state. Highlights of the conference included presentations by Vance Smith, GDOT Commissioner; Mike Beatty, DCA Commissioner; Jerry Griffin, ACCG Director; Lamar Norton, GMA Legislative Director and several state legislators. The 2010 conference will be held Novem-
Georgia for a Lifetime is an initiative of the Georgia Council on Aging. Georgia, like most parts of the country and the world, is experiencing a dramatic shift in its population. In 2008, the Georgia General Assembly asked the Georgia Council on Aging to study the effects of this impending population shift on state and local governments, private and non-profit organizations and to make recommendations for both short- and long-term actions. The report and the recommendations were presented in Macon on December 1, 2009. It is broken down into five distinct sections: Housing, Transportation, Civic Engagement, Health and Economic Self-Sufficiency. Expert panelists discussed what is being done in Georgia. These included: Charles Krautler, Executive Director of Atlanta Regional Commission, Donnie Henriques, Mayor of Woodstock, and Walter Coffie, President and CEO of Aging Services of Georgia.

Undercounted communities are under-funded communities. The survey is only 10 questions so it doesn’t take much time.

Take the first step towards making your community better by being counted and helping others in your community be counted.

It is up to you!

The River Valley Regional Commission has money to lend from its’ EDA Revolving Loan Fund. The fund was established by the RVRC and the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration to encourage new or expanded private businesses.

The creation and retention of quality jobs serves as the main objective of the program. Toward this goal, the RVRC does not intend to compete with local lending institutions or to act as a venture capitalist. Rather, by providing financial assistance to development opportunities, the Revolving Loan Fund will bridge the financial gap that exists between the amount private lending institutions are willing to commit for project development and the total amount needed to bring opportunities to completion.

The purpose of the RLF is to support business activities for which credit is not otherwise available on terms and conditions which would permit competition and/or the successful operation of the project. For more information contact Shelley Montgomery in the Columbus office or Sarah Walls in the Americus Office.
RVRC Bicycle and Pedestrian staff visited Flournoy Development during their employee Health Fair. At this fair, RVRC staff promoted the Bike to Work Day event, which is scheduled to take place on Friday, May 22, 2010. Also, health and safety information as well as inner city cycling maps were handed out to participants. If your organization is hosting a health and fitness event, green fairs, lunch and learns, etc. the RVRC would like the opportunity to talk to your employees about riding their bikes to work and how they can do this safely as well as all the health benefits from engaging in this activity. For more information contact Julio Portillo at jportillo@rivervalleyrc.org (706) 256-2910 or visit www.activevalley.org

RVRC Bicycle and Pedestrian staff kicked off their health and safety campaign titled: SAME ROADS, SAME RULES, SAME RIGHTS at the Columbus, GA Veterans’ Day Parade. RVRC staff and other community volunteers wore their yellow safety T-shirts to raise awareness on the importance of sharing the road with cyclists and respecting pedestrians. This safety campaign will be an ongoing effort to educate motorists, cyclists and pedestrians on the importance of following basic traffic rules and sharing the road with other users. If you or your organization would like to know more about this campaign and how the RVRC can help raise awareness for bicycle and pedestrian safety within your organization, please contact Julio Portillo at jportillo@rivervalleyrc.org (706) 256-2910 or visit www.activevalley.org

MEdicare Part D—Open Enrollment

If you did not sign up for a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan when you were first eligible, please enroll. There is a penalty of 1% of the monthly premium for every month that you wait to enroll and the penalty is for life. The next enrollment period is November 15, 2010 through December 31, 2010. For more information contact Shameika Averett at 706/256-2910 or saverett@rivervalleyrcaaa.org

Bike and Pedestrian Safety Program Update

WIA Success Story

Lonniequea Sutton is an example of how the Workforce Investment Program is at work.

Lonniquea Sutton, a Dooley County youth, began working under the WIA Summer Youth Work Experience in June 2009. Lonniquea was assigned to work at the Dooley County Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) as a clerical assistant. The Work Experience activity was extended through December 2009 for out of school older youth. Lonniquea continues to work at Dooley DFCS and is also enrolled in college pursuing a Nursing field of study.

Lonniquea has been an excellent worker under this program. The worksite Supervisor has given Ms. Sutton excellent evaluation ratings on her work skills, attitude and attendance at the worksite. Staff would like to express their thanks and appreciation to the Dooly County DFCS office for hosting a worksite for these programs. “The program would not be able to sponsor these activities without the help from local area agencies to serve as worksites,” said Janice West, WIA Director.

The Work Experience activity is funded by the Middle Flint Workforce Investment Board and American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

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The River Valley GeorgiaCares office is available to assist Medicare beneficiaries with their choices for Plan Year 2010.

Open enrollment for Medicare Part D, or Medicare’s Prescription Drug Plan will end December 31, 2009. Changes will become effective January 1, 2010. This enrollment period is for beneficiaries to enroll in a plan, if they have not already done so, and give an opportunity for current beneficiaries to change plans if they are unhappy with their current plan. Notifications in changes should have been received by all beneficiaries in October. Beneficiaries will be able to make changes to their Medicare health and drug coverage during the open enrollment period, which begins on Nov. 15th and ends Dec. 31st.

Prescription drug and health plans change each year, as do each beneficiary’s individual coverage needs, so all people with Medicare are encouraged to take advantage of the 2010 enhanced online tools and review their coverage options. Changes in premiums and coverage may mean the plan in 2009 is not the best one for 2010.

The 2010 tools will make it easier for beneficiaries and all partners to get the information they need about plan options for the coming year. Beneficiaries who wish to enroll for the first time or change their coverage for 2010 should do so by early December to ensure a smooth transition in the new plan year.
**STAFF SPOTLIGHT**

**Tiffany Ingram** is the director of the River Valley Area Agency on Aging in Columbus, Georgia. Seven years ago she felt like “life had come full circle” when she accepted this position because her first job out of college was with Family and Children Services working with the elderly and disabled. Prior to AAA she worked as the Executive Director of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development through the Department of Community Affairs in providing leadership classes throughout the state. Prior to that position Tiffany was the director of Economic Development for the Lower Chattahoochee RDC. She also worked many years in her home county, Talbot, as the Board of Commissioners clerk.

Tiffany has a BS in Social Services from Columbus College and has completed the Certification for Local Government Finance Officer through the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, UGA.

Originally from Moultrie, Georgia, Janice resides in Americus with her husband Jimmy and son Tyler. Hobbies include cooking, gardening and reading.

**Janice West** has worked for the APDC/RDC/Regional Commission for over 22 years. She began employment in the Job Training department which is now known as Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Services. Janice has worked in every position within her department prior to becoming the Workforce Director in 2006. Responsibilities include the daily operations, planning and service strategy development, and implementation, and program services management of Workforce Investment services.

The City of Cordele received a $500,000 OneGeorgia equity loan as part of a major effort to upgrade the city’s streets to recruit business near interstate 75 and State Route 300. The beneficiaries of this grant include McDonald’s, Flash Foods, and three (3) other local businesses. This project will create 68 jobs with a private investment of $7,960,648. Doily, Crisp, and Wilcox Counties were co-applicants.

The Harris County Development Authority received $1 million in EDGE funds from OneGeorgia to assist in the location of Hoover Universal in the county.

Both Mountain Oak Creek in **Harris County** and Pennahatchee Creek in **Dooly County** will undergo the second and final year of the planning process in order to reduce the TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) of fecal coliform present. The RVRC will also begin the first year of a two year plan to mitigate the pollution levels of a stream yet to be determined. Potential parameters to mitigate include high fecal coliform counts, low dissolved oxygen, and pH.
For the past few months the United States Census Bureau’s field surveyors have been working on verifying residential addresses throughout the RVRC communities. Some of the addresses which the RVRC submitted to the USCB last year have been rejected for two reasons: they either were not located and verified during the canvassing process or they were not residential addresses. Recently, the USCB has allowed an appeal regarding their decision to reject part of the data. To this effect, the RVRC staff has been working in conjunction with the city and county governments in obtaining additional supporting documentation verifying the existence of each rejected address. The initial deadline for the appeal process was extended by an additional 15 days. The extension will give staff enough time to compile additional supporting documentation for the appeal. After the completion of the appeal process for the rejected data, the USCB will create a master address list which will be used in any future population survey and census projects as part of the count form. If for any reason a resident doesn’t receive his or her USCB population count form, the forms can be picked up at several community locations. Locations will be announced. After completion mailed back in the attached, pre-paid envelope. Everyone needs to work to improve the accuracy of the census count within our communities.

Regional Important Resources Projects

The RVRC planning staff has begun work on the Regional Important Resources (RIRs) project. Following the Department of Community Affairs’ specific rules and guidelines, the RC staff will identify RIRs, both natural and cultural, in the region, develop a plan for their protection and management and review all activities that may impact RIRs. A nomination letter has been sent to local government officials asking them to identify any additional valuable natural and cultural resources located within the region. The first draft of the map, showing the current list of RIRs, has been created and includes:

- state parks
- wildlife management areas
- public fishing areas
- historic districts

After the Regional Resource Plan is completed, it will be submitted for review to the Department of Community Affairs and other affected parties before it is formally adopted and implemented by the Regional Commission.

A draft map of RIR is included in this issue. Please review it and send comments to the Regional Commission.

Housing Rehabilitation Programs Make A Difference

Macon County uses housing rehabilitation funds available under DCA’s CDBG Grant application process for rehabilitation of housing units. DCA and regional governmental goals are to provide decent housing to residents where possible. Before and after photos of the outside of one successful rehabilitated house demonstrates the benefits of considering the undertaking of a housing program in a community. The inside of this housing unit was significantly improved as well as the outside. The residents now have a decent house to live in. Jarrod McCarthy is the RC grant writer and project administrator for Macon County’s Housing Rehabilitation program.

For more information on the Macon County Housing Rehabilitation Program, contact Jarrod McCarthy at jmccarthy@rivervalleyrc.org or call 229/931-2909.
Living at Home, Living Longer, Living Safely, Living Well

The River Valley Area Agency on Aging Community Care Services Program provides an alternative to nursing home placement. Services provided include emergency response pendants, care plans with care coordinator social service workers, RN assessments, meals, transportation, respite, homemaker, personal care and many others. Eligibility requirements are both financial and level of care that requires authorization from a doctor. Eligibility starts in our office and our Gateway screeners can answer all your questions. Call and ask our Gateway staff how you can get help in your home.

Here are some quotes from clients that are receiving CCSP:

Seventy three year old male from Marshallville: “I could not stay in my home if I didn’t get services from CCSP, I would be in a nursing home”.

Seventy five year old female from Columbus: “This program has helped me stay independent and I can stay in my own house and don’t have to rely on my children to take care of me. I don’t want to go into the nursing home, I am so thankful for this program”.

Sixty four year old female from Columbus: “Without the CCSP services I would become a burden to my family. I am able to live independently.”

Cordele Intermodal Facility

The Cordele-Crisp County Industrial Development Council has worked diligently to create economic development opportunities in the city and county. One of their most successful efforts is identified by Bruce Drennen, Executive Director of the Cordele-Crisp County Industrial Development Council, who identifies the project as the “Cordele Intermodal Center.” The main attractions for logistics is the convenient rail links and interstate highway access. Three rail lines—CSX, Norfolk Southern, and Georgia Midland Railroad (the line with direct connection to Savannah)—converge in Crisp County.

The project would provide new highway-railroad intermodal service between central and southwestern Georgia and the Port of Savannah. The new service would provide an alternative to trucking containers the entire route between Savannah and cities such as Albany and Americus, in addition to Cordele.

Containerized export products could be trucked or rail transferred to the Crisp County terminal where containers would be placed on rail cars and sent to the Savannah Port. In Savannah regional goods would be loaded on ships and distributed to the global market place. Likewise, containerized imports would be received and sent by rail car to Cordele for distribution by trucks or rail to designated points.

The increased import and export will have a significant impact on the Crisp County region.

The Intermodal Center could have a significant economic impact in expected growth of related services.
**Staff Achieves Certification**

Eryn Dodds and Rochella Wright attended the SE4A (SOUTHEASTERN ASSOCIATION OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING) Conference in Charleston, S.C., Sept 26-30, 2009. While there, they took certification test. Both passed and are now CIRS-A (Certified Information and Referral Specialists-Aging). Kia Morris, Gateway Coordinator, is also certified.

AIRS Certification is a professional credentialing program for individuals working within the I&R sector of Human Services.

Certification is a measurement of documented ability in the field of I&R reflecting specific competencies and related performance criteria, which describes the knowledge, skills, attitudes and work-related behaviors needed by I&R practitioners to successfully execute their duties. The AIRS Certification Program is operated in alignment with the standards provided by the National Organization for Competency Assurance.

Certification is available for three specializations within I&R. Individuals who successfully pass the AIRS certification examination are awarded a certificate, lapel pin and may use the following credentials after their names:

- CIRS — Certification for I&R Specialists
- CIRS-A — Certification for I&R Specialists in Aging
- CRS — Certification for Resource Specialists

**Dreams Can Come True**

Dan Ariail, of Americus, is a firm believer that dreams can become reality at South Georgia Technical College. He graduated from South Georgia Technical College’s second Law Enforcement Academy Class in October and began his new job as a Sumter County Civil Deputy in the new Sumter County Courthouse the following Monday morning.

“I was with Mulcoa for ten years and was laid off,” said Ariail. “While I was unemployed, I started looking around to see what was available. On the job search you can find hundreds of jobs, but hardly any careers. That’s why I decided to go to South Georgia Tech and enroll in the Law Enforcement Academy. This is something that I had thought that I would really enjoy, so I enrolled and I am glad I did.”

Ariail was able to take advantage of the HOPE Grant, which allows qualified Georgia residents to attend South Georgia Technical College practically tuition free. He also found out that as a displaced worker, he was eligible to enroll in the Workforce Investment Act program.

The Law Enforcement Academy is one of the programs supported by the Workforce Investment Act, and with the help of WIA Coordinator Sandhya Muljibhai and WIA Assistant Minnie Williamson, Ariail was able to receive WIA benefits. This helped with books, uniforms, and other educational materials.

“I couldn’t have completed my courses without the WIA program. WIA gave me financial assistance, motivation for reaching my goal, and counseling toward my future career. I would highly recommend WIA to any student who is starting a new career,” said Ariail.

“When we have self-motivated students such as Mr. Ariail, we get excited about helping someone like that,” said Muljibhai. “WIA helped Dan purchase his uniforms and school materials.”

Ariail believes that WIA is a valuable program for students to take advantage of. “With WIA, a student has a better chance of achieving the goal of graduation, which is the reason for going to school. I want to thank SGTC’s instructors and staff, with a special thanks to the WIA program, for all that they have done for me,” said Ariail.

The WIA program, in addition to providing funds to pay for supplies and materials students may need, also offers counseling and motivation. That motivation along with his dream of starting a new career has helped Ariail realize that dreams can become reality.

Ariail resides in Americus with his wife, Sherrie and their four children, Hannah Ariail, 21; Nicholas Ariail, 15; Ciara James, 15; and Zachary James, 12.

For more information about WIA at South Georgia Tech, contact Sandhya Muljibhai at 229.931.2553 or Janice West.
INTERNATIONAL WALK TO SCHOOL DAY

October 6, 2009 – Chattahoochee County Elementary School, recipient of a Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Grant, continues to demonstrate how they promote safe cycling and walking to school by participating in the International Walk to School Day. This event had the support of local elected officials, Sheriff’s Department, Volunteer Fire Department and RVRC staff. The entire student body, along with faculty and staff, walked to school the day of the event.

IMPROVEMENTS IN VIENNA’S WASTEWATER PLAN BENEFIT

Vienna has had serious problems with their sewerage treatment facility. These problems have impacted both the residents and Tyson Foods, the largest employer in the county. As part of a $2 million project to make improvements to the sewerage system Buddy Strength, of the Americus office of the River Valley Regional Commission, wrote an Immediate Threat and Danger Grant (ITAD) to fund replacement of motive pumps. The city received $41,329.63 from the Department of Community Affairs and matched it dollar for dollar with local funds.

The ITAD funded the replacement of the motive pumps which are a very critical component in the SBR wastewater treatment process. Vienna has also applied for funding from the Economic Development Administration, Employment Incentive Program and One Georgia Authority (funded) to perform other needed improvements.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

In addition to being a newly formed Regional Commission on July 1, 2009, the RC became a new Economic Development District. Economic Development Districts (EDD) are established by the Economic Development Administration and by Federal Designation. By establishing the Economic Development Districts, EDA supports the economic development needs of distressed communities throughout the United States. EDA’s mission is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness and preparing American regions for economic growth. River Valley’s EDD, with its sixteen County members, realize that by sharing a common workforce, a common geography, and a number of common economic factors, their fates are tied together.

The River Valley Regional Commission is the Administrative Agent for the River Valley EDD. The establishment of the EDD and the production of the planning document known as the CEDS Five Year Plan allows the EDD region to be eligible for Federal EDA grant dollars.

The planning process for the CEDS will begin in January. A group made of up of Regional Council members will serve as the CEDS committee; however, public input on projects to be listed in the CEDS is critical. If you have any ideas or want to discuss this further, contact Kay Hagler at the Americus office (229-931-2909) khagler@rivervalleyrc.org or Katie Howard (706-256-2928) khoward@rivervalleyrc.org in the Columbus office.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
from the Staff of the River Valley Regional Commission

R. B. Holmes Photography