



December 2017

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The Region's Fiscal Year 2017 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Awards



Cordele: City Manager Edward Beach, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, and Director of Housing and Urban Advancement Irene Cantrell



Montezuma: RVRC staff members Ansley Fitzner and Joel Hanif, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, and Representative Patty Bentley



Pine Mountain: Representative Debbie Buckner, City Clerk Betsy Sivell, Mayor Jim Trott, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, and RVRC staff Jim Livingston

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) awarded several communities in our region CDBGs at their annual "Big Check" ceremony in Savannah this October. The River Valley Regional Commission wrote and will be administering 5 CDBG awards for the region: Cordele, Montezuma, Pine Mountain, Reynolds and Talbotton.



Reynolds: RVRC staff Grant Richardson, Public Works Director Scott Jones, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, and Representative Patty Bentley



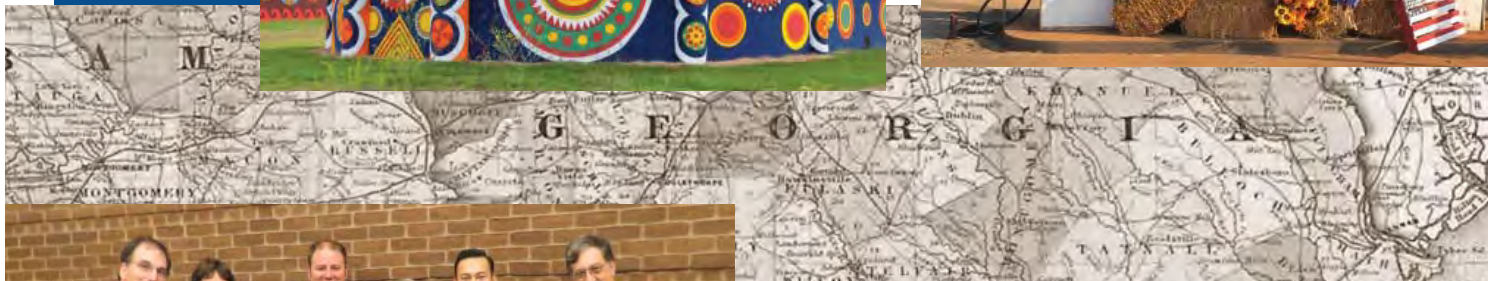
Talbotton: Representative Debbie Buckner, Mayor Tony Lamar, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, and RVRC staff Jim Livingston

The RVRC also wrote two Employment Incentive Program (EIP) funding applications for Harris County Development Authority and the Sumter County Payroll Development Authority which were acknowledged during the ceremony. Other communities in the region receiving CDBG funding were the cities of Butler, Dooling, and Vienna.

Several reviewers of the CDBG applications made note of the dramatic, compelling photos submitted with proposed projects this year. Photographs of potential CDBG projects is essential in successful funding. Please tell front line workers to get photographs of problem areas, as well as repairs, and keep documentation to assist in writing CDBG proposals!

Executive Director's Note

As many of you know, we have started the process of developing the River Valley Regional Plan for 2018 through 2022. Many of you have participated or will participate in meetings that will use a SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) analysis to help shape Regional Policies, Goals and Key Strategies for our staff to work toward over the next five years. I had the opportunity to participate in several of these meetings and the positive attitude of the participants always amazes me. At one of the meetings a comment was made that really resonated with me and it is that we need to CELEBRATE our SUCCESSES no matter how small. I hope that this newsletter provides that inspiration. We are always looking for that big win (200+ jobs announcements, state championships, increase in tax revenues, etc.) but the small successes that each of us encounter every day in our communities is what makes us smile and want to live in the River Valley region. The murals on the city of Shellman silos, the newly refurbished Pasaquan village, and the Fall decorations that are so proudly displayed in our downtowns all let me know that we truly live in a special part of the state. I wish each one of you a holiday season filled with small things that are worth CELEBRATING! Celebrating our small successes together will bring positive results as we move forward to improve the quality of life for the residents of the River Valley region! -Patti



Pictured above: RVRC staff Rick Morris and Jim Livingston, GPA President Corey Hull, RVRC Executive Director Patti Cullen, RVRC Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner Julio Portillo, and Jim Summerbell, GPA President-Elect
Pictured below: GARC President Jim Dove, River Valley RC Executive Director Patti Cullen, Alice and Terrell Hudson

Outstanding Plan Implementation

At this year's Georgia Planning Association Awards Program held at the Columbus Convention and Trade Center on September 28th, the River Valley Regional Commission's Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was recognized as an award winner in the Outstanding Plan Implementation category. The RVRC Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan correlates impacts of bicycle and pedestrian planning with economic development, infrastructure, and health and social dynamics.



Terrell Hudson was recognized for four years of exceptional service as GARC Board Chairman at the annual GPA conference held in St. Simons, GA November 8-10.

Staff Spotlight

Aging Department:

Franetta Miles has been employed with the Regional Commission for over 17 years. With numerous job title changes over the years, she is currently the Wellness & Special Events Coordinator and loves her job! "Working at the RVRC is the best thing, career wise, that ever happened to me" she stated. "I actually enjoy coming to work because I work for and with wonderful people". Franetta has been married for 25 1/2 years and is the proud mother of two grown handsome sons whom she adores. Franetta enjoys spending time with her family, laughing with her friends and co-workers, shopping, shopping and shopping.



Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning:

Julio joined the River Valley Regional Commission in November, 2006 and currently works as a Regional Community and Bicycle-Pedestrian Planner. While in this position, he writes and administers Federal and State Grants, performs Comprehensive Planning, Rural Transit Planning, and manages the region's Bicycle-Pedestrian and Safe Routes to School Programs. Julio served on the Board of Directors of Goodwill Industries of the Southern Rivers 2013-2016, and is currently a Technical Advisor to the Board of Directors of Bicycle Columbus, Sumter Cycling, and the Chattahoochee Valley Area Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (CVA-SORBA). Julio attended Columbus State University where he obtained a Bachelor's of Business Administration and a Master's of Public Administration and where he is currently an Adjunct Professor of Political Science.



Local Awards and Certifications

GeorgiaCares SHIP and SMP Certifications



Pictured above: Cheryl Maddox (left) and Eboni Morris-Key (right)

Congratulations to Cheryl Maddox, GeorgiaCares Coordinator, and Eboni Morris-Key, GeorgiaCares Volunteer Coordinator, on their successful completion of the GeorgiaCares State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Counselor Certification. Cheryl and Eboni completed a twelve week intensive training program which included four SMP assessments, a SHIP written exam, and associated oral exams.

Local Finance Officer Certifications

Two Local Finance Officer Certifications were awarded in the region through the Institute of Government's financial management training program. Level I certification requires finance officers to complete 108 hours of instruction about the intricacies of government budgeting, purchasing, accounting and other public finance topics. Level II Certified Financial Officers receive additional hours of instruction in governmental accounting and budgeting, internal controls and revenue administration.

Congratulations to Adria Williams, Clay County Board of Commissioners, on a Level I certification and to Taryn Roberson, Randolph County Board of Commissioners in receiving a Level II certification!



Lay-Leader Class Graduates

River Valley Regional Commission hosted a Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) Lay-Leader Class. This is the first step in becoming certified as a workshop leader for the Stanford University Chronic Disease Self-Management Program which is an evidence-based program designed to help others manage their own health, stay active, and take charge. The Lay-Leader Classes were held August 21, 22, 28 and 29, 2017. The classes were facilitated by River Valley Regional Commission's very own Master Trainer, Franetta Miles and Middle Georgia Regional Commission's Master Trainer, Nicole Gaither, who we greatly appreciate for lending her time and knowledge to our Lay-Leader Class. We had a total of nine participants who completed the first stage of certification. The final stage of certification will be for each participant to facilitate two classes within a year of training in their community to become completely certified.



Pictured left to right: Jessie Dawson, Marcella Bryant, Yolanda Thomas, Nicole Gaither, Katrina Tanner, LaTanjulla Benjamin, Betty Martin-Woods, Rodney Rawls, Franetta Miles, Marie Peterson

WIOA Branding Initiative

The State and local WIOA "Branding" initiative has been implemented at the local area Comprehensive One Stop Center (COSC). The Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) Americus Career Center serves as the local WIOA area designated One Stop Center. A pull-up banner has been placed in the lobby of the GDOL Americus Career Center and a permanent WorkSource Georgia Middle Flint sign will be installed on the outside of the GDOL Americus Career center location soon. Branding signage has also been implemented at the RVRC office and other WIOA Service Provider locations. These branding pull-up banners are utilized at various events and venues such as job fairs, High Demand Career Initiative (HDCI) meetings, targeted recruitment events, and Workforce Development Board meetings as well. Thanks to our State WIOA Workforce office for providing "Branding" grant funds to assist local areas with implementing this initiative.



Pictured above: John Shaw, Manager, GDOL Americus Career Center

2020 Census - Time for Local Government Involvement

On the U. S. Census Bureau website is a small document labeled, "2020 Census Schedule". Presented on page four is a Program Milestone table. The first and last table entries are: Begin 2020 Census-November 18, 2011; Complete 2020 Census-September 29, 2023. As of this month, staff with the Census Bureau has already been working six full years making preparations for the twenty-fourth decennial U. S. national census, April 1, 2020. Office planning and preparations for the census at the national level are now yielding to preparations in the field. For census takers to know where our residents live they will need accurate maps and residential addresses. The Bureau already has a map and address list for your jurisdiction, but for the purpose of performing the most accurate census possible they are making it available for the local government to review for any necessary corrections. Within the past two months, the chief elected official of all fifty-one of our local governments should have received registration forms allowing them to participate in the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA). If local officials still have the registration form, staff with the RVRC is available to assist with completion. If you do not have the form staff can provide you with a copy. This is the only opportunity a local government will have to make sure accurate maps and address lists are available to census takers and you must register by December 15. RVRC staff is available to help compare your local addresses with the Census lists, but we must be identified on your LUCA registration. The proportion of taxes you and your neighbors send to Atlanta and Washington D.C. in 2020-2030 are returned to your jurisdiction in 2021-2030 for local projects and are affected by local participation, or non-participation, in LUCA 2020. Contact Mariyana Kostov (706-660-5374) or Gerald Mixon (706-660-5373) for more information.

FORM D-2002 (2-22-2017) OMB No. 0607-0964; Approval Expires 12/31/2019

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economic and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

Entity ID
Government Name

United States Census 2020

REGISTRATION FORM
2020 CENSUS LOCAL UPDATE OF CENSUS ADDRESSES OPERATION (LUCA)

A. PARTICIPATION RESPONSE (Submission Deadline December 15, 2017)

1. YES Our government is registering for LUCA. - Complete Sections B and C.
2. NO Our government is not registering for LUCA. - Complete Section B and mark an (X) for each reason that applies:

a. Another level of government (state or county) that includes our jurisdiction is participating in LUCA
b. Insufficient staff
c. Lack of funds
d. No time/too busy
e. No local address list available

f. Concerns about Census Bureau Title 13 materials
g. Restrictions on using Census Bureau Title 13 materials for other purposes
h. Other reason - Specify (Please print) _____

Thank you for your comments. We will use them to help improve future LUCA operations.

B. SIGNATURE OF TRIBAL CHAIR OR HIGHEST ELECTED/APPOINTED OFFICIAL RESPONDING TO THE LUCA INVITATION

Regional Plan Update

The RVRC staff has begun development of the Regional Plan update, due June 27, 2018. The Regional Planning process defines the work program for the RVRC staff for the next five years and is extremely important to ensuring efficient provision of services to our communities.

The first part of the regional plan is the Regional Plan Assessment, an objective and professional analysis of data and information about the region. A Stakeholder Involvement Program is the second part of the regional plan that describes the Regional Commission's strategy for adequate public and stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the Regional Agenda. The Regional Agenda is the final part of the regional plan and includes the region's vision and strategy for the future.

Representatives from each county create the Leadership Team that will meet prior to RVRC Council meetings through April. Staff also scheduled four Successes, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threat (SWOT) Analysis meetings which took place throughout the fall. Any help you can give your RVRC staff with this process is greatly appreciated!



Regional Plan Meeting - RVRC Columbus Office



Regional Plan Meeting - Buena Vista



Regional Plan Meeting - Lower Chattahoochee Council of Governments

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) was submitted to the Economic Development Association (EDA) in September, 2017. The updated CEDS includes new regional goals and objectives:

Goals

- Develop People Resources in the Region
- Sustain and Improve the Land Assets of the Region

Objectives

- Provide quality, genuine places and experiences for visitors
- Assist the workforce of the region in gaining the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for regional jobs in the 21st Century
- Support the recruitment, retention and expansion of businesses in the region
- Help the region sustain and improve the quality of life
- Foster community leadership
- Support agriculture
- Improve infrastructure
- Support Main Street and downtown improvements
- Improve housing stock
- Maintain environmental integrity in the region

This CEDS is a collaborative effort between the RVRC CEDS Committee, economic development professionals throughout the region, and residents of the region through a comprehensive survey undertaken in the spring of 2017. The full report can be found here: <https://goo.gl/e1gygK>



River Valley Economic Data
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy



Pictured top: CEDS Economic Data cover page
Pictured bottom: Jim Livingston, RVRC Community and Economic Development Director, presents the updated CEDS document at the monthly council meeting

A Reminder to Our Local Governments:

DCA has become more stringent in its review of local government requirements. DCA disqualified several communities in our region and statewide in the latest round of funding due to failure to meet reporting requirements. Please take the time to review and submit necessary reports to the state in a timely manner. To check to see if your community is listed, please go to <http://www.dca.ga.gov/LocalGovStatus/planning.asp> Please call your RVRC staff if you have any questions.

Paxen Learning Work Experience



Pictured above: Sumter County Sheriff's Office Colonel Eric Bryant and Paxen Learning participants at the Sumter County Sheriff's Office Work Experience worksite

Paxen Learning, the WIOA Youth Service Provider, assists area youth participants with work readiness, career pathways services to build employment skills in preparation of employment, and work experience. Career pathways help youth explore various occupational areas and the educational requirements for those occupations. Interest and aptitude assessments are provided to help determine the individual's occupational interests and types of jobs with those interest areas.

Paxen invites local area employers to be guest speakers to talk about their occupations, participate in mock interviews with participants, and serve as Work Experience worksites. Thank You - Sumter County Sheriff's Department for participating with Career Exploration and Work Experience.

Fair on the Square - Lumpkin, GA

The Fair on the Square event, celebrating its 15th year, was a great success with 100 riders participating in the event on October 21st. Funds raised were designated to help restore the old jail. Also, the Stewart County Historic Commission received a \$5,000 grant from the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley to permanently designate 3 routes for bicyclists, naming them the Carter Butts Memorial Bicycle Route.



Fair on the Square Event
Poster, October 21st
Lumpkin, Georgia

Safe Kids Columbus and RVRC Partnership

RVRC bicycle and pedestrian staff has partnered with Safe Kids Columbus to assist in children's bicycle and walking safety programs. RVRC donated \$2,000 to the organization for assistance with purchasing 1,000 helmets that will be given away at the annual helmet giveaway on December 15 at the Columbus Public Library.

WIOA Success Story - Juanita Nelson

The Middle Flint Workforce area, like many towns in Georgia, was once home to a number of manufacturing facilities which provided employment opportunities for residents in and around the area. With the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, the manufacturing industry in the Middle Flint Area and other parts of Georgia began to see a decline. Federal funding was implemented to assist these unemployed workers which provided opportunities to receive education and training to prepare for employment in other occupational areas.

Juanita Nelson, a resident of Taylor County, worked in the sewing industry for over 26 years. When Ms. Nelson's employer (Dan Rivers, Inc.) closed, she became a Dislocated Worker. She knew gaining additional education and retraining in another occupational area would increase her chances for employment. Ms. Nelson took advantage of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and Trade Act educational opportunities and enrolled at South Georgia Technical College in Americus. She chose the Medical Assisting program of study in 2005 and graduated with a Diploma in 2006. The Middle Flint WIA and Trade Act services provided financial assistance towards her tuition, books, training supplies, uniforms, and other supportive services while she attended training at South Georgia Technical College. Ms. Nelson returned to employment at Sumter County Health Department as a medical assistant/clerk in 2006. She has been employed with the Sumter County Health Department for 11 years and continues to enjoy her job in the medical field working at the Health Department. Our goal is to provide assistance to individuals entering or returning to employment, to advise on increasing income earnings, and to ensure employment retention.

Janice West (WIOA Workforce Director) and Juanita Nelson recently reconnected at a community meeting. Janice West stated that one of the best things about her job is being able to see current and former WIOA participants around the area and the impact that WIOA services have on their life.



Juanita Nelson (left) WIOA participant and Janice West (right) WIOA Workforce Director

Georgia - Bicycle Friendly State

This month, the League of American Bicyclists announced individual state rankings for the nation and placed Georgia at number nineteen in the country for bicycle friendly states. Our local organizations, Sumter Cycling and Bicycle Columbus, are major contributors of regional awareness and collaboration making titles like Bicycle Friendly State possible. The River Valley Regional Commission serves as the technical advisor to both boards and assists with the implementation of bicycle safety, education and complete streets programs.



BICYCLE FRIENDLY STATE

International Walk to School Day

On October 4th, Clubview Elementary School and Richards Middle School celebrated international walk to school day in Columbus. Walkers were encouraged and acknowledged by the school marching bands who performed at the school entrances. Parents, teachers, students, school administrators and community members attended the event for a collective participation of 300 people at both school campuses.



Walk to School Participants
Clubview Elementary School



Marching Band, Walk to School Day
Richards Middle School

GeorgiaCares Events

The GeorgiaCares Team has been very busy sharing important information with seniors in the region. They participated in the Senior and Law Enforcement Together (S.A.L.T.) Summerfest event in July and a Savvy Senior Resource Fair in August. The S.A.L.T. Summerfest is an annual senior health and resource fair that offers entertainment, lunch, and beneficial information essential to everyday life. This organization helps to keep seniors of the community updated with news and health information. It allows them to come together, voice their opinions, and express their ideas on how to make Columbus a better place. In August the GeorgiaCares Savvy Senior Resource Fair provided information to the community regarding the 2018 changes to Medicare. Various vendors participated: Alzheimer's Association, Columbus Regional, Georgia Legal Services, and many more. The Savvy Saving Senior Event focused on providing financial savings information on Medicare and listed businesses which offer free or discounted items. Staff also hosted a Welcome to Medicare Birthday Party at Fox



Pictured, the GeorgiaCares team:
Dareion Hill, Eboni Morris-Key,
and Cheryl Maddox

Senior Center in August. Before the festivities, Eboni Morris-Key, Volunteer Coordinator, gave presentations on Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP), Open Enrollment, the latest Medicare scams, the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), and volunteer opportunities through the GeorgiaCares Program. In September, the GeorgiaCares team participated in National Medicare Education Week by visiting all sixteen of the region's senior centers, providing Medicare and Open Enrollment information for the upcoming 2018 year.

Senior Hunger Summit

The 2017 Senior Hunger Summit was an opportunity for professionals in the fields on aging and nutrition, as well as persons interested in the problems of hunger, to come together to discuss senior hunger and possible solutions. First Lady Sandra Deal spoke candidly about her years as a caregiver and the challenges she and Governor Deal faced. State Representative Carolyn Hughley (Columbus) was a member of a roundtable of elected officials. Commissioner Robyn Crittenden closed the two day session with a call to action to work together to end Senior Hunger.



Pictured: Field Operations
Manager Public Guardianship
Office, DHS Carlton Coleman,
RVRC AAA Director Katie Howard,
and Representative Carolyn
Hughley at the 2017 Hunger
Summit





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Chair - Clinton Perry, Jr.
Executive Director - Patti Cullen

www.rivervalleyrc.org



Delivering Our Region's Progress



Southern Snow, Dooly County 2017

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