



**News  
in  
the Region  
December 2018**

# FY18 Community Development Block Grant Awards!

## Region Scores! CDBG Awards

On October 10th the Georgia Department of Community Affairs presented Community Development Block Grant awards to communities who had successfully applied for funding. The River Valley Region was a big winner with five (5) awards. Congratulations to these communities!

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### Marion County-\$260,000 Street and Drainage Improvements



Pictured Left to Right: RVRC Executive Director Patti Cullen, Sylvia Russell, County Clerk Lea Elliott, County Manager Thomas Weaver

### Randolph County-\$327,725 Street and Drainage Improvements



Pictured Left to Right: RVRC Executive Director Patti Cullen, Commissioners Lamar White & Jimmie Allen, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, Steve Jackson, Representative Gerald Greene, Commissioners Jimmy Bradley & Wesley Williams

### City of Cuthbert \$750,000 Sewer System Improvements



Pictured Left to Right: Councilors Annie Howard & Betty Jones, RVRC Executive Director Patti Cullen, Representative Gerald Greene, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, Mayor Steve Whatley, Councilors Vincent Gadson & Karen Johnson



### City of Richland \$750,000 Sewer System Improvements

Pictured Left to Right: RVRC Executive Director Patti Cullen, Representative Gerald Green, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, Mayor Adolph McLendon, RVRC Staff Will Griggs, and Councilor Bill Coy

### Stewart County \$750,000 Street & Drainage Improvements



Pictured Left to Right: RVRC Executive Director Patti Cullen, Representative Gerald Greene, Stewart County Manager Mac Moye, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, Commission Chair Joseph Williams, RVRC Staff Laura Schneider, and Commissioner Joe Lee Williams



## *From The Executive Director's Desk...*

Hurricane Michael delivered a punch to the River Valley region on October 10<sup>th</sup>. Our roads, infrastructure, housing, historic buildings and agriculture were all affected by the storm. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) are available to assist with recovery efforts; however, local governments and individuals must provide them with the needed documentation about their issues. As of October 19<sup>th</sup>, thirty-one counties in Georgia were eligible for federal public assistance. Of those, 4 were in the River Valley region. We know of another 3 counties that were hard hit and hopefully will be added to federal disaster declaration. Several counties reached out to the RVRC for help during the aftermath of the storm and our staff was able to find resources for them. We also worked with our senior centers to make sure that all our seniors had shelf staple meals to take home with them. As the recovery process continues, please do not hesitate to call on our staff. We are here to assist each of you in any way possible. The storm will have a major impact on our economy for years to come and we need to pull together as a region to overcome the devastation! The lessons we learned from this storm event will help us become more resilient in the future. *Patti*

## *Tai Chi for Arthritis and Tai Chi for Fall Prevention @ Marion County Senior Center*

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, Tai Chi for Arthritis and Tai Chi for Fall Prevention began an eight-week session at the Marion County Senior Center in Buena Vista, Georgia. About sixteen willing participants, ages 63 to 83, were taught basic Tai Chi movements to help ease stiff joints and build muscular strength. They performed shifting body weight which helps to maintain balance. Participants found that practicing Tai Chi helped to relieve pain as well as reducing emotional and physical stress. Being physically active allows for increased blood and joint fluid circulation and helps with increased flexibility and fitness. Tai Chi is an effective slow, gentle, smooth exercise program for people with arthritis, or people of any age.

Participants stated that practicing Tai Chi for 20 - 30 minutes a day helps reduce or eradicate emotional distress, relaxes the mind and promotes the concentration process. Tai Chi also helps participants maintain self-reliance, increase a 'get-up-and-go' mindset, minimize stiffness, improve self-confidence, increase the opportunity and desire to assist others, and helps prolong healthier, happier and productive lives.

## *Planning and Zoning Training*

On October 17<sup>th</sup>, the River Valley Regional Commission, in conjunction with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Georgia Planning Association, hosted a planning and zoning training at South Georgia Technical College in Americus. Topics covered in the training session included planning essentials, zoning and



land development issues, legal issues in planning and zoning, and variances. The event had approximately 100 attendees, showing a considerable demand for this sort of training session. Officials from as far away as Coastal Georgia and the northern Atlanta metropolitan area were in attendance. The RVRC region had officials from fourteen communities and 4 RVRC staff members present.

## *Plains, Trains and Bike Chains*

On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, RVRC staff worked alongside Sumter Cycling to host the annual Plains, Trains and Bike Chains Ride. Riders started out in Cordele and Americus, finishing in Plains where the Peanut Festival was being held. The ride had 56 total registrants. Many of these registrants came from out of the region, traveling as far as 300 miles to participate.



## *River Valley Regional Commission Regional Plan 2018 – 2038*

The River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) submitted the final draft of the 2018 – 2038 Regional Plan to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs on August 30<sup>th</sup> with the RVRC Council adopting the approved final plan on September 26, 2018.

At the beginning of the process, RVRC council members volunteered to participate on the regional plan steering committee. This group consisted of a combination of elected officials, government staff, and local citizens with at least one representative from each county. The steering committee developed a list of stakeholders from whom to solicit input regarding the regional plan update.



Allison Slocum, Senior Planner, leading a Regional Plan planning meeting.

During the process, RVRC staff created an online survey to solicit input from stakeholders and residents of the region in regards to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) the area faces. Additionally, the Commission reviewed each community’s current comprehensive plan for information regarding regional needs and opportunities. After soliciting community input from public hearings and in-person listening sessions, RVRC staff, together with the steering committee, used the information gathered from the comprehensive plans, the survey, the listening sessions, and the steering committee meetings to develop the regional vision statement and a list of regional needs and opportunities. Once the Commission established their priorities, RVRC staff and steering committee members developed strategies and activities that would use regional strengths to maximize opportunities, minimize weaknesses, and take advantage of opportunities to overcome regional weaknesses and threats.



The culmination of the regional planning process is a vision for the River Valley region’s future. The RVRC 2018 – 2038 Regional Plan is a well-balanced document, addressing the issues of today, the opportunities of tomorrow, and outlining the steps necessary to bring about positive change over the next five (5) years.

### *Nursing Program*

South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) recently held a Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) program Pinning Ceremony. The Pinning Ceremony is a SGTC school tradition which signifies the entrance of a nurse into their new brotherhood or sisterhood of the nursing career. The ceremony is accompanied by the lighting of the candles and recitation of the Nurse’s Pledge.

Upon completion of the nursing program, the graduates are eligible to sit for the NCLEX-PN State Board Examination to become an official Licensed Practical Nurse. 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 clinical settings.



The WIOA program assists eligible nursing students with financial assistance for tuition, books, uniforms, state licensing examination fees, immunization medical exams, supportive services etc. while the participant is attending nursing training.

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

SGTC Nursing Graduates!

Best Wishes in your Nursing Career.



## ***RVRC Revolving Loan Fund Assists Local Business in Cordele, Georgia***

The River Valley Regional Commission, through its Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund program, assisted a local business, Empire Theatre, LLC with financing of \$75,000. They purchased and renovated a building at 119 West 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Cordele. The project retained 6 jobs and they plan to create 2 new jobs within a year. The building is the new location for their dance and performing arts studio. South Georgia Banking Company of Ashburn provided bank participation and the owners injected cash. We were very excited to be able to assist this small business.

## ***Carter Butts Memorial Ride***

On October 20<sup>th</sup> RVRC staff and the Stewart County Historical Society held the Fair on the Square Bicycle Ride also known as the Carter Butts Memorial ride. Forty riders came for this event with route options at 20, 50, and 64 miles. After the ride, lunch and drinks were provided to riders during Lumpkin's Fair on the Square activities.



Fair on the Square

## ***Assistive Technology at Work***

A case management client living in Vienna was having trouble communicating with his friends, family, and caregivers. Communication is important to the client because he is bedbound and must rely on telecommunications to interact with his support system and get in touch with someone in case of an emergency. The client's home phone was constantly malfunctioning and he said he did not understand how to use his cellphone. The case manager was able to spend some time showing the client how to use his cell phone. Unfortunately, this did not completely solve his communication issues because of his significant hearing impairment. With a piece of assistive technology called a cell phone amplifier that allows the cell phone volume to exceed the standard speaker phone volume, the client is now able to adequately hear his phone ring and can now communicate clearly with anyone. If you would like more information about Assistive Technology, please call 1-800-615-4379.



## ***Georgia Trend Magazine Winner***



Congratulations to Julio Portillo who was recognized by Georgia Trend as one of their "40 Under 40". Julio, who is now the Executive Director of Columbus Midtown Inc., was formerly employed by the River Valley Regional Commission as a Regional Planner with a focus on Bicycle/Pedestrian Planning.

Pictured Left to Right: Four of the "40 Under 40" recipients, Clockwise Tim Hur, Sojourner Marable Grimmert, Janet Geddis and Julio Portillo

## ***Children's Helmet Giveaway***

October 19<sup>th</sup> RVRC staff partnered with SAFEKIDS Columbus and the Columbus Police Department to provide a children's helmet give-a-way during a Mercy Med Farmer's Market. The children were excited to be receiving their free helmet. Bicycle helmets were properly fitted for each child.



Children's Bicycle Helmet Give-a-Way



## **Looking for resources in your area?**

Our ADRC Counselors provide access to information, assistance and referral concerning services for seniors, family members and persons with disabilities. We currently have over 3,000 resources for our 16 county area.



*Area Agency on Aging*

**Call our ADRC Counselors at  
706-256-2910 or  
800-615-4379**

## *Environmental Planning NEWS*

In August, Environmental Planning staff attended a Georgia Adopt-a-Stream Macroinvertebrate Trainer Workshop at the Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area in Sandy Springs, GA. Staff received training from GA EPD staff on trainer roles and responsibilities as well as learning techniques for teaching volunteers how to correctly identify and sample for macroinvertebrates to assess water quality in streams. Macroinvertebrates are aquatic insects, mollusks, or crustaceans that live



**Georgia Adopt-a-Stream Macroinvertebrate Trainer Workshop Participants**

*Staff received training from GA EPD staff on trainer roles and responsibilities as well as learning techniques for teaching volunteers how to correctly identify and sample for macroinvertebrates to assess water quality in streams.*

in the substrate, or bottom, of a water body. They are impacted by the physical, chemical, and biological conditions that occur in a stream environment and have varying levels of sensitivity to pollution which makes them good indicators of water quality. Staff began conducting quarterly macroinvertebrate monitoring within the Kinchafoonee Creek watershed in September. Results of this monitoring will help to determine the effectiveness of best management practices (BMPs) that have been installed within the watershed to address sediment levels in the stream. As part of the educational outreach component for this project, Adopt-a-Stream workshops will be offered to citizens within the watershed which is located in Marion, Stewart, and Webster counties. Participants will have the opportunity to learn about GA EPD's Adopt-a-Stream program and become certified to monitor waterways in Georgia. Data collected by volunteers statewide is used to establish baseline conditions and increase public awareness of pollution problems.



River Valley is now offering care consultation services. BRI Care Consultation is a telephone-based information and support service for adults with physical and mental health challenges and their family caregivers. This program offers personalized coaching, through a trained Care Consultant, and advice to help clients manage their own care. Clients that are enrolled in the program will work with the Care Consultant over a 12 month period. River Valley has 2 trained consultants, Eboni Key and Elizabeth Young.

### *On the Table Chat*

Bicycle Columbus and the RVRC hosted an “On the Table Chat” October 23<sup>rd</sup>. The “On the Table Chat” event is a starting place for new conversations and the RVRC was able to host one about bicycle advocacy in the Columbus area. Thirty people joined us that night for our table chat which lasted from 6-8 pm.



## National Innovation Award

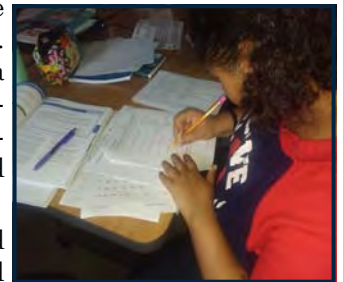
The River Valley Regional Commission recently received two 2018 National Innovation Awards from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO). NADO recognized the River Valley Regional Commission for both economic development and infrastructure improvements in the region.

Staff member Jarrod McCarthy worked with the City of Montezuma to secure funding for multi-phased water and sewer improvements. This has included four separate CDBG projects over the last seven years totaling \$2.25 million in grant funding. The FY 17 application was used by the state training as a good example of a thorough application.

NADO also recognized the Innovation in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy developed in 2017. They were particularly interested in the use of ESRI StoryMap as a way to display the plan without a printed report. This was done to create a plan that was easily read by not only elected officials and economic development professionals, but the general public in our region. NADO also remarked the importance of our region being able to use survey data to help determine needs and opportunities for such a diverse region. The survey data was able to differentiate between rural and urban parts of our region and the CEDS document used that information to inform our action plan. These innovations in the presentation of our CEDS are being used as a national case study by NADO.

### Dedicated Teen Earns Her GED

Ms. Jasmine Bleau, a 19 year old youth from Cordele (Crisp County), enrolled in the WIOA Eckerd Connects Youth GED Plus program in June 2018 to attain her GED. Jasmine dropped out of high school in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade and is one of 4 children raised by a single mom. Like many area youth, Jasmine did not have a personal vehicle for transportation to attend classes. Getting to GED classes was at times difficult and even required Jasmine to walk to the local training center. Jasmine has been very determined and worked hard to get her GED allowing her to start the next phase in life.



Jasmine hard at work!

On August 7<sup>th</sup>, Jasmine passed the final section of the GED examination and earned her GED. Jasmine is continuing to build her skills with Career Pathways and Work Experience activities. She is working at a retail store in Cordele to gain hands on work experience. **Congratulations Jasmine on earning your GED!**

### Volunteer and Caregiver Appreciation

On August 17<sup>th</sup>, GeorgiaCares hosted a Volunteer and Caregiver Appreciation Day. Members of the Volunteer program and CareNET were recognized for their outstanding efforts to our programs. Volunteers, family caregivers, professional and former caregivers were treated to a day of pampering, fellowship, and lunch. Virginia College School of Beauty in Columbus treated the recipients to manicures and we thank them immensely! And thank

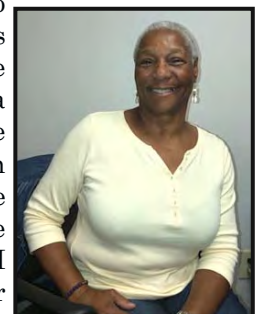


Annie King, Betty Pugh, Kassie Taylor, Susan Krochmalny, Doris Carde, Lula Knight, Myrtle Cambridge, Janet Bussey, Betty Wright, Rhonda Hollis, & Intern Sheila Leonard

you to our Volunteers and Caregivers in the community.

### GeorgiaCares...

Ms. Edna McGinnis, a Columbus resident, takes advantage of the services offered by the GeorgiaCares program. Every year she schedules an appointment with a counselor to review the Medicare changes for the upcoming year and to complete a Medicare plan comparison. Ms. McGinnis recently expressed interest in becoming a volunteer for the program to learn more about Medicare in order to be able to help other beneficiaries understand their benefits. She said "I am grateful for the Area Agency on Aging and appreciate all they do to assist seniors within the community. I also appreciate being able to sit down and receive one-on-one Medicare counseling. I intend to continue to come here for everything: fresh produce, to review health coverage plans, and for other available resources."



Ms. Edna McGinnis

**To schedule your Medicare Plan Comparison, call 1-866-552-4464 (Option 4).**

## Living a Healthy Life with Self-Management Skills

Recently, a Chronic Disease Self-Management (CDSMP) workshop was held at Harris County Senior Center in Hamilton, Georgia. Local Stanford University Leaders facilitated the six-week workshop which encouraged seniors, 60 – 90 years of age, to “self-manage” chronic diseases such as heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, depression, and other physical and mental health conditions. Self-management helps to ensure that seniors, as well as people of any age, live longer healthier lives, remain active and productive, and live independently for as long as possible. This news is impressive, particularly since a subjective study comprised of more than 1,000 people found that people who took the CDSMP, in contrast to people who did not, developed healthier



Harris County seniors enjoying an exercise class.

activities like exercise, symptom management, increased social activities, better communications with healthcare providers, improved mental stability, and reduced time in the hospital.

## Senior Hunger Summit

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Senior Hunger Summit was held October 16-17 in Columbus. Over 100 people attended to learn more about this important issue and what can be done to alleviate the problem. Speakers included Campus Kitchen, University of Georgia, Atlanta Community Food Bank, as well as local faith based organizations which provide food/meals to seniors. There were 5 members of the River Valley Senior Hunger Coalition who attended:



*Pictured: Senator Kay Kirkpatrick, District 32; Representative Carolyn Hugley, District 136; Representative Derrick Jackson, District 64; Representative Calvin Smyre, District 135; Representative Robert Trammell, District 132; Moderator Matt Pieper, Executive Director, Open Hand Atlanta (not pictured)*

Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Gail Minton, Carleen Frokjer, Rev. Roderick Green and Carolyn Lipscomb. On the last day a panel discussion made up of key members of the General Assembly addressed the question of Senior Hunger and answered questions. Locally, Senator Calvin Smyre and Representative Carolyn Hugley from our local delegation participated on the panel.

## Staff Spotlight

### Welcome New Staff Member...

Annie Poles is the newest employee in the Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) Department. She worked for the past 23 years with the Russell County Department of Human Resources in the Foster Care Department. In her spare time, she likes to sew, work on crafts, and bake. She is also an Alabama fan (Roll Tide) and is enjoying her new job and the wonderful people she has met.



Annie Poles

### Certifications...

Congratulations to Elizabeth Young on receiving her certification in Options Counseling and Kassie Taylor for



Elizabeth Young

being certified as a Counselor for the State Health Insurance Assistance Program.



Kassie Taylor



## AICP Designation

Congratulations to Joel Hanif, Regional Planner/Community Developer, in the RVRC Americus office! Joel is now a member of the American Planning Association’s Professional Institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). Having the AICP designation means that Joel has mastered the principles, skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to be a professional planner.



Joel Hanif

To become certified by the American Planning Association, a planner must have an appropriate education in the planning field, at least three years of professional planning experience, and must pass an examination that tests that knowledge and skillset.

Congratulations again to Joel and to the River Valley Regional Commission which now employs three AICP designated planners.



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



Andersonville National Cemetery

*Happy Holidays from the Council & Staff of the River Valley Regional Commission*