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FUNDING RESTORED FOR AAA PROGRAMS

The River Valley Area Agency on Aging received federal funding that restored both senior center and home-delivered meals back to 2012 levels. The reductions for the past two years were devastating in our communities, especially for the senior centers. Most senior centers had reduced days of operation to three or four days a week with only a limited number of meals served each day. Many home-delivered meal recipients saw a decrease in the number of weekly meals too. The end of March brought great news in restoring these services back to normal levels.

The Georgia Legislature and the Governor came through too with approval of:

- \$693,333 increase in Adult Protection Services
- \$226,800 allocated for Emergency Relocation, which is used when residents of personal care homes or nursing homes must be relocated due to emergencies
- \$1.5 million in meals
- \$321,000 funded to implement licensure of Adult Day Care health facilities.

Look for increased AAA activities in your community.



Each May, the nation celebrates Older Americans Month to recognize older Americans for their contributions and provide them with information to help them stay healthy and active. This year's theme "Safe Today. Healthy Tomorrow!" focuses on injury prevention. RVRC staff attended the Wellness Fair at Peachtree Mall on May 2 in Columbus and the Middle Flint Council on Aging Annual Picnic May 13 in Americus.

From the Executive Director's Desk...

The first three months of the calendar year have been extremely busy for the RVRC staff. Our Aging staff completed the Area Plan update and submitted it to the Division of Aging Services on March 1. The Area Plan is the budget and management document for providing services to senior citizens in the 16-county River Valley Region.

Our Planning Department Staff has been involved in updating The Regional Agenda Work Program this past month. The document has been

submitted to the Department of Community Affairs (DCA) for their review.

Staff has also been busy preparing Comprehensive Plan updates for several cities and counties in the region. (See related article on Page 2)

On April 1, 2014, staff from both the Planning and Economic and Community Development Departments submitted 15 Community Development Block Grant applications to DCA for review. (See related article on Page 5) We wish all our

communities the best of luck in receiving funding for these much needed projects.

The Workforce Investment Program staff continues their outstanding work in training and placing workers in jobs. Staff completed their Comprehensive Workforce Development Act Plan for program years 2012-2017 in March.

The Governor's Office of Workforce Development officially moved to the Department of Economic



Attending the West Central Georgia CareNet quarterly meeting (standing, from left) Linda Harris, Mary Day, Diane Webb, Cynthia Moffet, Brenda Byrd; (sitting) Dr. Rhonda Hollis, Glenda Boynton, Paula Webb.

CareNet members learn about 'Smiles for Life'

The West Central Georgia CARE-NET held its quarterly meeting on March 25, 2014, at the River Valley Area Agency on Aging office in Columbus. The guest speaker for the event was Dr. Shaunta' King, a dentist with Valley Healthcare Services in Fortson. Dr. King is also the program director for Smiles for Life, an oral health program for older adults.



Dr. Shaunta' King
Valley Healthcare
Services

The CARE-NET members enjoyed an informative Power-Point presentation on the importance of maintaining good oral hygiene. Dr. King also presented members with oral hygiene kits.

The West Central Georgia CARE-NET, developed by the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregiving, in conjunction with the Area Agency on Aging, is a volunteer coalition of family and professional caregivers.

To learn more about the West Central Georgia Care Net, contact Linda Harris, CARE-NET Coordinator at (706) 256-2939. For information on the Smiles for Life program, contact Valley Healthcare Services at (706) 987-8216.

RVRC staff assists in updating Comprehensive Plans

The RVRC recently assisted 11 member governments develop and update their comprehensive plans. These are the first plans in our region to be written in accordance with the state's new local planning standards which took effect last year. These new standards are designed to simplify the planning process to make it more straightforward and useful for communities. Every community is required to update its plan every five years, and all communities in the River Valley region will be using these new planning standards for their next plan update.

The communities that have undergone the process this year have already seen a benefit from using this simplified process. The sheer size of the plans has been reduced dramatically, creating a more useful planning document that can be easily digested by the public, elected officials, and staff.

Webster County attracted 40-plus people to its initial planning meeting – a remarkable turnout for one of the state's least populated counties. Nearly 150 residents of Harris County, Hamilton, Pine Mountain, Shiloh and Waverly Hall participated in an online visual preference survey that reaffirmed many of their previous preferences for local development.

Draft versions of these plans, which currently are in various stages of regional and state-level review, can be found on the RVRC website: Clay County (including Fort Gaines and Bluffton), Crisp County (including Cordele and Arabi), Harris County (including Hamilton, Pine Mountain, Shiloh, and Waverly Hall), Georgetown-Quitman County, and the Unified Government of Webster County.

Marshallville receives ITAD grant

The City of Marshallville received a \$70,000 Immediate Threat and Danger grant for repairs to its water facilities. The outdated system has left the city without water twice. These repairs should remedy the situation.

In Memory of WIA Participant Lynn Green

Lynn Green was a WIA participant from Vienna (Dooly County) who desired to become a commercial truck driver. WIA paid for Lynn to attend the Truck Driver Institute in 2012.

Lynn successfully completed the training and received his Commercial Driver's License (CDL). He immediately began driving for a nationally known trucking company and later purchased his truck as a driver/owner. Lynn enjoyed his job and traveling around the country.



Lynn's family contacted WIA in January to let us know Lynn had passed away after a sudden illness. His family wanted to let us know that Lynn had endured many hardships in his life and had many doors closed to him. He repeatedly told his family that the WIA program had given him a chance when no one else would. His family expressed their thanks and appreciation to the Middle Flint WIA program for helping Lynn.

WIA Case Manager Norma English stated, "Lynn was a great WIA participant. It always put a smile on my face to hear from him." The WIA program will miss Lynn and we are glad our program was able to give Lynn the chance he needed to become successful.

Executive Director's Report

From Page 1

Development on March 31st. Ben Hames, previously Governor Deal's Deputy Chief Operating Officer, will head the division.

The more each of you become involved in the River Valley Regional Commission, the more engaged staff can be in helping you find the resources you need to make your community the best it can be!

Patti

Paxen Learning welcomes new staff member

Paxen Learning Inc. (WIA Service Provider) welcomes a new staff member, Lacy Bailey. Lacy began her employment with Paxen in a temporary position as an administrative assistant in November 2013 and was hired permanently in February 2014.

Lacy is the first smiling face you see when entering the Paxen office. She assists with many job duties such as WIA intake, receptionist, administering assessments, data entry, making case management contacts, following-up with participants, and developing class schedules.

Lacy graduated from Schley County High School and attended college in Americus. She and her husband Justin have two daughters Katelyn, age 5, and Madyson, age 9 months. Lacy and her family reside in Ellaville (Schley County).

"Lacy has been a great addition to the Paxen Learning staff," said Workforce Director Janice West. "We are glad to have her working with the WIA services."



Preparing the River Valley to succeed in a digital economy

The RVRC is beginning a Digital Economy planning process to identify how the region uses online services and technology and what is needed to improve access to these resources, which can be used to increase education and economic opportunities for the people of the region.

During the planning process we will review strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges in how our region uses technology in four sectors: economic development, education, health care, and public safety. We will look at existing infrastructure, but focus on the adaption and usage of digital tools by our region. This report will be completed by December 2014.

A project website has been set up to provide more information and to act as a demonstration of ways to improve our Digital Economy. The website was developed with limited expertise in about three hours using free online tools. A business can use these same tools to develop or enhance its online presence with very little investment in time or money. To learn more visit www.rivervalleydigitaleconomy.info.

We also created an online survey to measure data speeds and usage throughout the region. Please go to the Digital Economy website to take this survey.

For more information, contact Jim Livingston at jlivingston@rivervalleyrc.org.



RVRC employees Charlotte Davis and Bill Weathers completed the CDSMP Lay Leader Course and will be providing community classes.

Bill Weathers and Charlotte Davis complete CDSMP Lay Leader Course

The River Valley Area Agency on Aging recently offered the Chronic Disease Self Management Program Lay Leaders course to interested individuals in Columbus. This evidence-based program was developed by Stanford University and is designed to help people manage their chronic health conditions by reducing stress and anxiety, make appropriate nutrition choices, formulate action plans and enhance communication skills.

This four-day training program enables leaders to offer this program to their communities, churches, healthcare providers, businesses and other interested groups. Community programs are taught once a week for 2 1/2 hours and last six weeks.

Two employees from the RVRC Area Agency on Aging have completed the course work and will be forming community classes soon. Congratulations to Bill Weathers and Charlotte Davis.

Celebrate Bike to Work Day May 9

Energizing stations will be available that morning in Americus and Columbus for people who ride their bikes to work.



At noon in Americus, Mayor Barry Blount will join us for the annual Ride with the Mayor and a free pizza party at Rylander Park.

We will wrap up the day with Columbus Mayor Teresa Tomlinson leading the Ride with the Mayor starting at 6 p.m. at Woodruff Riverfront Park. Then join the Bike to Work party at the Uptown Riverfest Concert featuring On the Border-The Ultimate Eagles Tribute.

For more information:
www.activevalley.org/BikeToWork

Senior Center Spotlight: Reginald Barry Jr. Senior Center, Cordele

Federal budget cuts had a profound effect on senior services in Georgia, including the 12 senior centers in the River Valley region. The Reginald Barry Jr. Senior Center in Cordele was able to help finance center activities and events through proceeds from a store that is located inside the center. The store is operated by the seniors and all proceeds from sales are put back into the center.

Items that can be purchased include clothing, books, DVDS, CDs, purses, jewelry, wall pictures, tools, craft items, furniture and much more. The store provides the opportunity for seniors to purchase needed items. Since most seniors have modest fixed incomes, the opportunity to purchase a dress, or a pair of shoes for one or two dollars is helpful.

The Reginald Barry Jr. Senior Center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and is located at 115 East 24th Avenue, in Cordele. The center provides an opportunity for seniors to engage in social contact with peers, exercises, activities, games, quilting, field trips, as well as a nutritious hot lunch meal. Center participants also have access to a library. Transportation is provided.

For more information, please contact center manager Sherry Emerson at (229) 273-1183.

River Valley requests \$7.1 million in CDBG funding

The RVRC Staff assisted 15 local governments with Community Development Block Grant applications for fiscal year 2014.

This year staff submitted public facility projects that included water, sewer, street and drainage or combination of each, one multi-use building and one multi-activity housing and street and drainage project.

The grants were submitted on April 1 and award announcements will be made in August.

According to the Department of Community Affairs, 123 communities submitted applications totaling more than \$59 million in proposed community improvements.

The following grants were submitted from the River Valley Region:

City of Bluffton – water system improvements, \$353,038

City of Buena Vista – water system improvements, \$491,920

City of Ellaville – water system improvements, \$332,301

City of Lumpkin – water and sewer system improvements, street drainage improvements, \$477,697

City of Montezuma – sewer system improvements, \$500,000

City of Shellman – sewer system improvements, \$500,000

City of Richland – sewer system improvements, \$500,000

City of Unadilla – water and sewer system improvements, street and drainage improvements, \$500,000

City of Vienna – sewer system improvements, \$500,000

Clay County – water system extension, \$471,623

Georgetown-Quitman County – street and drainage improvements, \$404,801

Randolph County – 4-H building rehabilitation (re-submit), \$500,000

Stewart County – drainage improvements, \$500,000

Talbot County – housing, street and drainage improvements (re-submit), \$575,175

Unified Government of Webster – water system and street drainage improvements, \$500,000

Staff Spotlight

The River Valley Regional Commission welcomes its newest staff members: Eboni Holder, Michael Smith, and Charlotte Davis.

Eboni Holder

Eboni Holder is the new intake and evaluation specialist with the Area Agency on Aging. She was born in Ft. Polk, Louisiana, and raised all over the United States due to her family's military background. She is a graduate of Harris County High School. She graduated from Georgia Southern University with a bachelor's degree in health sciences, with a major in health education and promotion. She is a certified health education specialist, which reflects her commitment to expanding her skills and knowledge. In her free time she enjoys gaining continuing education credits for her Certified Health Education Specialist certification, traveling and trying out different restaurants and recipes.



Michael Smith

Michael Smith has joined the AAA staff as the Money Follows the Person Transition Coordinator, helping nursing home residents transition back into the community. He earned a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice from Faulkner University. He is a native of Tuskegee, Alabama, and moved to Columbus in 2011. Before joining the AAA staff, Michael was a forensic case manager with more than 17 years of experience in the mental health and criminal justice fields. Michael and his wife Antjuana are actively involved with their church and mentor groups of teens. Michael enjoys writing music, football, his man cave, cooking, walking, deejaying, playing drums, and spending time with his family.



Charlotte Davis

Charlotte Davis is a part-time assistant planner who works in the bicycle pedestrian division of RVRC and the Area Agency on Aging. She earned a B.A. in political science in 2011 and her master's in public administration in 2013. In her spare time she enjoys spending time with family, bicycling, cooking, research, videogames, and learning new things.





Paxen Learning GED Instructor Pam Washington and youth GED participant Tre'Von Glover.

WIA youth participant sets an example

Tre'Von Glover, age 17, from Cordele participated in the GED Plus classes and did an exceptional job of setting an example for the youth in the program.

Tre'Von immediately took all of the GED examination tests upon completion of classroom training and passed all five parts of the exam on his first attempt. He is currently enrolled at South Georgia Technical College and doing well in all of his classes.

Vienna receives USDA grant-loan

The City of Vienna received a \$25,000 USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Grant-Loan to purchase new vehicles for the Police Department and the Utility Department.

News from around the River Valley Region

RVRC Council members elected to ACCG Board of Managers

"Celebrating A Century" was the theme for the 2014 Annual Conference for the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia, held April 11-15, 2014, in Savannah. Several members of the River Valley Council were elected to the Board of Managers and installed by Governor Nathan Deal on April 14.

Congratulations go out to Harry Lange, Harris County Chair, as the new District 8 representative and Terrell Hudson, Dooly County Chair, as the new At-Large Representative. Clinton Perry, Taylor County Chair, continues to be an Active Past President. Also from our Region, Bruce Huff, a Columbus City Councilor, represents Consolidated Governments on the Board of Managers.

Each of these gentlemen represents our region well and brings our concerns to this statewide organization.

Andersonville National Historic Site observes 150th anniversary of Civil War prison

Andersonville National Historic Site is commemorating the 150th anniversary of the opening of the prison. The site was included in an article about tourism in Georgia Trend Magazine. The article said Andersonville NHS offers a different kind of heritage tourism experience, a concept known as "dark tourism," or the act of visiting sites associated with death or tragedies.

"Visitors come here with preconceptions, and there is no one reaction to what they find here," said Eric Leonard, chief of interpretation and education at Andersonville, which houses the National Prisoner of War

Museum and the Andersonville National Cemetery as well as the historic prison site. "It runs the gamut. There are people who walk out of our orientation film in tears, and that is absolutely appropriate. We have a hard story to tell."

Go to www.nps.gov/ande for more information about Andersonville National Historic Site.

Americus Main Street Program receives award

The 35th anniversary Main Street banquet was held February 25 in Douglasville. The Americus Main Street program was among the 12 programs recognized. The Americus program received an award for having the most events in a downtown district.

River Valley businesses cook up Flavor of Georgia

Three River Valley businesses were selected as finalists in the annual Flavor of Georgia food contest held March 17-18 at the Georgia Railroad Freight Depot in Atlanta.

Richland Rum won first place in the adult beverage category.

Causey Foods won in the barbecue sauce category for its Sweet 'N Smokey BBQ Sauce, which was created in Vienna and is distributed from Smyrna.

Foy's in Columbus placed third in the marinades and sauces category for its whiskey marinade.

The annual contest showcases delicious, original market-ready prototypes or commercially available food products. Each is judged on flavor, Georgia theme, unique or innovative qualities, commercial appeal, potential market volume and use of locally-sourced products.

River Valley businesses nominated for Manufacturer of the Year awards

The 2014 Georgia Manufacturer of the Year awards were presented April 17 at the 20th Annual Governor’s Awards Luncheon at the Georgia International Convention Center. Georgia Manufacturing Appreciation Week (April 14-18) was developed by the Technical College System of Georgia and the Georgia Department of Economic Development.

Companies are nominated by business and civic leaders for their contributions to the state’s economy and their local communities. Nominated from the River Valley region were:

Columbus Technical College Region - Pratt Whitney (large Company, over 500 employees), Swift Spinning (medium), and Richland Rum (small, under 150 employees).

Southwest Georgia Technical College Region - Carvelle Boat Group (medium), Southeast Railcar Inc. (small), and Stella Jones Corporation (small).

Indira Zelaya, a fourth grade student at Sara Cobb Elementary School in Americus, received an honorable mention in the Manufacturing Appreciation Week student design contest. She is pictured with South Georgia Technical College. Her artwork, titled “Manufacturing ... Providing Opportunities for Fu-



Photo courtesy of SGTC

Indira Zelaya of Americus (third from left) received an honorable mention in the Manufacturing Appreciation Week student design contest. She is pictured with SGTC President Sparky Reeves, and her family and SGTC Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. John Watford, and her family.

ture Generations of Georgians,” included local manufacturers CMS, Caravelle, Georgia Power, KIA, Pepsi, Imerys C-E Minerals, Eaton Corporation, Conart, CMI, and Honda. Her photo was also included on the 2014 Georgia Manufacturers of the Year 20th anniversary calendar.

GeorgiaCares Program celebrates Arthritis Support Group’s 25th anniversary

Mary Baker has been group leader of the Arthritis Support Group in Americus for the past 25 years. She has been very instrumental in keeping the group informed about the different forms of arthritis and always encouraging people to “keep moving.” Despite her husband’s passing a few years ago, she has remained a strong pillar for others to lean on within the group.

The GeorgiaCares Program was invited to be a part of the 25-year celebration and received a certificate of appreciation. Ayana



Mary Baker (right) of the Americus Arthritis Support Group presents certificates of appreciation to Ayana Charleston of the Atlanta Arthritis Foundation and Shameika Averett, GeorgiaCares coordinator, RVRC.

Charleston, program and services director of Southeast Region of the Arthritis Foundation located in Atlanta, provided a wealth of information about arthritis and the

events that are sponsored by the Arthritis Foundation.

We wish the Arthritis Support Group in Americus many more successful years to come!



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Delivering Our Region's Progress

WIA participant selected as SGTC “Student of Excellence”

Lance Cornell a WIA participant from Andersonville (Sumter County) attends South Georgia Technical College (SGTC) and was selected as the Student of Excellence for January 2014. Lance is enrolled in the Welding and Joining Technology program.

Lance was nominated by his SGTC Welding Instructor Ted Eschmann. Mr. Eschmann stated when Lance had to miss a week of classes for surgery on his right arm, he not only made up all the class time he missed, but he learned to weld with his left arm while his right arm healed. Lance said he loves coming to class each day and could not imagine what else he'd

rather be doing. He thanked his instructor for the nomination and said he was humbled by the honor. Lance received a plaque of recognition and Student of Excellence T-shirt from SGTC for his accomplishments.

SGTC recognizes students each month with a Student of Excellence award. The winner is selected based on grades, work ethic, participation in clubs and organizations and amount of program completion.

Sandhya Muljibhai, SGTC WIA Coordinator stated Lance was a great WIA participant and they enjoyed having him in the WIA program.

Congratulations to Lance.



Dr. John Watford (SGTC) and Lance Cornell (WIA Participant).

Save the Date: The annual RVRC Legislative Luncheon will be May 28 at the Josh Gibson Center in Buena Vista.