

# The Valley Quarterly

April 2012  
3rd Quarter



## STEWART & TALBOT COUNTIES RECEIVE CAMERA READY CERTIFICATION



(L to R) Craig Dominey (Camera Ready Program Manager), Chip Jones (Stewart County Camera Ready Liaison), and Amy Houghton

The Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office, a division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDECD), designated 25 Georgia counties as Camera Ready at the inaugural Film Day at the Capitol event, which took place on February 29th. Of these 25 counties, two counties, Stewart and Talbot, were from the River Valley Region. This now means that the River Valley Region is 100% Camera Ready! The state's Camera Ready Community Program was created to enhance Georgia's statewide resources for the growing number of film and television productions.

Launched in October 2010, the program now includes 136 counties across the state. From July 2010 through June 2011, more



(L to R) Craig Dominey and Pam Jordan (Talbot County Camera Ready Liaison)

than 336 productions invested over \$683.5 million in Georgia. These projects alone generated an economic impact of \$2.4 billion. Georgia-filmed movies slated to hit theatres in the coming months include "The Three Stooges" on April 4, "American Reunion" on April 6, "The Wettest County" on April 20, and "What to Expect When You're Expecting" on May 11. Multiple top-rated television series are currently filming across the state including CW's "Vampire Diaries," VH1's "Single Ladies," MTV's "Teen Wolf" and AMC's record-breaking "The Walking Dead."

## From the Executive Director's Desk...

Wow! It has been a very busy beginning for 2012. Our Area Agency on Aging staff has completed and submitted the Area Plan for our Aging Program. The Planning and Community Development staff submitted fifteen (15) Community Development Block Grant applications on April 2, 2012 (there are more details in the newsletter on each community's application). We also have our staff beginning on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy process. This year a complete Economic Development Strategy will be completed rather than the update of the past years. The first meeting will be in April immediately prior to the Council Meeting. In addition to the multitude of projects that our staff is working on, there are also many changes underway with the programs. The Department of Human Resources is requiring us to change the way we do business with our subcontractors, as well as how we calculate the success of the programs at the regional commission level. Our Workforce Investment Program is also undergoing changes, as the state transitions the program from the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) to the Governor's Office of Workforce Development (GOWD). This change shall take place on July 1, 2012. Remember: the River Valley Regional Commission staff is here to serve you. Please don't ever hesitate to call us if you have any questions about our programs and services. Also, feel free to visit our website for additional information at [www.rivervalleyrc.org](http://www.rivervalleyrc.org). We will help our communities in any way that we can!

-Patti

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## RVRC Submits 15 CDBG Applications for Funding

On April 2nd, RVRC Staff submitted fifteen (15) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications on behalf of the communities in the region. Eligible projects include public facilities, buildings, housing and economic development. CDBG guidelines require that a minimum of 70% of the persons served must be low/moderate income persons. The following projects were submitted for the FY2012 fiscal year:

- City of Buena Vista– Water & Sewer Improvements
- City of Butler– Sewer Improvements
- Cusseta-Chattahoochee County– Water Improvements
- City of Cordele– Housing Rehabilitation & Street Improvements
- Crisp County– Health Department
- City of Cuthbert– Housing Rehabilitation
- Harris County– Streets & Drainage/Water Improvements
- Georgetown-Quitman County– Streets & Drainage Improvements
- City of Ideal– Water & Sewer Improvements
- City of Lumpkin– Streets & Drainage Improvements
- Marion County– Streets & Drainage Improvements
- City of Marshallville– Water & Sewer Improvements
- City of Montezuma– Water Improvements
- Stewart County– Water & Septic System Improvements
- City of Waverly Hall– Flood & Drainage Improvements/ Septic Tank Replacement

## Youth Work Experience Program Helps Area GED Graduates

Paxen Learning Corporation recently implemented the Youth Work Experience activity in December of 2011. The Work Experience (WE) activity is designed to give youth participants hands-on work experience by placing them in real work settings. Youth are eligible for the Work Experience activity once they obtain their GED through Paxen GED Plus training services. Worksites in our region can volunteer to host a youth participant at their agencies. In order to do so, they must provide supervision and training on various job duties, and have meaningful work tasks for youth participants. Youth are paid \$7.25 per hour for up to 32 hours of work per week, and are able to participate in the activity for up to ten (10) weeks. Marion County Department of Family & Children Services (DFCS) has recently volunteered to serve as a worksite host for WIA participant Mariah Smith. Mariah is a resident of Marion County and obtained her GED through the Paxen Learning GED Plus program. She currently provides clerical support to the Marion County DFCS staff. Upon completion of the Youth Work Experience Program, Mariah will be able to gain valuable skills that will help her find job opportunities in the future.



WIA Participant Mariah Smith (seated) with Penny Cook (left) and Director Karen Bartlett (right) of the Marion County DFCS)

## Staff Spotlight



### Rachel Williams

Rachel Williams is the newest addition to the RVRC Area Agency on Aging Department. She recently graduated from Columbus State University with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology and will be serving as the new Transition Coordinator for the “Money Follows the Person” Program. In this position, Rachel will be assisting seniors who want to re-enter their communities from nursing homes by helping them find housing and home furnishings, and also by helping them with an individualized transition plan, including budget and meal planning. She will follow her clients’ progress for a period of one year to help make a successful transition. In her free time, Rachel enjoys hanging out with her husband and friends, as well as helping out with the youth in her church. She is excited about joining the AAA team and serving the elderly and disabled in the community.



### Mariyana Kostova

Mariyana joined the RVRC in 2004 and currently serves as the GIS/GPS Manager for the Americus office. Her duties include the creation of base maps for data analysis and display, data acquisition and formatting for the E911 Center, vehicle routing, tax parcel data maintenance and analysis, Census Data acquisition and submission, and redistricting. She recently began work on the GIS Web Development for the City of Cordele and has also hosted a few GIS-related trainings for Tax Assessors’ offices in the region. Born in Bulgaria, Mariyana has a Master’s Degree in Cartography and GIS. In 1998, after graduation, she started work as a GIS specialist for a map company in the city of Sofia. She and her husband, who is a physics professor at Georgia Southwestern State University, live in Americus with their 6-year-old son. Mariyana’s hobbies include reading, gardening, outdoor activities, and Zumba.



## Stronger Economies Together

The RVRC is partnering with the USDA Rural Development and Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program to implement the **Stronger Economies Together (SET) Initiative** in our region. The SET initiative is designed to help current or newly formed regional teams in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint to strengthen and enhance economic development activities in their communities. FVSU CEP is accepting applications from regional teams, consisting of three or more rural, contiguous counties, with at least 50% of the team's composition including USDA designated "StrikeForce" counties. The regional teams that are selected will develop an economic development strategy, with assistance from USDA, FVSU CEP, UGA, DCA and the RVRC, and then apply for funding to implement the proposed strategy. The due date for applications is **May 4, 2012**. Multiple applications will be accepted from the Region. To learn more, please contact Katie Howard or Kay Hagler at 1-877-819-6348.

## GeorgiaCares Program Hosts Volunteer Training

The GeorgiaCares Program hosted a volunteer training at the RVRC on March 2, 2012. Christine Williams, GeorgiaCares Trainer for the Division of Aging Services, and Donyetta Green, Volunteer Consultant, conducted the training and provided useful strategies and insight into increasing volunteer interest, recruitment and retention. The volunteers that attended the training also learned about the Medicare program and are now better equipped to educate the beneficiaries in our 16-county area about their Medicare options and what the GeorgiaCares program can offer them. If you would like to become a volunteer, please contact Shameika Averett at 706-256-2917.



## AAA Staff Attends Master Training Workshop for CDSMP



Ilona Preattle, Lauren Pfrogner and Gary Gordon, and other Master Training participants, at the Galt House hotel in downtown Louisville, Kentucky.

In March 2012, three Area Agency on Aging staff members, Ilona Preattle, Lauren Pfrogner, and Gary Gordon, had the opportunity to travel to Louisville, Kentucky to attend a Master Trainer workshop for the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program. The program, created and sponsored by Stanford University, is designed for people living with or caring for someone with a chronic disease, such as diabetes, heart disease, lung disease, or arthritis. The six-week program teaches participants several effective ways to take control of their condition and lead healthier lives. Ilona Preattle, Lauren Pfrogner, and Gary Gordon are being certified not only to teach the CDSMP course themselves, but to train and certify others to teach the course as well. The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program will be implemented in the River Valley region this spring.

## Cordele Receives Federal Historic Preservation Grant

The **City of Cordele** received a grant from the Historic Preservation Division of the Department of Natural Resources in the amount of **\$6,000** to complete design guidelines for the Gillespie-Selden Historic District. RVRC staff has assisted the City of Cordele and Gillespie-Selden residents to develop strategies to revitalize the area. In 2010, RVRC staff completed a housing assessment survey for the historic neighborhood as part of an Area Redevelopment Plan. The City of Cordele used information from this plan to apply for and receive USDA funding to perform housing rehabilitation in the Gillespie-Selden neighborhood. The City has also applied for CDBG funding to assist with this process, which is currently under review. The Gillespie-Selden Design Guidelines will analyze housing types and architectural styles found in the neighborhood. The guidelines will also assist city leaders and residents to define architectural features in need of preservation versus those in need of rehabilitation/renovation. Lastly, these guidelines will help community leaders ensure that proposed redevelopment of vacant lots respects the historic character of the Gillespie-Selden area. The development of design guidelines for Gillespie-Selden is an important strategy in the city's overall plan to reinvest in and redevelop this historic neighborhood and recreate a vibrant and healthy Gillespie-Selden.



A historic building in the Gillespie-Selden Community in Cordele, GA.

## Analyzing Tax Parcel Data with GIS

A few years ago, the River Valley Regional Commission began maintaining the tax parcel maps in collaboration with the county tax assessors. As always our staff is looking for ways to expand this effort and offer greater service to our local communities. In January 2012, the RVRC hosted a meeting where staff member Mariyana Kostova gave a demonstration of additional related services which can be provided to the benefit of the tax assessors' offices. The demonstration was focused on merging tax WINGAP data with the corresponding GIS data, making it easier for the assessors to identify missing data and unrecorded properties such as parcels and improvements. This technique should lead to better verification of the existing records and an overall improvement in the data analysis. Mapping a counties' Computer Assisted Mass Appraisal (CAMA) data can make it easier to identify improperly coded parcel properties, allowing a greater uniformity in the coding of the data. In addition, Mariyana discussed in detail how this process can add value and increase productivity in the work of city and county governments. The meeting had an excellent turnout, with more than 15 appraisers and commissioners, representing 7 counties in the region. We would especially like to thank Jimmy Nolan from ITOS, who helped with the demonstration analysis and expressed his support of the RVRC mapping program.



RVRC GIS Manager, Mariyana Kostova, discussing how to merge WINGAP data with GIS data

## AAA to host Wellness Fair During Older Americans Month



May is Older Americans Month, a perfect opportunity to show our appreciation for the older adults in our community. The theme for this year's Older Americans Month 2012—*Never Too Old to Play!*—puts a spotlight on the important role older adults play in sharing their experience, wisdom, and understanding, and passing on that knowledge to other generations in a variety of significant ways. This year's celebrations will recognize the value that older adults continue to bring to our communities through spirited participation in social and faith groups, service organizations, and other activities. While the Area Agency on Aging provides services, support, and resources to older Americans year-round, Older Americans Month is a great opportunity to show special appreciation for some of our most beloved citizens. We have many reasons to celebrate them! The AAA is joining in the national celebration of Older Americans Month 2012 with our **annual Wellness**

**Fair** to promote intergenerational engagement and recreation. This event will take place on **Friday, May 4, 2012 at Peachtree Mall from 8:00-10:00 AM**. The Wellness Fair focuses on services for seniors to include but not limited to: health screenings, education and products, and services for older Americans. Come out and join the fun!

## Paxen Learning Gives Presentation to Middle Flint Workforce Investment Board

Paxen Learning, the WIA Service Provider for the GED Plus training activity, gave a presentation at the March meeting of the Middle Flint Workforce Investment Board. Shelia Hines, Site Manager for Paxen, gave an overview of their services for the GED Plus and Youth Work Experience training activity. Paxen offers an accelerated basic skills remediation of the subject areas preparing individuals to take the GED examination. In addition to the basic skills remediation, work readiness and computer basics are incorporated with the GED Plus training activity. WIA GED Plus participants Spring Worley, Brittany Cooper, and Piere Tobler spoke to Workforce Board Members about their training experience with the Paxen Learning GED Plus program. Participants were very appreciative to have the GED Plus program and explained how their training experience has helped them to set other educational and work goals. Carley Huguley, Paxen State Director for Georgia, expressed her thanks and appreciation to the Middle Flint Workforce Investment Board (WIB) members for allowing Paxen Learning to provide services that make a difference in people's lives. Paxen staff stated that it's very rewarding to them to see how individual's lives are changed and improved by helping them obtain their GED. Since 2007 Paxen has helped **167** individuals earn their GED. Our Workforce Investment Staff serves Crisp, Dooly, Macon, Marion, Sumter, Schley, Taylor, and Webster Counties.



Paxen Learning Participants talking about their positive experiences with the GED Plus training program.



## Lessons for Designing Cities

Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup> 2012 from 8:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Coca-Cola Space Science Center

701 Front Street | Columbus, GA.

**Good Urbanism 101 travels to Columbus!** for a half-day seminar focusing on the history, principles, and current practices of community design, including an emphasis on walkability, integration of alternative transportation options, sustainability, and the relationship between public infrastructure and redevelopment potential in Columbus. **Join the Georgia Conservancy's Growth Management Program and Georgia Tech professors** Richard Dagenhart, David Green, and Doug Allen to learn about sustainable community design and how different professions can collaborate to improve our cities, including Columbus. Themes include platting and subdivision, street design and transportation, zoning, and urban design. The course contextualizes growth and development/redevelopment issues in the history of urban design while paying special attention to the specific challenges facing Columbus.

### Who should attend?

Anyone interested in planning, designing and building a better Columbus, including government officials, engineers, non-profit advocacy and advisory groups, architects, historic preservationists, landscape architects, planners, attorneys, financial

### Register Now! Space is Limited

(please visit <https://donationpay.org/georgiaconservancy/goodurbanism2012.php> to register)

\*exact location will be announced closer to event date

### Cost: \$40

This cost includes presentation handouts and breakfast, as well as a midway break with light snacks available.

### Questions?

Visit the [Good Urbanism 101 Web page](#) for more information.

### Continuing Education Credit:

Continuing education credits are available for the following organizations: AICP, AIA, and USGBC.

### Contact:

\* For Professional Engineers and other fields that are self-reporting, the Georgia Conservancy is happy to provide assistance.

Katherine Moore, GA Conservancy [kmoore@gaconservancy.org](mailto:kmoore@gaconservancy.org)  
Deanna Murphy, GA Conservancy [dmurphy@gaconservancy.org](mailto:dmurphy@gaconservancy.org)



American Planning Association  
**Georgia Chapter**  
*Making Great Communities Happen*

\*PROCEEDS from Good Urbanism 101 support urban design education at Georgia Tech by supporting graduate students with scholarships or research assistantships.



## GeorgiaCares Senior Medicare Patrol: Volunteer with Us!



Are you a retiree? Do you want to learn how you can assist Medicare beneficiaries in our 16-county area? Would you like to be a part of a great team of staff and other volunteers?

GeorgiaCares is the

Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) and the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) provider. SMP empowers seniors and others on Medicare to preserve Medicare and Medicaid for future generations by preventing health care fraud. The goal is to teach Medicare beneficiaries how to protect their personal identity, detect potential errors, fraud and abuse and how to report it. SHIP provides personalized counseling, education and outreach to reach Medicare beneficiaries and helps answer questions about their Medicare options. GeorgiaCares is always looking for dependable, committed volunteers who are willing to learn, have good listening and communication skills, and are able to give at least a six month commitment. We will provide all the training you need to answer questions with confidence about the Medicare program. You can make a difference for people with Medicare! Contact GeorgiaCares at 1-866-55AGING (552-4464) or (706) 256-2917.

## RVRC Staff become certified ACT Specialists

RVRC's Aging staff Shameika Averett, Eryn Locker, Linda Harris and Amy Slaybaugh are now certified "At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics" (ACT) Specialists. This two-day training was held at the Public Safety Building in Columbus, GA on January 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, and in Duluth, GA on February 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. The ACT certification was provided by the Georgia Department of Human Services/ Division of Aging Services and was co-hosted by Pat King, a registered nurse and forensic special investigator. The overall mission of the ACT Training is to equip primary and secondary responders (police departments, social workers, case managers, and other organizations) with the knowledge and skills to address the needs of at-risk adult crime victims in Georgia as part of a multi-disciplinary team, thus advancing public safety.



Aging staff pictured with other participants during the ACT Training Session

## RVRC Staff Attends Hazus Training



The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) has received a grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Disaster Recovery Enhancement Fund to supplement Georgia's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Disaster Recovery allocation following two presidentially declared disasters in 2008. These funds will be used for activities and products to assist local governments in preparing for future disaster mitigation and resilience. Two key components are to increase disaster mitigation education and awareness and to enhance consistency amongst various required planning documents. DCA, in partnership with FEMA and GEMA, is providing a unique opportunity for professional development and FEMA certification by presenting a series of FEMA-certified training courses to build competency in hazard mitigation planning for local governments and Regional Commissions. Students completing this training series will receive double FEMA certification as **HAZUS Professionals** and as **HAZUS Practitioners**. Training will be provided at DCA and at

multiple remote training sites, participating via teleconference, and with remote training site assistants. **HAZUS-MH** is a powerful risk assessment software program for analyzing potential losses from floods, hurricane winds and earthquakes. In HAZUS-MH, current scientific and engineering knowledge is coupled with the latest geographic information systems (GIS) technology to produce estimates of hazard-related damage before, or after, a disaster occurs. This program will directly support FEMA's **Risk Map**, or Risk Mapping, Assessment, and Planning program that will provide an integrated statewide and national assessment of flooding risks based on digital flood hazard data and web-accessible data. This information will enable Georgia communities to develop mitigation plans and make informed risk management decisions that maximize loss reduction. Tina Rust, the GIS Analyst in the Columbus office, is attending this training, which will be completed in September, and will then be certified as a **HAZUS Professional**.

## Start-ups of Cycling Non-Profits Taking Place on Regional Scale

On March 30th, RVRC Staff Kayra Velez and Julio Portillo submitted two Seed Grant applications to Georgia Bikes! in hopes of aiding the process of starting up cycling non-profit organizations in the region. Sumter Cycling, based in Americus, and Bicycle Columbus, based in Columbus, are the two organizations that are seeking this funding in order to become established as 501 (c)3 non-profit, advocacy organizations. The primary mission of these groups is to promote cycling advocacy and spread awareness of such efforts in order to create a more active and cycling-friendly community. They would also like to increase awareness of alternative transportation in order to build healthier lifestyles. Through the creation, planning, and execution of cycling initiatives in this area, this goal can be met.

After start-up costs are satisfied, remaining grant money will be used to help plan and put on various community events. These two organizations are the first groups of their kind in these cities. Cycling initiatives and advocacy have not yet been promoted full-scale in the area, so the creation of these groups is extremely important. With the support of local businesses in the region, these groups will not only be able to achieve their goals of creating a more bicycle-friendly community, but also will succeed in spreading their efforts to surrounding areas, thus contributing to the ultimate goal of a more bicycle friendly America.

## RVRC Communities Receive Grants from Georgia Humanities Council

Thirty-two (32) organizations in 19 different communities received the first set of this year's grants from the Georgia Humanities Council. Grants of up to \$2,000 are awarded to nonprofit organizations such as museums, libraries, historical societies, community groups, educational institutions, and government agencies. These grants support programs such as book discussions, film and lecture series, small exhibits, community forums or festivals, etc. Programs must be offered free of charge and involve humanities scholars. Two of the 32 organizations that received awards were from the River Valley Region— Columbus State University in Columbus, GA and Andrew College in Cuthbert, GA. Columbus State University received \$1763 for their upcoming educational forum at the Carson McCullers House, "A Celebration of Carson McCullers 95th Birthday". Andrew College, in partnership with the Historic Chattahoochee Commission, will be receiving up to \$2000 for their educational series on the Civil War titled "Making Sense of the Civil War". Congratulations to these two universities!

## Senior Week at the Capitol

"Senior Week at the Capitol" was held from February 21- 23, in Atlanta, Georgia. The purpose of Senior Week is for seniors to meet with their legislators to let them know the value and importance of Home and Community Based Services for seniors, observe legislators in their gallery, call legislators out of the gallery, or to meet in their offices and advocate for senior services. Mary A. Day, AAA Assistant Director, coordinated a caravan of staff and clients to attend this event on February 23rd. Also attending the event



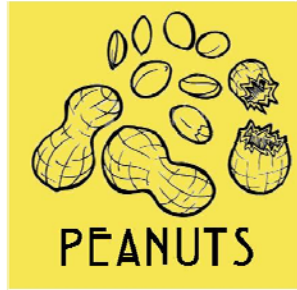
AAA Staff, clients, and other participants at this year's Senior Week at the Capitol.

were Norman Graves, Middle Flint Council on Aging Executive Director, Site Managers, and Client Representatives from Muscogee, Talbot, Crisp, Harris, Macon, and Sumter Counties. Together, this group had 108 persons in attendance, which is the second largest group ever to have attended this event from our region. All persons in attendance distributed information sheets to the legislators concerning Home and Community

Based Services. Seniors also had the opportunity to tour the South Rotunda of the capitol and visit with the Georgia Council on Aging and other organizations who had displays. While at the capitol, seniors were able to take photos with some of our representatives and Senator Ed Harbison. In addition to touring the Capitol, clients thanked the House of Representatives and Senators for all their support for Community Care Services and the non-Medicaid Home and Community-Based services. Visits and contacts were made with

Representatives Carolyn F. Hugley, Kip Smith, Debbie Buckner, Calvin Smyre, Buddy Harden and Senator Ed Harbison. Representatives Carolyn Hugley and Calvin Smyre greeted everyone and shared updates with the group concerning certain services. All Senators and Representatives stated that they were committed to senior services and will do all that they can to ensure future funding for them.

## Coming Soon to a Town Near You!



Join the RVRC as they partner with Sumter Cycling and the National Park Service for the ultimate cycling adventure— Prison to Peanuts! The 34-mile ride will begin at the Andersonville National Historic Site, continue through Americus, and end at the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site. The event is set to take place on Saturday, April 28th. For more information, please visit [www.activevalley.org](http://www.activevalley.org) or contact Kayra Velez at [kvelez@rivervalleyrc.org](mailto:kvelez@rivervalleyrc.org). To register, provide Kayra with your name, contact information, and t-shirt size.

## BICYCLE ADVENTURE



**Bike to Work Day— Americus, GA: Friday, May 18th**

**Bike to Work Day— Columbus, GA: Friday, May 25th**

For more information on Bike to Work Day events, including the Ride with the Mayor and Annual Block Party, visit [www.activevalley.org](http://www.activevalley.org) or call our office at 1-877-819-6348.



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