RVRC

RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION

Annual Report
2012-2013

Planning

Community & Economic Development

Area Agency on Aging

Workforce Investment

Council Officers

Terrell Hudson
Council Chair

Clinton Perry Jr.
Vice Chair

Richard Morris
Secretary

Chair's Message

It is my great pleasure that you selected me to serve as chair of the River Valley Regional Commission Council from January 26, 2011, to June 30, 2013, and to be elected to serve an additional two-year term beginning July 1, 2013. I am extremely appreciative of the Council's confidence and support in re-electing Clinton Perry, Richard Morris, and me as your officers for another term.

I am also pleased to report to the 16 counties and the 35 cities that make up the River Valley Regional Commission (RVRC) region (also known as Region 8 in the State of Georgia) the programs and projects for our individual communities administered by the RVRC staff are all doing well. Each year, the staff strives to seek out and take on new projects that benefit our many communities.

With the issue of sequestration affecting all of the federal agencies, we realize the reduction of funding in grant programs will affect all of our communities seeking project assistance during the coming fiscal year, but the staff will continue to work to determine the best grant assistance possible for your projects.

There are many projects underway in the region that will shape our future. The passage of the Transportation Investment Act in the River Valley Region will be one that will propel our communities to grow and prosper during and after its implementation. Another project is the Richland Downtown Revitalization Project which will include rehabilitation of eight dilapidated buildings. The intention of this project is to eliminate slum and blight as well as to promote and foster a newly established downtown area where businesses can locate and thrive.

Our staff was successful in the writing and having approved grant and loan applications for many of our communities through various state and federal programs such as CDBG, OneGA, DOT, USDA, and others. In addition, the RVRC staff provided planning, transportation, aging, workforce, GIS, and environmental services to many of our communities.

As always, the RVRC Council Members and the staff are all willing to provide assistance to you in any way. Please feel free to contact any one of us or our Executive Director, Patti Cullen.

We appreciate the confidence and support you have given to the RVRC and we will continue not only to provide services to our city and county members, but to improve upon them and expand the services as funding permits. We look forward to fiscal year 2014 and being able to serve our communities.

--Terrell Hudson

Council Members

The River Valley Regional Council, composed of representatives from our 16 counties and 35 cities, meets monthly to review and discuss activities of the RVRC. Individual committees have been formed within the council related to transportation, economic development, environmental, and planning issues that affect our region. The committees meet as needed to review, discuss, and to make decisions on related projects, and report their findings back to the full Council.

Cussetta—Chattahoochee County:
Jim Lawrence, Commission Chair
Ronnie Burgamy, Commissioner
Edward Lee, Private/Non Public

Clay County:
David Shivers, Commission Chair
Steven Foy Martin,
Councilman, Fort Gaines

Crisp County:
Wallace Mathis, Commission Chair
A.J. Rivers, Commissioner, Cordele
Mike Speight Private/Non Public

Dooly County:
Terrell Hudson, Commission Chair
Eddie Daniels, Mayor of Vienna

Harris County:
John Harry Lange, Commission Chair
Rebecca Chambers, Mayor of Hamilton
Derek Williams, Private/Non-Public

Macon County:
Ambrose Richmond Felton,
Commission Chair
Gerald Beckum, Mayor of Oglethorpe
Tommy McKenzie, Private/Non-Public

Marion County:
Cecil McMickle, Commissioner
Ralph Brown, Mayor of Buena Vista
James R. "Bump" Welch,
Private/Non-Public

Muscogee County:
Teresa Tomlinson, Mayor of Columbus
Jerry "Pops" Barnes,
Councilor, Columbus
Pat McHenry, Private/Non-Public

Quitman County:
Richard Morris, Commission Chair
David Kinsey, Commissioner

Randolph County:
Jimmy Bradley, Commission Chair
Steve Whatley, Mayor of Cuthbert
Patricia Goodman, Private/Non-Public

Schley County:
Greg Barineau, Commission Chair
Carlton Wilson, Councilor, Ellaville
Kim Lawhorn, Private/Non-Public

Stewart County:
Joe Lee Williams, Commission Chair
Charles Gibson, Mayor of Lumpkin
Chip Jones, Private/Non-Public
Lawrence Young, Private/Non-Public

Sumter County:
Randy Howard, Commission Chair
Carla Cook, Councilor, Americus
Wally Summers, Private/Non-Public

Talbot County:
Freeman Montgomery,
Commission Chair
Knox Blackmar, Councilor, Talbotton
Pam Jordan, Private/Non-Public

Taylor County:
Clinton Perry Jr., Commission Chair
Barry Whitley, Mayor of Butler
Mary Ayers, Private/Non-Public

Webster County:
George Moore, Commission Chair
Melvin Crimes, Commissioner

Appointees:
Noel Williams
Governor's Appointee,
Private/Non-Public

Mitchell Watkins
Lt. Governor's Appointee,
Private/Non-Public

Dr. Carole Rutland
Speaker of the House Appointee,
Private/Non-Public

RVRC Staff Members

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Patti Cullen

ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sarah Walls

ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT

Emily Chambers, Finance Officer (Columbus Office)
Tammy Collins, Finance Officer (Americus Office)
Grace Grant, Executive Secretary
Becky Holmes, Office Manager
Annie Thompson, Fiscal Assistant
Debbie Zwaga, Secretary/Receptionist

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Gerald Mixon, Planning Director (Americus Office)
Rick Morris, Planning Director (Columbus Office)
Allison Slocum, Senior Planner/
Historic Preservation Planner
Kevin Howard, Regional Planner
Mariyana Kostova, GIS/GPS Manager
Jarrod McCarthy, Mobility Manager
Julio Portillo, Regional Planner
Lance Renfrow, Environmental/GIS Planner
Tina Rust, GIS/Planner
Kayra Velez, Marketing Manager/Assistant Planner

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Katie Howard, Community & Economic Development Director
Grant Richardson, Community Developer
Buddy Strength, Community Developer

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Tiffany Ingram, Director
Mary Day, Assistant Director
Ilona Preattle, Program Director
Kia Barrow, Gateway Coordinator &
CCSP Specialist
Shakendra Strafford, Intake Referral Specialist
Bill Weathers, Intake Referral Specialist
Rochella Wright, Intake Referral Specialist
Shameika Averett, GACARES Coordinator
Linda Harris, Case Manager
Franetta Miles, Administrative Support Technician
Lauren Pfrogner, Admin/Data Entry &
Special Projects
Annmarie Rivera, Data Resource Specialist
Gail Simpson, Fiscal Analyst
Alysa Stephens, Options Counselor
Rachel Williams, MFP Transitions Coordinator

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT DEPARTMENT

Janice West, Director
Norma English, Coordinator

Awards & Certifications

Awards

Mobility Management Program — Excellence in Regional Transportation, *National Association of Development Organizations*

Prison to Peanuts Bike Adventure — Outstanding Initiative for Small Community, *Georgia Planning Association*; Excellence in Regional Transportation, *National Association of Development Organizations*

River Valley Aging and Disability Resource Connection — Exceptional Service Award, *Columbus Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities*

Staff Certifications

Linda Harris — Care Management, *Boston University*; Powerful Tools for Caregivers, *Stanford University*

Kevin Howard — Regional Economic and Leadership Development Course, *Georgia Academy for Economic Development*

Tiffany C. Ingram — Mental Health, Care Management, Master Trainer for A Matter of Balance, *Boston University*; Professional Achievement Award, *SE4A University Training Program*

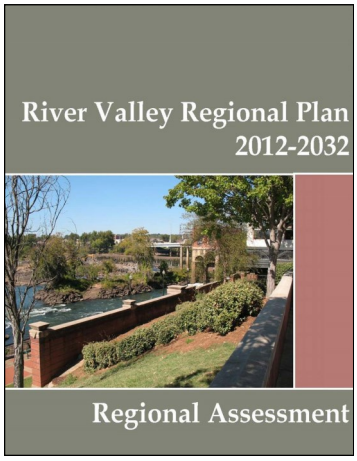
Lauren Pfrogner — Local Government Finance Officer Program Levels I & II, *University of Georgia Carl Vinson Institute of Government*

Ilona Preattle — Mental Health, Care Management, Master Trainer for A Matter of Balance, *Boston University*; Professional Achievement Award, *SE4A University Training Program*

The RVRC Planning Staff received the Outstanding Initiative for Small Community Award from the Georgia Planning Association. Pictured are RVRC staff members Tina Rust, Gerald Mixon, Julio Portillo, Kayra Velez, Lance Refrow, Patti Cullen, and Kevin Howard.

AAA Data & Resource Specialist Annmarie Rivera and Georgia Cares Coordinator Shameika Averett receive the Exceptional Service Award from Columbus Mayor Teresa Tomlinson.

Planning Activities



REGIONAL PLANNING

To aid in the future growth of the River Valley Region, staff prepared a Community Assessment which addresses the demographics and statistics of the region. The issues our communities will face and opportunities for growth and economic development over the next 20 years are also included. This document, along with the Regionally Important Resources Plan, provides the backbone for the Regional Agenda which was completed and adopted in January 2013.

LOCAL PLANNING

A tourism workshop was held in Andersonville.

Three local plans were developed for the purpose of stimulating economic development and/or preserving community heritage. The first of these was an urban redevelopment plan for Cordele's 7th Street, the community's original commercial corridor. This plan is a useful tool for redevelopment and opens the possibility of designation as an Opportunity Zone (OZ). Preservation of the historic central business district is a key component of the plan. Design guidelines were developed for the Gillespie-Selden residential neighborhood, also in Cordele. Implementation of these standards will help the neighborhood maintain the historic and cultural character that enabled it to get placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The third local planning document was a tourism study for the City of Andersonville. Study findings included recommendations on how the community can expand its offerings to tourists, and its contributions to the state's heritage tourism industry.

PRE-DISASTER MITIGATION

Local pre-disaster mitigation plans are a requirement for eligibility for pre-disaster assistance and post-disaster recovery assistance. Pre-disaster mitigation planning is a process of identifying a community's greatest disaster threats, e.g., tornadoes, extreme weather events, and determining how best to reduce exposure to those threats. The successful implementation of good plans should reduce injuries, deaths and property losses caused by natural and man-made disasters. Staff is assisting with plans in Dooly, Macon, Marion, Randolph, Schley, Stewart, Sumter, Taylor and Webster counties. The Clay County plan was submitted and approved during the year by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

ZONING

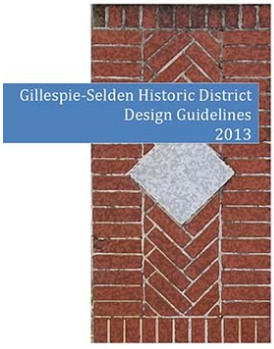
Zoning helps preserve property values and provides local offices the tools to prepare for growth. The staff provided planning and zoning technical assistance to Quitman, Talbot, Stewart, and Chattahoochee counties and the cities of Fort Gaines, Hamilton and Richland. This allows these local governments to utilize their zoning ordinances and to make the most informed and educated decisions possible. Talbot County

modified its Zoning Ordinance, making use of the staff's technical expertise. This year staff reviewed two variance requests, two zoning requests, two conditional use requests, and one subdivision related issue. Staff met with Schley County officials to discuss local interest in developing a Zoning Ordinance. Staff also drafted major amendments to the Macon County Zoning Ordinance.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

Development of plans to reduce the threats of high fecal coliform counts and sediment loads began for Pataula Creek in Clay, Quitman, Randolph, and Stewart counties. With stakeholder insight and visual field surveying, staff determined 10 sites within the Pataula Creek watershed to be sampled monthly for a one-year period to conclude in June 2014. Implementation of Best Management Practices has been underway for Pennahatchee Creek in Dooly County. The fluorometric analysis conducted by staff members did not show any evidence of the presence of human waste. More than 250 of the projected 1,000 feral hogs have been captured within the target area, and approximately 18,000 linear feet of fencing has been installed to prevent livestock from entering the waterways. UGA has agreed to write the first Feral Hog Management Manual for landowners in the state of Georgia. This project will continue through September 2014.

More than 250 feral hogs have been captured in Dooly County.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Historic Preservation Planner provides assistance to people interested in restoring historic properties and to Historic Associations that promote preservation throughout the region. At the Georgia Planning Association's 2012 Fall Conference, the staff presented a seminar about using design guidelines to revitalize neighborhoods. This year staff reviewed **45** applications for Certificate of Appropriateness for the Board of Historic and Architectural Review for the City of Columbus. Staff also completed **47** Section 106 reviews for the Columbus Housing Demolition/Rehabilitation Program.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Geographic Information System (GIS) department serves as a depository for mapping information within the region. Whether creating new maps or providing copies of existing maps, the GIS Department is a critical piece of the services provided by the RVRC. The staff used GPS software to collect municipal water infrastructure information when the City of Arabi requested assistance in identifying and mapping its system. Staff also designed and launched a website for the city, serves as the website administrator, maintains the site and posts updates. A web-based application that facilitates municipal employee access to city maps was developed at the request of the City of Montezuma. The GIS staff continues to maintain tax parcel data for Crisp, Macon, Marion, Quitman, Randolph and Webster counties.

Planning Activities

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Adequate transportation is essential to the survival of the region. The state is currently unable to fully fund all of the needed improvements and expansions to the current road system. Staff provided assistance in the creation of a Regional Transportation Roundtable (RTR) for the purpose of discussing and developing a list of transportation improvement projects that were included on the region-wide TSPLOST referendum. The RVRC region was one of only three regions in the state to pass the TSPLOST referendum on July 31, 2012. Technical assistance was provided to the RTR, Executive Committee, and the Citizens Review Committee during the fiscal year.

Transit Activities

The Lower Chattahoochee Regional Transportation Authority was created by the state legislature to operate the Pataula Transit System. This system began operation on July 1, 2012, at the new facility located in Springvale (Randolph County) and is operated by Resource Management Systems, Inc. (RMS).

Staff continues to work with the Department of Human Services (DHS) on the coordinated transportation efforts in the eight western counties. In FY13, **35,317** trips were made in these eight counties. Also, **1,071** bus passes were distributed in Muscogee County, **1,052** of which were four-week passes.

Staff prepared the 2013 Schley County Transit Plan.

Transportation Enhancement Projects (TE)

The TE program enables funding for transportation projects of cultural, aesthetic, historic and environmental significance. Local communities have completed projects such as rehabilitation of rail station depots, bike/pedestrian trails, sidewalks, and streetscapes. The staff assisted the following communities with implementing different phases of their TE projects:

- City of Shellman - streetscape project
- Harris County - walking trail and amenities completed
- City of Andersonville - depot renovation

The City of Andersonville received TE funding to renovate the historic depot.

Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Mobility Management Program

The staff produced a Regional Transit Coordination and Action Plan for the region. The document assesses the transit needs, obstacles, and opportunities in the region and the courses of action each pertinent local government and significant transit entity in the area is willing to consider in order to pursue transit improvements. These include creating cost efficiencies, filling service gaps, and partnering in regional transit systems. The RVRC Mobility Manager was elected as the chairperson for the Georgia Transit Association's Mobility Management Committee.

The Prison to Peanuts Bike Adventure attracted 120 riders from across the southeast.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning

The RVRC staff planned and implemented the following events:

- Bike to Work Day and Ride with the Mayor in the cities of Columbus and Americus. Approximately **500** people participated in these annual events.
- The Second Annual Prison to Peanuts Bike Adventure. This event included a 32- and 64-mile bike ride connecting the cities of Andersonville, Ellaville, Americus, and Plains and promoted the Andersonville National Historic Site and Jimmy Carter National Historic Site. Participating in the event were **120** riders from all over Georgia and parts of Tennessee, Alabama and Florida.
- The Presidents and Patriots Bicycle Adventure. This three-day, two-night adventure connected two state parks (Florence Marina and Georgia Veterans parks) and two national parks (Andersonville National Historic Site and Jimmy Carter National Historic Site). **Forty-five (45)** cyclists participated in this event.

Staff also assisted with the following events:

- The Inaugural Tour de Farm. **Fifty (50)** cyclists participated in this bicycle tour of organic farms in Sumter County, which was organized by the Sumter-Americus Bicycle-Pedestrian Committee and the RVRC.
- Sixth Annual Midtown Bike Around. RVRC co-sponsored this bicycle tour of historic Midtown Columbus with **75** people participating.

Staff continue to develop and maintain the regional bicycle and pedestrian website (www.activevalley.org) and serve as technical advisors to the boards of Bicycle Columbus, Sumter Cycling, Safe Kids and the Chattahoochee Valley Area Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (CVA-SORBA).

Safe Routes to School Program

Staff completed the Randolph County Elementary Safe Routes to School Plan, which contains detailed assessments of transportation needs within a 2-mile radius from the school. The plan also provides recommendations for how to encourage more children to walk and bike to school. The staff continues to support the Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center by scheduling site visits, renewing partnership forms and participating in International Walk-to-School Day events.

Georgia Planning Association Fall Conference held in Columbus

The Georgia Planning Association Fall Conference was held Sept. 26-28, 2012, at the Columbus Trade Center. Planning staff from the RVRC, Columbus Planning Department, Coalition for Sound Growth, Trees Columbus, MidTown Inc., and the Historic Columbus Foundation served as the host committee for the conference, which boasted an attendance of approximately **300** planning professionals from across the state. This was the first time in 10 years the conference was held in Columbus. Seminar topics included historic preservation, modern transportation, stakeholder involvement, and planning regulations. Several sessions featured student presenters from schools across the southeast, including Georgia Tech, the University of Virginia, Florida State University, and Auburn University. On the last day of the conference, an award ceremony was held to recognize outstanding planning initiatives around the state.

Community & Economic Development

The Community & Economic Development Department provides grant writing, grant administration, and technical assistance to our region's local governments. The RVRC is designated as an Economic Development District by the US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA). This designation allows us to receive funding in order to provide technical assistance to cities and counties, development authorities, and existing and emerging private entrepreneurs, businesses, and industries.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS (CDBG):

More than **4,000** people in the region benefited from the nine CDBG projects closed out by staff this fiscal year. Projects included rehabilitating four sewer systems and one water system, two housing projects which rehabilitated 12 houses, and renovation of a county health department.

The Quitman County Health Department was renovated using CDBG funds.

This house in Shellman was renovated using CDBG funds.

Street and drainage improvements to be funded with FY12 CDBG funds in Harris County.

Richard Morris, Georgetown/Quitman County commission chair, attended the lunch and learn program in Butler. The topic for the lunch was communication and how to use Constant Contact.

In April 2012 staff prepared the following successful CDBG applications, which were approved for funding in September 2012:

- City of Buena Vista - **$390,000** for sewer system improvements
- Harris County - **$500,000** for street and drainage improvements as well as water system improvements
- City of Montezuma - **$500,000** for water/sewer system improvements
- Stewart County - **$495,413** for septic tank replacements and water system improvements
- City of Lumpkin - **$469,244** for street and drainage improvements
- Town of Waverly Hall - **$500,000** for septic tank replacement as well as street and drainage improvements

On April 1, 2013, RVRC staff submitted 14 CDBG grant applications for various communities in the region.

OTHER SUCCESSFUL GRANTS:

Immediate Threat & Danger (ITAD) Funding:

- City of Pinehurst - **$8,317.84** to purchase wastewater treatment plant pumps
- City of Ideal - **$8,446.35** to make repairs to the lift station

USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG):

- City of Pinehurst - **$56,035** to make water and sewer improvements

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Quarterly meetings to provide opportunities for networking and learning tools for promoting and growing local downtown areas were held in 2013. Staff was able to coordinate these meetings through the assistance of a Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG). Sessions were held in Buena Vista, Butler, and Shellman on topics such as Constant Contact, Camera Ready, and Historic Preservation Tax Credits.

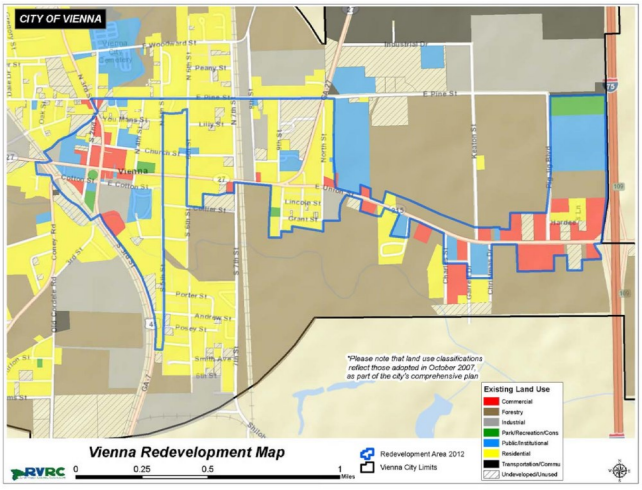
Community & Economic Development

REHABILITATION PROJECTS

The City of Richland received a $423,133 Redevelopment Fund Grant to rehabilitate the facades of eight downtown buildings. Two jobs will be created as part of this project and $173,990 will be invested by building owners, the Downtown Development Authority of Richland, and the Richland Better Hometown.

Rehabilitation of buildings in Richland.

The staff created a redevelopment plan for the City of Vienna which addresses the needs of the citizens. The plan was developed through a process which involved a Community Visioning Meeting and Design Charette. Specific steps were recommended to help the city achieve its goals and objectives. Also as part of the process, a marketing analysis was completed. The analysis identified market areas which could be used as potential new businesses or expansions of existing businesses. This work was completed as part of a Rural Business Opportunity Grant received by the RVRC. In January 2013, work began in the City of Butler on an Urban Redevelopment Plan following the same process as the City of Vienna.



Baby Dreams Furniture, which manufactures cribs and other nursery furniture, received a loan from the EDA Revolving Loan Fund. Pictured from Baby Dreams are treasurer Anna Ma, Rostam Felfeli, Mina Felfeli, and CEO H. Gostasb Felfeli,

REVOLVING LOAN FUND (RLF)

Baby Dreams Furniture in Buena Vista received a $200,000 loan from the EDA Revolving Loan Fund. The total project cost was $267,000 with **50** jobs retained and two jobs created.

Contacts were made with **28** potential loan customers. Credit analysis was done on one loan application.

Bankers from the Americus area, including Americus Mayor Barry Blount, of SB&T, attended a meeting to learn more about the SBA 504 Loan Program and RVRC's Revolving Loan Fund.

Marketing efforts included partnering with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission's Small Business Lender to market the SBA 504 Loan Program with banks in the RVRC 16-county area. Meetings were held in Columbus and Americus to begin these efforts with personnel from several banks attending. Information was provided to promote the availability of the USDA and EDA Revolving Loan Funds.

The Imerys facility in Macon County.

INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS

Macon County was awarded a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Employment Incentive Program (EIP) grant for **$500,000** for a rail spur to help the Imerys company deliver its product throughout the United States and the world. The plant hired **38** new employees. Macon County was also awarded a **$200,000** grant from the Georgia Department of Transportation for the construction of a turn lane on Highway 49 fronting the plant site to accommodate the increase in industrial truck volume generated by the expansion. Macon County received a One-Georgia grant in the amount **of $235,000** for the **$49** million Imerys expansion.

Area Agency on Aging

The mission of the Area Agency on Aging is to create and sustain a livable community that promotes health and well-being for older adults and persons with disabilities. This is achieved through information, education and accessibility to services and resources promoted through the AAA Gateway – Aging and Disability Resource Connections as well as community collaborations. Our vision is to "Be Informed, Be Prepared and Live Well." We link individuals to the right services and resources at the right time.

AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CONNECTION (ADRC)

The ADRC is the portal for seniors, caregivers and people with disabilities to obtain information as well as placement for appropriate services and resources. Access to these services provides opportunities for the elderly and disabled to maintain independence and dignity through a comprehensive, coordinated system of resources and support. We have the most comprehensive human services resource database in the region with more than **25,000** listings in more than **300** service categories. Through the ADRC, our counselors made **20,549** contacts with people in our region seeking services and information.

SENIOR FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM

For the **8th** consecutive year, the AAA was able to serve **761** seniors through the Senior Farmers' Market Program at **13** senior centers across the region. Each senior was able to cash in $20 vouchers in exchange for fresh produce. Overall, there was a **100 percent** redemption rate for vouchers. This program is a win-win program for both the seniors and Georgia farmers. We were able to serve more seniors this year due to other regions donating unused vouchers.

The Senior Farmers' Market provided fresh produce to more than **700** senior citizens in the region. Pictured above are seniors in Sumter County visiting the market.

HOME-DELIVERED AND SENIOR CENTER MEALS

RVRC/AAA contracts with providers to serve meals in 12 senior centers and provide home-delivered meals in the River Valley's 16-county region. More than **162,000** meals were served to seniors over 60 years of age, their caregivers, and persons with disabilities. Choice meals are now being offered in both Macon and Sumter County senior centers which allows congregate meal participants to choose an entrée one day a week.

HOME AND COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES (HCBS)

HCBS serves seniors over age 60 through a variety of programs and services such as home-delivered meals, homemaker and personal care support, information and assistance, as well as transportation. It provides a support system package to those most in need. This year, **2,050** clients received assistance through home and community based services.

CHRONIC DISEASE SELF MANAGEMENT PROGRAM (CDSMP)

CDSMP is an evidence-based program teaching participants to live well with and manage their chronic condition. **Four** lay leaders were trained and will teach community classes.

Staff members Lauren Pfrogner and Ilona Preattle taught a Chronic Disease Self Management class in Macon County with **10** participants.

COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES PROGRAM - Preventing Unnecessary Placement

CCSP is a Medicaid waiver service for those needing extensive care at home to prevent nursing home admission. The program, which served **390** clients throughout the region during the 2013 fiscal year, saves Medicaid dollars and allows the clients to remain in their own home and community. The average Medicaid costs for Nursing Home care was **$25,854** per person last year. The average Medicaid service benefits cost per CCSP consumer for the same period was **$9,083**. Residents in our region were able to stay in their homes for an additional **4 1/2** years when receiving CCSP services. Also, **67 percent** of CCSP recipients pay a cost share based on their income in supporting this service.

KINSHIP CARE: GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

This program provided more than **20** families raising related children with assistance and support through presentations and support group meetings in Stewart County. Several presentations were made at elementary and middle schools in the region regarding resources for families that are raising related children. A field trip for the Stewart County support group was made to Rock Ranch for the second year. Information has been distributed in Harris, Muscogee, and Crisp counties, initiating new kinship collaborations.

SENIOR WEEK AT THE CAPITOL

Senior Week at the Capitol is an annual event sponsored by the Georgia Council on Aging. On February 28, 2013, **70** seniors, caregivers and our staff went to the Georgia State Capitol during Senior Week to meet with local elected officials to advocate for Home and Community Based Services and to support the "Be There 4 Seniors" campaign.

WELLNESS AND PREVENTION

The AAA Wellness staff provided programs reaching **15,696** seniors in the region. These included presentations and programs on safety, nutrition, physical activity and exercise, osteoporosis screening and disease management. The AAA partnered with the public health department for the **8th** year in offering osteoporosis screenings. These screenings were completed in Muscogee, Harris and Talbot County senior centers. The wellness program is also coaching senior center managers on how to promote healthy lifestyles by providing current health-related information and daily physical activity with their participants.

Area Agency on Aging

A new evidenced-based program "A Matter of Balance" has been offered in our region and is teaching community and lay leaders important information to prevent falls. This program was taught in Dooly County. It consists of eight classes focusing on class participation as well as exercises to build strength and endurance.

Dooly County residents participating in the new Matter of Balance program learned important information about how to prevent falls.

CASE MANAGEMENT

Case Management provides assistance to clients on the Home and Community Based Services waiting list who have little or no caregiver support and are not able to receive home and community based services immediately. Other resources are identified and a care action plan is developed with the client to help meet his or her needs. A Telephone Reassurance Program "Heart to Heart" was developed to provide telephone support for clients on HCBS waiting lists, utilizing volunteers who are also waiting list clients. River Valley AAA continues the partnership with the Georgia Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association to extend the Telephone Reassurance Program to caregivers and clients with dementia. This year the telephone reassurance program was offered in Muscogee, Harris, Talbot, Stewart, Randolph and Sumter counties.

The revitalized West Central Georgia Care-Net offers programs for professionals and caregivers.

CAREGIVER SERVICES

Our goal is to keep caregivers healthy so they can continue providing care to their loved ones while taking care of themselves too. This year the Alzheimer's Respite voucher program known as "Time-Out" provided up to **$1,200** each to **36** caregivers to spend on their respite needs.

The first Care-Net was created in our region in 1990 by the Rosalynn Carter Institute, however over time the organization stopped meeting. The revitalization of the West Central Georgia Care-Net is well underway this year with regular meetings and new programs for both caregivers and professionals.

The Powerful Tools for Caregivers program was offered in our region and **four** people were certified as lay leaders. These leaders are offering evidenced-based classes that equip caregivers with tools and strategies to help them handle caregiver challenges.

GEORGIA CARES

The GeorgiaCares Program is a trusted source of information about Medicare and other related insurances. The River Valley GeorgiaCares Program attended more than **140** activities in communities throughout the 16-county area this year. These activities included public service announcements on local AM radio stations about Medicare Open Enrollment 2013, interactive presentations to the public, health fairs at various churches and partner organizations, television shows, and dedicated enrollments for Part D, the Medicare Savings Program and Low Income Subsidy.

AAA staff Alysa Stephens, Options Counselor, and Shameika Averett, GeorgiaCares Coordinator, attend a volunteer fair at Columbus State University.

The River Valley GeorgiaCares Program has reached more than **835,000** beneficiaries in FY 2013. Many beneficiaries have qualified for extra help with their prescription drug costs, saving them more than **$1.5 million** through Social Security's Low-Income Subsidy Program. The River Valley GeorgiaCares Program has completed more than **280** applications for the Medicare Savings Program which saved beneficiaries more than **$356,0**00 in Medicare premiums. The River Valley GeorgiaCares Program is also the SMP (formerly Senior Medicare Patrol) investigating Medicare errors, fraud and abuse. Staff assisted beneficiaries at various senior centers on how to read their Medicare Summary Notice to detect fraud and abuse of the Medicare Program. During FY 2013, the River Valley SMP provided more than **70** events and outreach activities including one-on-one counseling sessions, group sessions and community education about how to prevent, detect and report Medicare errors, fraud and abuse.

MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON (MFP)/OPTIONS COUNSELING

The AAA is the appointed local contact agency to start discussions with the residents who wish to return to their communities. The AAA Options Counselor visits with nursing home residents and works with nursing home staff to determine if further action should be taken based on the resident's self-direction. If services are available and the resident wishes to leave the nursing home, the program known as "Money Follows the Person" is initiated. This program assists residents in resettling in the community with home and community services. The AAA transitioned **15** people from nursing homes in our region back into the community this fiscal year, and Options Counseling was provided to **132** residents in our region's 20 nursing homes.

Workforce Investment

The River Valley Regional Commission serves as the grant recipient and administrative entity for the local area Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services. These services are governed by the Middle Flint Workforce Investment Board, which is comprised of local private and public sector members. The local WIA serves an eight-county area consisting of Crisp, Dooly, Macon, Marion, Schley, Sumter, Taylor, and Webster counties. WIA offers educational and training opportunities to assist and enhance employment opportunities that will lead to employment, job retention, and self-sufficiency for eligible individuals age 17 and up. Trade Act services are administered by the agency to assist individuals (Dislocated Workers) who have been laid off from their employment due to business closures or employee layoffs. To help people return to employment, WIA offers career guidance and exploration, career interest assessments, referrals to educational and employment training opportunities, and case management. WIA Grant Awards designated for the area during Program Year 2012 and Fiscal Year 2013 totaled **$1,059,443**.

Paxen GED staff member Karen Smith with WIA GED graduates at the June 2013 graduation ceremony.

GED PLUS TRAINING SERVICES

GED Plus offers basic skills remediation and training activities to assist WIA-eligible customers with obtaining their General Education Diploma (GED). GED remediation training provides an instructor-led review of the five subject areas of the GED training materials. Work readiness training is the "Plus" portion of the program and focuses on resume' preparation, job search techniques, interviewing skills, career exploration, work ethics, personal budgeting and finances, dressing for success, job search assistance, post-secondary educational exploration and workplace skills. Training is delivered in an instructor-led classroom setting for a six-week period. Classes meet Monday thru Friday for 6-8 hours daily during the training period. GED examination fees and supportive service benefits are available to assist with cost of training. GED Plus enrollment for FY13 was **158** people.

YOUTH WORK EXPERIENCE SERVICES

Youth Work Experience Services enhances employment opportunities for youth participants who have recently obtained their GED and have little or no work experience. Youth are paid wages in the amount of $7.25 per hour during the Work Experience activity. Worker's Compensation Insurance coverage is also provided during the training.

Fifteen (15) youth participated in Work Experience activity. Employers who participated as work sites include: CVS Pharmacy (Americus, Cordele), Dorothea's Salon (Americus), Dwight Harris Boys & Girls Club (Americus), City of Andersonville, Sumter County Board of Commissioners, Innovative Senior Solutions (Americus, Cordele), and Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Americus).

INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS (ITA)

The Individual Training Accounts provide educational and/or occupational skills training to enhance employability. This training activity typically includes both classroom training and hands-on learning for specific educational and/or occupational related areas. ITA participants receive assistance with tuition, books, training supplies, and transportation costs while in training. ITA served **141** individuals from all counties in the WIA area.

ON-THE-JOB-TRAINING (OJT)

The On-The-Job training service assists local employers in finding skilled employees who meet their employment needs. Employers work with an OJT Career Advisor to outline required defined work duties, needed qualifications and to determine the length of training time needed to master job tasks. WIA customers are interviewed by the employer who makes the final hiring decision.

Employers participating with the OJT activity included: Eyesight Associates (Crisp), Pinehill Nursing Center (Dooly), Innovative Senior Solutions (Sumter), Helena Chemicals (Crisp) and Tyson Foods (Dooly). **Nine** individuals received OJT services in FY13.

TRADE ACT SERVICES

Trade Act Training Services is a program that provides special benefits and training opportunities for workers whose jobs have been affected by trade with foreign nations or whose jobs have been moved outside the United States. Laid-off employees (Dislocated Workers) receive special benefits such as, but not limited to, educational training opportunities, extended Unemployment Insurance Benefits, relocation assistance, and occupational training. **Twenty-eight** (28) people received Trade Act Services during the year. Cooper Lighting (Sumter County) was the only Trade Act affected employer during the 2012-2013 year.

Robert Sturgeon, a WIA participant at South Georgia Technical College, competes at Skills USA competition.

PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES:

Through these programs, the following educational milestones were attained by participants:

- Associate Degrees: **41**
- Bachelor Degrees: **5**
- Training/Occupational Certificates: **17**
- Diploma (Technical Occupation Areas): **12**
- GED: **61**
- State Licenses: **19**

EMPLOYMENT AND AVERAGE WAGES:

WIA participants' wage rate for the past year ranged from **$8.59** to **$22.00** per hour and included training areas such as commercial truck driving, physical and occupational therapy, nursing, law enforcement, diesel mechanics, and education. After measuring employment and retention rates, the overall local performance status has been classified as meeting.

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