RVRC

River Valley Regional Commission

# Annual Report

## 2014-2015

# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

**Thank you all!** It has been my honor and pleasure to serve as chair of the River Valley Regional Commission Council from January 26, 2011 through June 30, 2015. Your confidence and support in me has been overwhelming. It goes without saying that I could not have served as effectively without Vice Chair Clinton Perry of Taylor County, Secretary Richard Morris of Quitman County, the Executive Committee members and, of course, all of the Council members.

I look forward to my continued service as a Council member. I know the Council is in good hands as Clinton Perry takes over as chair, Richard Morris as vice chair and Mike Speight as secretary. All of these gentlemen are leaders in their respective communities, the region and the state. **The best is yet to come!**

Reduced federal funding affected all agencies, however, the RVRC region did prosper. The cities and counties receiving Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds during fiscal year 2015 with assistance from the RVRC staff included the counties of Talbot and Clay and the cities of Shellman, Richland, Unadilla, and Buena Vista. These projects include public facility improvements as well as housing rehabilitation. Several other communities throughout the region were also awarded CDBGs; each of these projects will improve the quality of life for residents throughout the River Valley region.

The 2010 Transportation Investment Act or T-SPLOST completed its second full year of tax collections. The widening of US Highway 27and bridge replacement in Randolph County continued. Construction cost is estimated at $32 million. The first of the band one projects nearing completion is located in Talbot County with improvements being made to Pobiddy Road at an estimated cost of $3 million. The other band one projects located in Columbus/Muscogee County, Dooly County, and Sumter County will be under construction by the close of 2015. Many of the band two projects are in the design phase. Through June of 2015, $112,217,484 had been collected in the region with $28,054,371 being directly distributed to our region's local governments for transportation purposes. This is quite an accomplishment as our region was one of only three in the state to vote for the tax. These projects will continue to propel our communities to grow and prosper during its implementation.

The Council is happy to report that the Columbus office is relocating to a new facility on Front Avenue in uptown Columbus. The present building is under contract and a much larger facility has been purchased through the issuance of bonds by the Downtown Development Authority of Columbus. Part of the new space will be leased to ColumbusMakesIt, a recently established non-profit that will provide a "makerspace" or community center for diverse artists, makers, and technologists. ColumbusMakesIt will provide the tools, education and support that will encourage and inspire people to Learn It, Make It and Live It. Necessary construction/renovation is underway, and the Council and the staff are extremely happy. We anticipate moving into the new facility in November of this year.

The RVRC, in FY 2015, brought in approximately **$19,747,659** to the 16-county region; this means that for every $1 dollar of dues received by the RVRC from our cities and counties, their overall return on investment was **$52.23** in federal and state funding. Fifty-four percent **(54%)** of funding received this year was federal, and **46%** percent was received from the state.

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 our Executive Director Patti Cullen if you have any questions.

**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 to discuss issues related to transportation, economic development, and planning. 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** Commissioner
**James Morton** Commissioner
**Edward Lee** Private/Non Public

**Clay County**
**Lee Hubbard** Commissioner
**Steven Foy Martin**
Councilman, Fort Gaines

**Crisp County**
**Clark Henderson,** Commission Chair
**A.J. Rivers** Commissioner, Cordele
**Mike Speight** Private/Non-Public

**Dooly County**
**Terrell Hudson** Commission Chair
**Eddie Daniels** Mayor, Vienna

**Harris County**
**John Harry Lange** Commission Chair
**Rebecca Chambers** Mayor, Hamilton
**Doug Etheridge** Private/Non-Public

**Macon County**
**Mickey George**
Commission Chair
**Bruce Hill** Mayor, Oglethorpe
**Tommy McKenzie** Private/Non-Public

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

**Muscogee County**
**Evelyn Turner-Pugh**
Mayor Pro-Tem, Columbus
**Jerry "Pops" Barnes**
Councilor, Columbus
**Dr. Fred Gordon** Private/Non-Public

**Quitman County**
**Richard Morris** Commission Chair
**David Kinsey** Commissioner
**Allen Fort** Private/Non-Public

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

**Schley County**
**Greg Barineau** Commission Chair
**Carlton Wilson** Councilor, Ellaville

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

**Sumter County**
**Randy Howard** Commission Chair
**Nelson Brown** 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.** Commissioner
**Barry Whitley** Mayor, Butler
**Tom Queen** Private/Non-Public

**Webster County**
**George Moore** Commission Chair
**Melvin Crimes** Commissioner

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

**Maggie McGruther**
Governor's Appointee
Private/Non-Public

**Richard McCorkle**
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

# PLANNING

## REGIONAL PLANNING

The River Valley Regional Plan presents a vision for the River Valley, identifies minimum standards for local governance and recommends minimum environmental protection measures needed to help achieve the vision. The implementation regulations granted a three-year grace period for compliance with the state's new Regional Planning Standards. This year staff performed an inventory of all 51 jurisdictions to determine the current levels of compliance with recently established performance standards and protection measures. RVRC recommendations will help member governments come into compliance with any standards and/or measures not already adopted.

## LOCAL PLANNING

The state has established a set of Minimum Standards and Procedures for Local Comprehensive Planning for local government use in identifying and developing priorities for growth, management and resource protection. During this fiscal year staff assisted five counties as they progressed through plan development: Georgetown-Quitman County (adopted October 2014), Webster County (adopted October 2014), Marion County-Buena Vista (October 2015), Talbot County-Geneva-Junction City-Talbotton-Woodland (October 2015) and Chattahoochee County (February 2016).

## PRE-DISASTER MITIGATION

Local pre-disaster mitigation plans are a requirement for eligibility for pre-disaster mitigation 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. During the year Marion and Sumter counties' plans were approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and subsequently adopted by the cities and counties. Plans for Dooly and Webster counties were scheduled to be approved in July 2015. Schley County's plan is under review by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency. Talbot and Crisp County plans are being developed.

## ZONING

Zoning helps preserve property values and provides local governments the tools to prepare for growth. The staff provided planning and zoning technical assistance to Chattahoochee, Quitman, Stewart, and Talbot 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. This year staff reviewed four variance requests, four zoning requests, and two conditional use requests. Staff continued working with the Schley County zoning committee to develop the county's first zoning ordinance.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

The Pennahatchee Creek project, which was designed to help reduce levels of fecal coliform, has been completed. More than 620 feral hogs were captured and approximately 32,000 linear feet of fencing was installed to prevent livestock from entering the waterways. Through this project, RVRC mitigated 5,500 square feet of heavy-use area by installing seven alternate watering troughs and three stream crossings to reduce sediment and pollutant transport. As part of the project, RVRC partnered with the University of Georgia to produce the state's first Landowner's Guide for Wild Pig Management. The project's originality and successful implementation earned the RVRC **an Innovation Award from the National Association of Development Organizations**.

In April 2015, RVRC received a $440,848 Georgia Environmental Protection Division grant for a project to reduce the threats of high fecal coliform counts and sediment loads for Pataula Creek in Clay, Quitman, Randolph, and Stewart counties. The project will consist of bacterial and chemical monitoring as well as DNA source tracking. Best management practices will be used along dirt roads and forestry operations in order to reduce sediment displacement. Two composting facilities will be installed to help reduce fecal coliform levels from deer carcass dumping.

RVRC is currently working on a Watershed Improvement Plan for the Kinchafoonee Creek Watershed in Webster and Marion counties. The watershed, which includes Clear Creek and Lanahassee Creek, is not in violation of any pollutants; the plan is being written to continue a healthy watershed initiative and will be used as a model to demonstrate "What to do to keep a clean and healthy watershed."

## Historic Preservation

The Historic Preservation Planner provides assistance to people interested in restoring historic properties and to historic organizations that promote preservation throughout the region. This year staff reviewed 58 applications for Certificates of Appropriateness for the Board of Historic and Architectural Review for the City of Columbus. Additionally, staff completed historic preservation reviews for 11 applications requesting grant funding for various regional communities. During the course of the year staff also provided:

- assistance with National Register nominations and grant applications for Big Poplar Springs Baptist Church (Dooly County) and the Vienna Historic Society
- a presentation to the Randolph County Rotary Club and the Randolph County Historic Society regarding the benefits of historic preservation, historical preservation tax credits, and the Main Street Program
- information on HP tax credits to the Cordele Main Street Program
- technical information regarding window repair/replacement to the Dooly County Board of Commissioners
- technical assistance in Richland for rehabilitation of two downtown buildings and in Vienna for rehabilitation of one downtown building
- information regarding historic preservation to the Marion County Tourism Resource Team
- technical assistance to the Stewart County Historical Society regarding rehabilitation of the old Lumpkin jail
- technical assistance regarding historical markers in the eight western counties of the region, attempting to get them on the Georgia Department of Transportation inventory of markers.

RVRC GIS staff and the City of Americus GIS staff partnered to present GIS Day activities for students at Sumter County Elementary School.

## Geographic Information Systems

The Geographic Information System (GIS) department serves as a depository for mapping information within the region. Staff worked with Randolph County Chamber of Commerce on a Historic Homes and Sites Tour Map. Staff analyzed the tax delinquency data for Crisp County. The GIS staff continues to maintain tax parcel data for Crisp, Macon, Marion, Quitman, Randolph, and Webster counties.

# Transportation Planning

### Transit Activities

The Lower Chattahoochee Regional Transportation Authority (Quitman, Randolph, and Stewart counties) was created by the state legislature to operate the Pataula Transit System. RVRC staff administers the program and Resource Management Systems, Inc. operates the system, which is based in Springvale (Randolph County). Transit is used to support seniors, jobs, and other endeavors.

Staff continues to work with the Department of Human Services (DHS) on coordinated transportation efforts for the 16-county region. In FY15, **75,132** trips were made in the region and **1,195** four-week bus passes were distributed in Muscogee County. Of these trips, **47,949** were to and from 11 of the region's senior centers and served **2,577** people.

During FY15, RVRC implemented TRIP$, the new statewide online trip ordering and billing system. Staff received a letter of accommodation from DHS for being the quickest region to successfully implement the system. RVRC's DHS program received an **award from the National Association of Development Organizations**.

### Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Mobility Management Program

The Mobility Manager works with entities in each county to discuss transit options, cost efficiencies, and economic development support. The Mobility Manager also provides guidance and expertise for the three-county Lower Chattahoochee Transportation Authority (Quitman, Randolph, and Stewart).

A regional inventory of transit services and providers was conducted in order to determine individual system needs, service gaps, and existing levels of coordination. From the inventory, a regional directory was developed to facilitate service access.

### Transportation Enhancement (TE)

This program enables funding for transportation projects of cultural, aesthetic, historic and environmental significance. Staff assisted the following communities with implementing different phases of their TE projects:

- City of Shellman - streetscape project
- City of Andersonville - depot renovation
- City of Cordele - sidewalk improvements

### Safe Routes to School

Staff worked with Schley County Elementary School to complete a Safe Routes to School Plan, which contains detailed assessments of transportation needs within a 2-mile radius from the school. The plan provides ideas for safety-related activities and recommendations for how to encourage more children to walk and bike to school. Twelve (12) schools in the region have Safe Routes to School plans. Staff continues to support the Georgia Safe Routes to School Resource Center by scheduling site visits, renewing partnership forms and participating in Walk-to-School Day events.

### Teens in the Driver Seat

Teens in the Driver Seat is a new program being presented in the River Valley region through our partnership with the Georgia Department of Transportation. This is a nationwide program administered through Texas A&M Transportation Institute. It is a peer-to-peer program for teens that focuses on traffic safety and addresses the major risks for teen drivers. Five schools in the region expressed an interest in participating in the program during the 2014-2015 school year. Staff will continue to introduce this program to other schools in the region during the 2015-2016 school year.

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning

RVRC staff plan and implement programs and events that promote cycling and walking as healthy, safe forms of transportation and recreation. The staff serves as technical advisors to the boards of Bicycle Columbus, Sumter Cycling, Safe Kids, and the Chattahoochee Valley Area Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association. RVRC staff serves as a partner on the Friends of the Greenway Trail Fund which is led by the Community Foundation of Chattahoochee Valley in partner-

ship with the PATH Foundation. RVRC also maintains a regional bicycle and pedestrian website, activevalley.org.

Staff assisted with the planning, marketing and implementation of seven cycling events and assisted Bicycle Columbus in hosting the 2014 Georgia Bike Summit held in Columbus in October 2014.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service, staff has worked with the staff at the national historic sites in Plains and Andersonville, Florence Marina, Providence Canyon, and Georgia Veterans state parks, SAM Shortline Excursion Train, and Sumter Cycling to present the Find Your Park Centennial Bike Ride in August 2015 and 2016. These rides are part of the National Park Service's Find Your Park campaign.

RVRC partnered with MidTown, Inc. to create a "Minimum Grid, Maximum Impact" project that will provide pedestrian, bicycle and transit connections linking MidTown and Uptown Columbus.

RVRC also assisted the City of Columbus and Bicycle Columbus in preparing a Bicycle Friendly Community application that was approved by the League of American Bicyclists. Staff also wrote an application for the Columbus Civic Center which earned Bicycle Friendly Business designation.

*Tour de Farm cyclists prepare to head out on the road again after a stop at a farm in Schley County.*

RVRC staff received an **Excellence in Regional Transportation award from the National Association of Development Organizations** for marketing Tour de Farm as a means to promote agri-tourism in the region.

**170**
people participated in Bike to Work Day events in Americus and Columbus

**115**
people participated in the Georgia Bike Summit

**110**
people participated in the Lumpkin Fair on the Square Bicycle Ride

**80**
people participated in the MidTown Bike Around events

**74**
people participated in the Prison to Peanuts Bicycle Adventure

**48**
people participated in Tour de Farm

# COMMUNITY &
# DEVELO

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 which 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 GRANT (CDBG)

In April 2014 staff prepared **15** CDBG applications. The following were approved for funding in September 2014:

- City of Buena Vista– $491,920, water system improvements
- Clay County – $471,623, water system improvements
- City of Richland – $500,000, sewer system improvements
- City of Shellman – $500,000, sewer system improvements
- Talbot County – $575,175, multi-activity program including street and drainage improvements, home rehabilitation and reconstruction
- City of Unadilla – $500,000, sewer system improvements

On April 1, 2015, RVRC staff submitted **17** applications for various communities for the FY15 CDBG funding cycle.

### DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Quarterly meetings provided opportunities for networking and learning tools for promoting and growing local downtown areas. Staff coordinated these meetings through the Economic Development Administration's planning grant. Sessions on tourism resources and crowdfunding were held in Shellman and Georgetown.

### REHABILITATION PROJECTS

The City of Richland and the City of Vienna have downtown redevelopment projects under construction. These projects are funded through the Redevelopment Fund Grant, a set aside of CDBG funds.

### REVOLVING LOAN FUND (RLF)

An RLF luncheon to market the loan programs was held in September 2014 in Cordele with good attendance from local bankers. This has become a yearly event with the meeting location rotating throughout the region. RVRC staff continues to market the program and review possible projects for funding.

### COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

Staff completed the annual update to the CEDS which was approved by the Economic Development Administration. The CEDS Committee continues to promote dual enrollment in area high schools. In addition the committee worked with the REACH GA program to provide information on this post-secondary education program to area school superintendents. As a result, two additional school dis-

Work continues on a Cordele
which was funded by a Commu

# & Economic

# opment

sewer rehabilitation project,
nity Development Block Grant.

tricts in the region enrolled in the program and two additional districts are working on applications for 2016.

### Digital Economy

The Digital Economy Plan for the River Valley region was completed in winter 2014. The plan identified regional strengths such as the types of businesses that are in the region, the types of places people want to work, and the infrastructure to support a Digital Economy. Infrastructure investments continue to be needed in the region. Overall there is broad awareness of the importance of understanding and transitioning to a Digital Economy, and a recognition that training at all levels is needed throughout the region.

Suggestions, goals, actions, costs and responsible parties were developed as a part of the planning process. These goals and actions were divided based on location in the region, with suggestions targeted to the needs in the local community. Columbus has a different set of needs based on the types and strengths of the businesses compared to the other places in the region. Highlights of these goals include increasing wireless capabilities throughout the region, developing and building local small business and government capacity for effective use of digital tools and resources, focusing on the attraction and retention of top engineering talent, and encouraging entrepreneurial activity through the development of a makerspace in Columbus.

**$3 million**
received in CDBG funding

**$50,000**
Immediate Threat & Danger grant to the City of Richland for sewer treatment plant repairs

**$35,623**
Immediate Threat & Danger grant to the City of Byromville for water filtration system repairs

**$16,500**
USDA Search grant to the City of Marshallville to evaluate infrastructure needs

**$25,000**
USDA Community Facilities grant to Stewart County to purchase a utility vehicle

**$17,208**
USDA Community Facilities grant to the City of Butler to assist in the purchase of a police car

**2,421**
people benefitted from six closed CDBG projects: 4 sewer system improvements, 1 water system improvement, 1 roadway and drainage project, 3 homes rehabilitated, 1 mobile home unit reconstructed

# 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 (MFWIB), which is comprised of local private and public sector members. The local WIA serves the eight counties of Crisp, Dooly, Macon, Marion, Schley, Sumter, Taylor and Webster. WIA offers educational and training opportunities to assist and enhance employment opportunities that will lead to employment, job retention and individual self-sufficiency for eligible individuals age 17 and up.

WIA grant awards designated for the area during Program Year (PY) 2014 and Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 totaled **$1,238,402**. The WIA and Trade Act programs served **315** people during this time period. Based on local performance, the River Valley WIA program has been classified as exceeding the nine WIA performance measures.

**On-The-Job Training (OJT)** assists employers in finding skilled employees who meet their employment needs. Employers work with an OJT career advisor to outline required work duties, qualifications, and to determine the length of training time needed to master job tasks. The employer interviews WIA participants and makes the final hiring decision. The OJT participant is paid wages by the employer during the designated training period. The employer is eligible to receive a reimbursement for the training and permanent employment of the OJT participant. **Reimbursements to OJT participating employers total $28,576.** Employers participating with the OJT activity included Crisp Youth Detention Center (Crisp), and Tyson Foods (Dooly). **OJT enrollments: 29**

**GED Plus Training Services** assist WIA-eligible participants in obtaining their General Education Diploma (GED) by offering basic skills remediation. GED remediation training provides an instructor-led review of the 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, youth work experience, dressing for success, job search assistance, post-secondary educational exploration and workplace skills. Participants attend instructor-led classroom training for six weeks. Classes meet Monday thru Friday for six to eight hours daily. GED examinations fees and supportive services benefits are available to assist with the training cost. **GED Plus enrollment: 166**

**$1,238,402**
WIA grant awards

**166**
people enrolled in GED Plus

**113**
people served by Individual Training Accounts

**80**
businesses and employers benefitted from WIA services

**29**
people received On-the-Job training services

**16**
people participated in the Youth Work Experience

**6**
people received Trade Act services

**130 Credentials**
attained by WIA participants

**40** GEDs
**37** state licenses
**34** associate degrees
**10** diplomas (technical college)
**8** commercial drivers licenses
**1** bachelor's degree

**Youth Work Experience Services** enhance employment opportunities for youth participants who recently obtained their GED and have little or no work experience. Youth are paid $7.25 per hour during the Work Experience activity. Employers who participated as worksites include Mercy Housing (Sumter), Sumter County Board of Commissioners, Habitat for Humanity (Sumter), Dorothea's Beauty Salon (Sumter), and Crisp County Public Library. **Youth Work Experience enrollment: 16**

**Trade Act Training Services** provide 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. Businesses or employers must file a federal Trade Act Petition specifying the reason for business closures or reductions in work force. Laid-off employees (dislocated workers) receive benefits such as educational training opportunities, extended Unemployment Insurance Benefits, relocation assistance, occupational training, etc. to laid off employees. **Trade Act Services enrollment: 6**

Aviation mechanics training at South Georgia Technical College is one of the programs available to ITA participants.

**INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS (ITA)** 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. Georgia has an Eligible Provider List (EPL) from which individuals can choose eligible training providers which provide the desired type of ITA training services. Technical colleges, public colleges and universities as well as private training providers are typically the location for the ITA training services. Darton College (Cordele Campus), South Georgia Technical College and Georgia Southwestern State University are three ITA-eligible training providers located within the area. ITA participants receive assistance with fees for tuition, books, training supplies, and transportation costs while in training. **ITA enrollments: 113**

**EMPLOYMENT RATE** for people enrolled in WIA programs as of the 3rd Quarter (June 2015) and their average earnings for six months:

| | Entered Employment | Retention | Average Earnings |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adults | 78.2% | 90.9 % | $12,166 |
| Dislocated Workers | 95.0% | 94.1% | $13,919 |

# 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. Our vision is to "**Be Informed, Be Prepared and Live Well.**"

**Aging and Disability Resource Connection (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. Our database includes more than **300** service categories. Counselors discussed options with more than **4,500** callers seeking information.

**Home-Delivered and Senior Center Meals** are available through our subcontractors that serve meals in 12 senior centers and deliver meals to homes. More than **212,013** meals were served to seniors over 60 years of age, their caregivers, and persons with disabilities. We subcontract with 12 senior centers in our region which offer a variety of recreational opportunities such as exercise, games and arts and crafts in addition to congregate meals.

**Community Care Services Program (CCSP)** is a Medicaid waiver service for those needing extensive care at home to prevent nursing home admission. The program saves Medicaid dollars and allows the clients to remain in their own home and community. The average time a consumer receives services under the CCSP waiver is 48 months. The average Medicaid cost for nursing home care is **$31,368** per person. The average Medicaid service benefits cost per CCSP consumer for the same period is **$9,031**. This is a potential savings of approximately **$22,337** per consumer or about **71%** less than traditional costs of nursing home services. Also, **44%** of CCSP recipients pay a cost share based on their income.

**Wellness and Prevention** staff provided presentations and programs on safety, nutrition, physical activity and exercise, osteoporosis screening and disease management for **7,724** seniors. The AAA partnered with the public health department for the 10th year in offering osteoporosis screenings. These screenings were completed at Randolph and Muscogee 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.

**212,013+**
meals served to seniors, caregivers, and persons with disabilities

**160,000+**
beneficiaries reached through GeorgiaCares

**11,497**
people served by the Ombudsman Program

**7,724**
seniors served by AAA Wellness staff

**4,500**
contacts with people seeking services and information through the Aging and Disability Resource Connection

**1,275**
support calls received by the "Heart to Heart" Telephone Reassurance Program

**632**
people served through the Senior Famers' Market Nutrition Program

**128**
clients were served through the Elderly Legal Assistance Program

**17**
people transitioned from nursing homes back to their communities through Access 2 Independence

**CASE MANAGEMENT** provides assistance to clients on the Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) 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 to help meet the client's needs. Case management services were provided for **70** clients. The Telephone Reassurance Program "Heart to Heart" provided **1,275** support calls for clients on HCBS waiting lists, using volunteers who are also waiting-list clients. The AAA continues to partner with the Georgia Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association to extend the Telephone Reassurance Program to caregivers and clients with dementia. The Telephone Reassurance Program was offered in Muscogee, Harris, Talbot, Stewart, Randolph and Sumter counties.

**CAREGIVER SERVICES** help keep caregivers healthy so they can continue providing care to their loved ones while taking care of themselves too. The Powerful Tools for Caregivers program offered one class with **12** people attending. This program provides caregivers with tools and strategies to help them handle caregiver challenges. The West Central Georgia CARE-NET grew significantly this year and continues to meet on a regular basis.

RVRC Area on Aging has three staff members certified to lead Tai Chi for Health classes.

## EVIDENCED BASED WELLNESS PROGRAMS

- Chronic Disease Management Program teaches participants to live well with and manage their chronic condition. One lay-leader training was conducted with **nine** lay leaders trained. **Three** community classes were conducted in Randolph and Muscogee counties.
- Matter of Balance is an interactive fall prevention program which teaches participants to cope with the fear of falling. This eight-session program was offered in Randolph and Taylor counties.
- Tai Chi is an exercise program improving balance and strength for seniors and those with arthritis. This program was taught in Muscogee and Harris counties.

**SENIOR FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM** served **632** seniors at 12 senior centers and one subsidized apartment complex. This is the eighth consecutive year the AAA was able to provide this service. Each senior was able to cash in a $20 voucher in exchange for fresh produce from a local Georgia farmer on site.

# Area Agency on Aging

**GeorgiaCares** provides information about Medicare and other related insurances. The River Valley GeorgiaCares program attended **270** events and reached more than **160,000** beneficiaries this year. The River Valley GeorgiaCares program partners with the Department of Community Health to assist beneficiaries in obtaining Medicare Savings Programs, enrolling for Medicare Part D, the Senior Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and Low Income Subsidy provided through Social Security. The Low Income Subsidy program saved beneficiaries **$2,733,258**. Applications were completed for **654** people for the Medicare Savings Program, which saved beneficiaries **$104,708** in Medicare Part B premiums, coinsurance and other out-of- pocket costs. The River Valley GeorgiaCares program is also the designated Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) investigating Medicare errors, fraud and abuse. Staff provided **189** SMP events and outreach activities.

The River Valley GeorgiaCares program attended 270 community events throughout the region.

**Money Follows The person (MFP)/Options Counseling** assists 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. Through a contract with RVRC, Access 2 Independence transitioned **17** people from nursing homes back into the community. The AAA options counselor provided counseling to **146** residents in the region's 20 nursing homes.

**Long Term Care Ombudsman** program helps residents of nursing homes and personal care homes resolve problems with services and benefits to ensure their rights and standards of quality care are maintained. This program also provides older persons and their caregivers information regarding long-term care facilities. This program served **11,497** people.

**Elderly Legal Assistance Program (ELAP)** provides legal representation, legal information, and community education in civil legal matters. **Twenty-four (24)** community educational sessions were provided for **446** persons. This program served **128** clients and provided **1,186** counseling hours. ELAP also provided **1,430** people with information and referral services.

# RVRC Staff

## 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, Finanacial 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
Mariyana Kostov, GIS/GPS Manager
Jarrod McCarthy, Mobility Manager
Julio Portillo, Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Planner
Lance Renfrow, Environmental/GIS Planner
Cassie Myers, Environmental/GIS Planner
Jim Livingston, Special Projects Coordinator
Mia Anderson, Marketing Manager/Assistant Planner
Charlotte Davis, Assistant Planner (part-time)

### 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
Shameika Averett, GeorgiaCares Coordinator
Linda Harris, GeorgiaCares Volunteer Coordinator/
Caregivers Specialist
Kimberly Bellamy, Case Manager
Eboni Holder, Intake and Referral Specialist
Bill Weathers, Intake and Referral Specialist
Franetta Miles, Admin/Special Projects Coordinator
Gail Simpson, Fiscal Analyst
Melissa Price, Options Counselor
Lacey Pitts, Data Resource Specialist

### Workforce Investment Department
Janice West, Director
Norma English, Program Specialist
Tammy Carpenter, Program Specialist (part-time)

## Awards & Certifications

RVRC received awards from the National Association of Development Organizations for the Pennahatchee Creek project, the Tour de Farm bicycle event, and the DHS transit program.

Tiffany Ingram received the Disability for Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS-A/D) certification.

Ilona Preattle received Board Certification in Gerontological Nursing (recertification) and the Disability for Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS-A/D) certification.

Kia Barrow received the Disability for Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS-A/D) certification.

Bill Weathers received Options Counseling certification and the Disability for Information and Referral Specialist (CIRS-A/D) certification.

Franetta Miles received certification in Powerful Tools for Caregivers and Chronic Disease Self-Management Program/Chronic Disease Self-Management Education (CDSMP/CDSME).

Charlotte Davis, Eboni Holder and Lacey Pitts were certified as instructors for Tai Chi for Health.

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*Front cover photo by Cindy Goodwin Spencer at the Goodwin Brothers Farm, Weston.*