



ANNUAL REPORT

2015-2016

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Well, I can honestly say that this has been a year I will never forget! My first year as Chair of the River Valley Regional Commission Council has been a wonderful experience, and I am very appreciative of the honor and confidence that you have bestowed upon me. I would like to thank Richard Morris, Vice Chair, for filling in for me during my absence and all of our Council members for their cards, phone calls and, especially, prayers. As you know I was a passenger in a vehicle accident and suffered several breaks in one of my legs. This resulted in major surgical procedures that had me recuperating for several months. I am slowly but surely making strides forward to a complete recovery, and I am so thankful to be back!

Fiscal year 2016 brought many changes to the River Valley Regional Commission. First and foremost was the relocation of our Columbus office to a larger building located on Front Avenue. In 2015, the River Valley Regional Commission Council made the decision to invest in the Regional Commission and its staff by agreeing to provide the Columbus office with a new office building. The Executive Committee met numerous times to review building sites and to discuss the financial implications of purchasing and renovating a new office facility. The RVRC's new location, at 710 Front Avenue, Suite A, provides our staff with a more efficient, modernized space with room to grow. It has already been used by several local organizations for meeting space!

Grant applications are one of the primary services our staff offers to local governments. In April of 2015, the RVRC staff wrote seventeen (17) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) applications for cities and counties in the River Valley Region and was successful in having eight (8) approved for funding. Those receiving funding were the City of Cordele, \$500,000; Cuthbert, \$500,000; Ellaville, \$372,865; Fort Gaines, \$500,000; Georgetown-Quitman, \$328,407; Montezuma, \$500,000; Taylor County, \$500,000; and Vienna, \$500,000 for a total of \$3.7 million in CDBG grant funds for the area.

The Georgia Transportation Investment Act (TIA or TSPLOST) continues to be a win for the region. All Band One projects are either under construction or about to begin, and design work is well underway for Band Two projects. In the last three and one half years, our region has collected approximately \$159 million dollars, with \$119 million going to regional projects and \$40 million being distributed to all local governments in the region to be used for transportation improvements. I appreciate the leadership role our Regional Commission staff and Council took on ensuring the passage of this critical funding mechanism. We will be reaping benefits for years to come throughout the region due to the implementation of TIA.

*The RVRC, in FY 2016, brought in approximately **\$19,935,074** 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** in federal and state funding. Fifty-five percent (55%) of funding received this year was federal, and forty-five (45%) was received from the state.*

Of course, there are many other projects that the RVRC is involved in and/or has accomplished throughout the year. I hope that you will take the time to read this Annual Report and become familiar with all of the activities that your Regional Commission is involved in. We hope to provide the resources to implement our vision statement as a region where current and future generations succeed at home, at work, and in their communities. Thank you for all you do to make the River Valley Region the number one region in the state!

-Clinton Perry

COUNCIL MEMBERS

The River Valley Regional Council, composed of representatives from our 16 counties and 35 cities, meets 10 times a year 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 report their findings to the full Council.

Cusseta—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
Jeanie Bartee, Commissioner, Cordele
Mike Speight, Private/Non-Public

Dooly County

Terrell Hudson, Commission Chair
Hobby Stripling, 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

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
Jason Hoch, Private/Non-Public

Stewart County

Joe Lee Williams, Commission Chair
Debbie Stone, Councilor, 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,
Commissioner
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, Crisp County
Governor’s Appointee

Maggie McGruther, Sumter County
Governor’s Appointee

Richard McCorkle, Marion County
Governor’s School Superintendent
Appointee

A. J. Rivers, Crisp County
Lt. Governor’s Appointee

Dr. Carole Rutland, Muscogee County
Speaker of the House Appointee



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. This year the RVRC staff notified our fifty-one (51) member governments and advised each one of their responsibilities in regards to meeting the Regional Plan and Regionally Important Resources (RIR) requirements. Staff provided example policy and ordinance documents, that if adopted by the local government, would meet all compliance requirements. Staff also provided detailed technical assistance to numerous local governments on these requirements.

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



Central High School, Talbotton, GA, Students working on the Talbot County Comprehensive Plan.

for growth, management and resource protection. During this fiscal year staff assisted five counties as they progressed through plan development: Marion County- Buena Vista (adopted October, 2015), Talbot County-Geneva-Junction City-Talbotton-Woodland (adopted October, 2015), Chattahoochee County (adopted February, 2016), and Schley County-Ellaville (adopted June, 2016). At the end of the year staff continued putting finishing touches on the draft Macon County-Ideal-Marshallville-Montezuma-Oglethorpe plan and was at the midway point on the Stewart County-Lumpkin-Richland plan due in February, 2017. Staff was also gathering data for the Sumter County Plan, due June, 2017.

PRE-DISASTER MITIGATION PLANNING

Local pre-disaster mitigation plans are a federal 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, floods and other 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. After approval by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, pre-disaster mitigation plans were adopted by Crisp, Dooly, Talbot and Webster Counties during the fiscal year. The Schley County plan was approved in June, 2016, and subsequently adopted. Chattahoochee County and Quitman County plans were being developed.

ZONING

Zoning helps preserve property values and provides local governments the tools to prepare for growth. Staff provided planning and zoning technical assistance to Chattahoochee, Quitman, Stewart and Talbot counties and the cities of Butler, Hamilton, Pine Mountain and Richland. This assistance allows these local governments to utilize their zoning ordinances and to make the most informed and educated decisions possible. Technical assistance helps local governments remain current with evolving zoning case law. Staff assisted Schley County throughout the long process of developing an ordinance which was adopted in December, 2015.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING

The RVRC received a Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) grant through Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act in the amount of \$440,848 to reduce



Lance Renfrow, staff member, collecting water samples to test for fecal coliform.

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 (BMPs) 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. This project is scheduled to begin in November, 2016.

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's staff reviewed **72** applications for Certificates of Appropriateness for the Board of Historic and Architectural Review for the City of Columbus. Additionally, the staff completed historic preservation reviews for **13** applications requesting grant funding for various regional communities. During the course of the year, the staff also provided the following services:

- Assisted with the National Register nomination and tax credit application for the Dooly County Campground.
- Gave presentations to the Stewart County Historic Society regarding local historic district designation in the City of Lumpkin, to the Waverly Terrace Neighborhood Association (Columbus) regarding property owner requirements in locally designated historic districts, to the City of Cuthbert regarding the effect of a local historic preservation ordinance on property owners, and to the Marion County Chamber of Commerce regarding National Register Nominations.
- Facilitated the Vernacular Georgia Excursion to Marion County. Sites for the itinerary included Pasaquan, Gypsy Camp Store, Tazewell Courthouse, downtown Buena Vista, and other historic places in the Marion County area.
- Assisted representatives from the East Wynnton neighborhood in Columbus regarding the purchase of a historic marker to honor Dr. William Ayers, an important African-American doctor in Columbus.



Vernacular Georgia Excursion in Buena Vista, GA

- Assisted Sumter County and the City of Americus regarding the existing condition and repair/replacement of the historic South Lee Street Bridge located in a National Register and Local Historic District in Americus.
- Assisted the Columbus Fire Marshall regarding creation of a Fire District in the UpTown area of Columbus—within a local historic district and the Main Street boundary.
- Assisted the Marion County Chamber of Commerce and interested citizens on creation of an action plan for the development of a county historic society.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The GIS department serves as the map depository for the region. Staff works on special projects during the year, such as capture of public facilities and utilities using global positioning system (GPS) technology and assisting with planning aerial imagery for county tax assessors. The department also maintains property tax parcel maps for seven counties. These parcel maps are very useful in preparing applications for competitive grant funds for area governments.

The GIS department maintains a variety of data to assist in everything from monitoring growth, economic development, and planning emergency response. Available data includes roads, city/county limits, address points, zoning, land use, flood areas and more.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

TRANSIT ACTIVITIES

The Lower Chattahoochee Regional Transportation Authority manages the Pataula Transit System in Quitman, Randolph and Stewart counties. The RVRC staff administers the program, and Resource Management Systems, Inc. operates the system, which is based in Springvale (Randolph County). Transit helps residents meet their employment, health care, social interaction and recreational needs.

The RVRC staff continues to work with the Department of Human Services (DHS) on coordinated transportation efforts for the 16-county region. In FY16, **82,650** trips were made in the region and **1,340** four-week bus passes were distributed in Muscogee County. Of these trips, **52,822** were to and from eleven (11) of the region's senior centers and served an average of **240** elderly people each month.

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

The Mobility Management program received a national award from the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) for FY16. The award acknowledges the RVRC's exceptional work in performing a regional rate study to identify innovative ways to restructure DHS transit rates to better accomplish service goals. The award also recognizes the RVRC's efforts in working with the City of Americus to explore a variety of transit improvements and their benefits, including coordinating two currently separate transit programs. Together, these efforts are examples of the RVRC's macro and micro approaches to transit improvements.

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 also serves as a partner of the Friends of the Greenway Trail Fund, which is led by the Community Foundation of Chattahoochee Valley in partnership with the PATH Foundation, and as a partner in the Standing Boy Creek Park Committee.

RVRC staff maintains a regional bicycle and pedestrian website, activevalley.org. Staff also assisted with planning, marketing and implementation of seven cycling events in FY16.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service, RVRC staff worked with the staff at the national historic sites in Plains and Andersonville, as well as staff at Florence Marina, Providence Canyon, Georgia State Veterans Park, the 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 worked with Midtown Inc. to implement a Minimum Grid, Maximum Impact project that will provide pedestrian, bicycle and transit connections linking MidTown and Uptown Columbus. The Minimum Grid projects included the Woods to Water Family Fun Walk and planning for a pilot project which will include on-road facilities connecting Midtown to Uptown.



RVRC was designated as a Silver Level Bicycle Friendly Business by the League of American Bicyclists in Washington, D.C., becoming 1 of 14 businesses to receive such a distinguished designation in the state of Georgia.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

RVRC staff worked with the Americus Furlow Charter School to complete a Safe Routes to School Walk Audit, which contains detailed assessments of transportation needs within the most commonly used routes to walk to and from the school. As a result of this audit, the school will be provided with ideas for safety-related activities and recommendations for how to encourage more children to walk and bike to school. **Twelve** schools in the region have Safe Routes to School plans. RVRC 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. Staff also partnered with Safe Kids Columbus and participated in their annual bicycle rodeo and helmet give-away at which more than **600** children benefited from a free helmet and helmet fitting.

TEENS IN THE DRIVER SEAT

Through our contract with GA DOT, RVRC staff introduced a nationwide program, Teens in the Driver Seat, to the region. This is administered in partnership with the Texas A&M Transportation Institute. It is a peer-to-peer learning 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 2015-2016 school year. One school, the Americus Furlow Charter School partnered with the Texas A & M Transportation Institute to implement this program in their 2016-2017 school year.



2015 Walk to School Day

300	160
People participated in Bike to Work Day events in Americus and Columbus	Participated in the Lumpkin Fair on the Square Bicycle Ride
130	100
Participated in the Prison to Peanuts Bicycle Adventure	Participated in Tour de Farm
	50
	Participated in The Find Your Park Centennial Bicycle Ride



August, 2015 Find Your Park Centennial Bicycle Ride

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

The RVRC staff worked to implement the CEDS focus on workforce development and is continuing to promote Dual Enrollment and the REACH scholarship program for middle school students.

We have also brought the issue of Brownfields to the forefront in the region, working with state and national resources to help identify tools for landowners to effectively manage environmentally damaged property.

ColumbusMakesIt has been open and operating for one year in space provided by the RVRC; providing opportunities for entrepreneurship and collaboration.



White Oak Pastures in Bluffton, Georgia



CAMERA READY

Georgia Film tax credits have made the state's film industry a \$7 billion enterprise. There were 245 productions in Georgia last year, and the River Valley region is working to get a share of this industry. To do so, we have worked with every county in the region to make sure they are Camera Ready and have

placed suitable filming locations on the state's Camera Ready Database.

REVOLVING LOAN FUND (RLF)

The River Valley Regional Commission through its Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund assisted a local business, White Oak Pastures, with financing to purchase and renovate a building in Bluffton, GA. The project will create **five** new jobs. The building will house their corporate offices as well as serve as a retail store displaying and selling their unique artisan creations produced on the farm.





CDBG funded waterline placement

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS (CDBG)

In April 2015 staff prepared **17** CDBG applications. The following were approved for funding in September 2015:

- ◆ City of Cordele – sewer system improvements
- ◆ City of Cuthbert – sewer system improvements
- ◆ City of Ellaville – water system improvements
- ◆ City of Ft. Gaines – sewer system improvements
- ◆ Georgetown-Quitman County – street and drainage improvements
- ◆ City of Montezuma – water system improvements
- ◆ Taylor County – water system improvements
- ◆ City of Vienna – sewer system improvements

On April 1, 2016, RVRC staff submitted **13** applications for various communities for the FY16 CDBG funding cycle.

DOWNTOWN REHABILITATION PROJECTS

Two downtown redevelopment projects leveraging private investment have been completed in 2016 using the Department of Community Affairs Redevelopment Fund. The redevelopment of eight buildings in downtown Richland leveraged more than **\$123,900** of private investment and **\$411,683** in public funds to transform downtown Richland. Richland Rum has leveraged this investment to create **two** new jobs in downtown Richland and make national news as one of the best craft distilleries in America, according to USA Today. The Henley Building in downtown Vienna has been stabilized with **\$191,450** of public funds through the DCA Redevelopment Fund. This project has leveraged **\$36,983** of private equity and negotiations are currently underway to complete interior buildout for a new doctor's clinic that will serve the city.



Richland Rum

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

WIOA SERVICES

The RVRC serves as the grant recipient and administrative entity for the local area Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) services. These services are governed by the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board (MFWDB), which is comprised of local area private and public sector members. The local WIOA area serves an eight county area consisting of Crisp, Dooly, Macon, Marion, Schley, Sumter, Taylor and Webster counties. WIOA services offer educational and training opportunities to eligible individuals ages 17 and up within the area to assist and enhance employment opportunities which will lead to employment, retention in employment, and individual self-sufficiency. WIOA Grant Awards designated for the area during Program Year (PY) 2015 and Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 totaled **\$1,238,402**.

Through the programs mentioned, the following credentials were attained by WIOA participants as of PY15, 3rd Quarter:

Associates Degrees:	30
Bachelor Degrees:	1
Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDL):	10
General Education Diplomas (GED):	39
Diplomas (Technical College Areas):	12
State Licenses:	26
Total Credentials Earned:	118

INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS (ITAs)

The Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) are training services which provide educational and/or occupational skills training to enhance individuals' employability. This training activity typically includes both classroom training and hands-on learning for specific educational and/or occupa-



Semi-Truck Driver Training at South Georgia Technical College

tional related areas. Georgia has an Eligible Provider List (EPL) from which individuals can choose eligible training providers that 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: 107**

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING (OJT)

The On-The-Job (OJT) training service is designed to assist local area employers in finding skilled employees that meet their employment needs. Employers work with an OJT Career Advisor to outline required work duties, needed qualifications, and length of training time needed to master job tasks. WIOA customers are interviewed by the employer who later makes the final hiring decision. The OJT participant is paid wages by the employer during the designated training period.



Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Technology

The employer is eligible to receive a reimbursement for the training and permanent employment of the OJT customer. **Reimbursements to OJT participating employers total: \$16,644**

Employers participating with the OJT activity included Tyson Foods (Dooly County). **OJT Enrollments: 22**

GED PLUS TRAINING SERVICES

GED Plus training activities are designed to assist WIOA eligible customers obtain 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 training which focuses on resume preparation, job search techniques, interviewing skills, career exploration, work ethics, personal budgeting and finances, youth Work Experience, dress for success training, job search assistance, post-secondary educational exploration, and workplace skills.

Training is delivered by an Instructor-led classroom setting for a 6 week period. Classes meet Monday – Friday for 6-8 hours during the training period. GED examinations fees and supportive services benefits are available to assist with cost of training. **GED Plus Enrollment: 127**

YOUTH WORK EXPERIENCE SERVICES

Work Experience was designed to bridge the gap and to enhance employment opportunities for youth participants who had recently obtained their GED and who have little or no work experience.

Youth are paid \$7.25 per hour during the Work Experience activity. Worker’s Compensation insurance coverage is also provided during the training.

Employers who have participated as worksites include: Sumter County Board of Commissioners, Habitat for Humanity, A.S. Clark Campus, Cordele Housing Authority, Little Caesar’s, The Groom Spot, and Paxen Learning. **Youth Work Experience Enrollment: 41**

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

	WIOA Participants that Entered Employment	Retention Rate	Average Earnings (Six Months)
Adults	84.0%	99.6%	\$14,379
Dislocated Workers	100.0%	100.0%	\$17,898

Middle Flint



Connecting Talent with Opportunity
A proud partner of the American Job Center network

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The mission of the Area Agency on Aging is to create and sustain a livable community that promotes health and wellbeing 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 **206,000** meals were served to seniors over 60 years of age, their caregivers, and persons with disabilities. These senior centers offer a variety of recreational opportunities such as exercise, games and arts and crafts in addition to congregate meals for the elderly.

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 client to remain in their own home and community. The average time a consumer receives services under the CCSP waiver is 48 months. The average annual Medicaid cost for nursing home care is **\$33,690** per person. The average Medicaid service benefits cost per CCSP consumer for the same period is **\$11,473**. This is a potential savings of **\$22,217** per consumer or about **66%** of traditional costs of nursing home services.

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 ac-



Wellness Walk Registration at the Peachtree Mall in Columbus, GA

tion plan is developed to help meet the client’s needs. Case management services were provided for **97** clients.

CAREGIVER SERVICES help keep caregivers healthy so they can continue providing care to their loved ones while taking care of themselves too. The West Central Georgia CARE-NET continues to meet on a regular basis.



Providers and Family Members attending Dealing with Dementia Behavior training in Americus on August 16, 2016. This training was conducted by Eboni Morris, Caregiver Specialist.

A class, Dealing with Dementia Behaviors, for family caregivers was held as well as a 'Train the Trainer' workshop. Each person who attended the training received a Dealing with Dementia Behaviors Guide which provided valuable information for caregivers.

EVIDENCED BASED WELLNESS PROGRAMS

- Chronic Disease Management Program teaches participants to live well with and manage their chronic condition. One Lay-Leader training was offered to **seven** trainees, with **six** participants completing the program.
- Matter of Balance is an interactive fall prevention program which teaches participants to cope with the fear of falling. The Area Agency on Aging Master Trainer offered a Coach Training to **six** trainees with all completing the course. This Boston University Program is an **eight** session program.
- Tai Chi is an exercise program improving balance and strength for seniors and those with arthritis. RVRC Area on Aging has two staff members certified to lead Tai Chi for Health classes. Participants meet once a week for 10 weeks. This program was offered in Muscogee and Taylor counties to two groups with approximately **20** people total.



Farmer's Market held in Harris County

SENIOR FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM served **700** seniors at **13** senior centers and **four** subsidized apartment complexes. This is the tenth 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.

GEORGIA CARES provides information about Medicare and other related insurances. The River Valley GeorgiaCares program attended **130** events and reached more than **102,000** beneficiaries in FY16. The River Valley GeorgiaCares program partners with many organizations in and around the 16-county region to include the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP), the local AARP Chapter, the Elder Rights Team and SALT (Seniors and Law Enforcement Together).

The River Valley GeorgiaCares program also assists Medicare beneficiaries through enrollment in such programs as Low Income Subsidy offered by Social Security which saves beneficiaries **\$4,000** per year in Medicare prescription drug costs. The Medicare Savings Program, administered by the state of Georgia, will pay the premium for Medicare Part B and other coinsurance and other out of pocket costs. Applications were completed for **654** people for the Medicare Savings Program, which saved beneficiaries approximately **\$104,708**. Over **466** applications were completed for the Low Income Subsidy, saving beneficiaries over **\$186,000**.

The River Valley GeorgiaCares program is also the designated Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) investigating Medicare errors, fraud and abuse. Staff provided **87** SMP events and outreach activities.

THE ‘BE SENIOR SAVVY HEALTH AND RESOURCE FAIR’ was held on December 4, 2015 at the Mildred Terry Library. More than **50** seniors attended the event to learn about various resources in the Columbus region. Subjects covered were:

- Protecting Your Assets—Who Can You Trust?
- Staying Safe During the Holidays—Ways to Avoid Being Scammed
- Fall Prevention—What are my Risks, presented by Sheri Burdell, RN, Columbus Regional Health, Mobile Unit
- Medication Management—The Do’s and Don’ts
- Better Business Bureau—Who am I Doing Business With?

Jerry “Pops” Barnes, Columbus Councilman and RVRC council member, spoke with attendees at the ‘Be Senior Savvy Health and Resource Fair’.



MONEY FOLLOWS THE PERSON (MFP)/OPTIONS COUNSELING assists residents who wish to return to their communities. This program assists residents in resettling in the community with home and community services. 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. Through a contract with RVRC, Access2Independence transitioned **17** people from nursing homes back into the community.

The AAA options counselor provided counseling to **88** 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 **11,722** people.

ELDERLY LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (ELAP) provides legal representation, legal information, and community education in civil legal matters. Community educational sessions were provided at all **12** senior centers. This program served **100** clients and provided **1,333** counseling hours. ELAP also provided **1,565** people with information and referral services.



Lenard Crain, Better Business Bureau, informed seniors how to avoid being scammed.

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, Financial Assistant
Debbie Zwaga, Secretary/Receptionist

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Gerald Mixon, Planning Director (Americus Office)
Rick Morris, Planning Director (Columbus Office)
Mia Anderson, Marketing Manager/Assistant Planner
Charlotte Davis, Assistant Planner (part-time)
Joel Hanif, Regional Planner/Community Developer
Mariyana Kostov, GIS/GPS Manager
Jarrod McCarthy, Mobility Manager
Julio Portillo, Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Planner
Lance Renfrow, Environmental/GIS Planner
Allison Slocum, Senior Planner/Historic Preservation Planner

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Jim Livingston, Community & Economic Development Director
Grant Richardson, Community Developer

AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Katie Howard, Director
Mary Day, Assistant Director
Ilona Preattle, Program Director
Shameika Averett, GeorgiaCares Coordinator
Kia Barrow, Gateway Coordinator
Kimberly Bellamy, Case Manager
Linda Harris, GaCares Volunteer Cord./Caregivers Specialist
Eboni Holder, Intake and Referral Specialist
LaCarol Lloyd, Options Counselor
Franetta Miles, Admin./Special Projects Coordinator
Lacey Pitts, Data Resource Specialist
Gail Simpson, Fiscal Analyst
Bill Weathers, Intake and Referral Specialist

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT DEPARTMENT

Janice West, Director
Norma English, Program Specialist

Awards & Certifications

Julio Portillo, Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Planner, led efforts to have the RVRC designated as a Silver Level Bicycle Friendly Business (one of only fourteen in the state and the second Regional Commission to receive this designation).

RVRC received two Excellence in Regional Transportation awards from the National Association of Development Organizations for the Fair on the Square Program (Lumpkin, GA) and the Transit Improvements: Macro and Micro Approaches to Financial Restructuring and Service Enhancements.

Allison Slocum, Senior Planner/Historic Preservation Officer, was elected Chairman of the Georgia Association of Zoning Administrators.

Lance Renfrow, Environmental/ GIS Planner, received his Adopt-A-Stream Trainer certification in Chemical and Bacterial Monitoring in November of 2015.

Joel Hanif, Regional Planner/Community Developer, graduated from the Georgia Academy for Economic Development on May 5th, 2016 obtaining his Regional Economic & Leadership Development certificate.

Ilona Preattle, RN-BC, AAA Program Director, received Diabetes Chronic Disease Self-Management certification from Stanford University April, 2016.



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