RVRC

RIVER VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION

# ANNUAL REPORT

## FISCAL YEAR 2018

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

# *From the Desk of the Chair*

*Thank you for allowing me to serve another year as the Chair of the River Valley Regional Commission Council. The staff and I would like to thank all of our counties and cities for your support throughout this past year. Without you we would not be able to provide the services needed to make our region stronger!*

*Clinton Perry*
*RVRC Council Chair*

*Our staff works directly with federal and state agencies to bring additional resources and funding to the region. Primarily, the staff works with the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, Georgia Department of Human Services, Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Department of Economic Development, Georgia Environmental Protection Agency, Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division, U.S. Department of Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, as well as other federal and state agencies. The relationships the staff have built with each of these agencies is critical to the overall success of the region. Through this Annual Report, we have tried to highlight our efforts and accomplishments to meet the needs of our local governments.*

*The Transportation Investment Act (TIA - TSPLOST) 1% sales tax legislation which went into effect in calendar year 2013 continues to be a success for the region. A total of twenty-three (23) projects are on the regional project list. Of those 23 projects, four have been completed to date: US 27/SR 1 reconstruction and widening in Randolph County, a bridge replacement on US 27/SR 1 in Randolph County, Pobiddy Road improvements in Talbot County, and US 41 passing lanes and traffic signals in Dooly County. As of June 2018,* ***$250,424,178*** *has been collected through this tax. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the taxes collected are channeled to each individual county and city in the region and has enabled them to make repairs/improvements to their road systems, construct sidewalks, purchase new road improvement equipment, and other projects that are transportation related. TIA has proven to be a win/win for our region!*

*The RVRC, in FY 2018, brought in approximately $11,108,260 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 $29.51 in federal and state funding. Seventy-six percent (76%) of funding received this year was federal funds, and twenty-four percent (24%) was received from the state.*

*I would like to thank all of you for your support of the RVRC, and I look forward to our continued working relationship. The River Valley Regional Commission is here to serve our 16 counties and 35 cities, and I can say,* ***"No other regional commission does it better!"***

*Clinton Perry*

# 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 aging, transportation, economic development, and planning. The committees meet as needed to review, discuss, and make decisions on related projects, and to report their findings back to the full Council.

Cusseta—Chattahoochee County
**Walter Rosso,** Commission Chair
**James Morton,** Commissioner
**Edward Lee,** Private/Non Public

Clay County
**Lee Hubbard,** Commissioner
**Barry Waters**, Mayor, Fort Gaines

Crisp County
**Sam Farrow, Jr.,** Commission Chair
**Jeanie Bartee,** Commissioner, Cordele

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 T. Brown,** Mayor, Buena Vista
**James R. "Bump" Welch,** Private/Non-Public

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

Quitman County
**Carvel Lewis,** Commission Chair
**Danny Blackman,** Commission Vice-Chair

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
**Jimmy Babb,** Mayor, Lumpkin
**Chip Jones,** Private/Non-Public

Sumter County
**Randy Howard,** Commission Chair & RVRC Vice-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.,** Private/Non-Public & RVRC Chair
**Barry Whitley,** Mayor, Butler
**Tameka Harris,** Commissioner
**Tom Queen,** Private/Non-Public

Webster County
**Tony Kennedy,** Commission Chair
**Melvin Crimes,** Commissioner

STATE APPOINTEES

Governor's Appointees
**Maggie McGruther**, Sumter County
**Richard McCorkle**, Marion County

Lt. Governor's Appointee
**A. J. Rivers**, Crisp County

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

## MISSION STATEMENT

*The mission of the River Valley Regional Commission shall be to create, promote and foster orderly growth and economic prosperity for our region.*

## VISION STATEMENT

*A region where current and future generations succeed at home, at work and in their communities.*

# Recognitions and Awards

- The Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting was awarded to River Valley Regional Commission by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for its FY17 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by the River Valley Regional Commission.

*RVRC Executive Director Patti Cullen presented Finance Officer Emily Chambers with the Certificate of Achievement for excellence in Financial Reporting*

*RVRC staff Rick Morris ,Planning Director and Jim Livingston, Community & Economic Development Director, GPA President Corey Hull, RVRC Executive Director Patti Cullen, RVRC Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner Julio Portillo & Jim Summerbell, GPA President Elect*

- Emily Chambers, Finance Officer, completed and passed the second and third parts in a series of 5 exams which are required for her designation as a Certified Public Finance Officer.

- State Representative Gerald Greene presented Patti Cullen, Executive Director, with a Resolution of Recognition from the Georgia General Assembly. It recognized the efforts of Ms. Cullen to improve the quality of life for citizens in the River Valley Region during her more than 35 years of work in community and economic development with the River Valley Regional Commission.

- The RVRC was recognized as an award winner in the "Outstanding Plan Implementation" category by the Georgia Planning Association for the River Valley Regional Commission Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

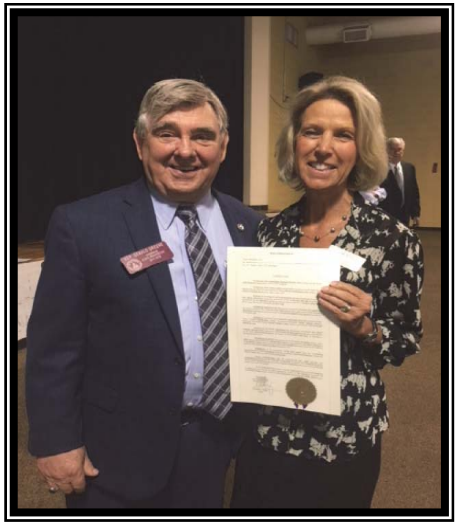
- Allison Slocum, Senior Planner, was President of the Georgia Association of Zoning Administrators.

- Cheryl Maddox, GeorgiaCares Coordinator, Eboni Morris-Key, GeorgiaCares Volunteer Coordinator, and Dareion Hill, GeorgiaCares Program Assistant, received their GeorgiaCares State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP) and Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) Counselor Certifications.

- LaCarole Lloyd, MDS-Q Options Counselor, received both an Options Counselor and Information and Referral Specialist for Aging and Disability certifications (CIRS/A/D).

- Jarrod McCarthy, Mobility Manager, was elected as the Secretary for the Georgia Transit Association (GTA). He is also serving as the Chairperson for GTA's Mobility Management Committee.

- The following employees were recognized for their service to the RVRC: Grace Grant, Executive Secretary, 40 years; Tammy Collins, Finance Officer, 25 years; and Bill Weathers, Aging and Disability Resource Connection Counselor, 5 years.



*State Representative Gerald Greene and RVRC Executive Director Patti Cullen*

## Regional Planning

In 2018, RVRC staff worked diligently preparing a full update of the River Valley Regional Commission Regional Plan. During the regional planning process, RVRC staff held two required public hearings and five listening sessions in various locations around the region: Columbus (Muscogee County), Cuthbert (Randolph County), Americus (Sumter County), Buena Vista (Marion County), and Vienna (Dooly County). RVRC staff also developed an online survey to solicit input from residents of the region in regards to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats the region faces. Volunteers from the RVRC Council formed the steering committee for the process. Each county had at least one representative on this committee, and staff met monthly with this group reviewing data and information needed for each element of the document. A final draft of the regional plan document was submitted to the state in May 2018 with a revised document submitted in August 2018.

*RVRC Steering Committee Meeting*

## Local Planning

This fiscal year, staff began working with Taylor County (Butler and Reynolds) to update their comprehensive plan by the community's February 2019 planning schedule. Before the fiscal year expired, activity was underway updating plans for Clay (Bluffton and Ft. Gaines), Crisp (Arabi and Cordele), and Harris (Hamilton, Pine Mountain, Shiloh and Waverly Hall) Counties, all having June 2019, planning deadlines. Staff also began working with Webster County before the fiscal year ended, to satisfy an October 2019 deadline.

## Pre-Disaster Mitigation Planning

Pre-disaster mitigation plans are a federal requirement. Because of increasing reclamation costs that follow presidential disaster declarations, communities are required to have and implement such plans to be eligible for federal financial assistance with pre-disaster mitigation and post-disaster recovery. It has been shown that mitigation in advance of extreme weather events is less expensive than reclamation. Planning at the countywide level helps communities identify their most likely disaster threats and determine how best to reduce exposure to them. Financial assistance for the planning effort is available through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The community is responsible for determining the most probable threats and how to best protect residents and property from these occurrences. With updates due every five years on varying schedules, several of these plans are on the top of staff desks at any given time. This year staff assisted Clay, Chattahoochee, Macon, Marion, Quitman and Randolph Counties.

## Historic Preservation

RVRC staff provided assistance to people interested in restoring historic properties and to organizations throughout the region that promote historic preservation. This year staff:

- Reviewed 53 applications for Certificates of Appropriateness for the Columbus Board of Historic and Architectural Review
- Assisted the Columbus Convention Visitors Bureau regarding revamping and updating the city's African-American Heritage Trail
- Assisted the community of Tazewell (Marion County) to place their school on the National Register of Historic Places
- Facilitated a tour of Pasaquan during the Georgia Planning Association meeting held September 27-29th in Columbus
- Wrote a Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank (GTIB) grant application for Marion County to complete streetscape improvements on the Courthouse Square in Buena Vista
- Provided technical assistance to the City of Columbus Planning Department and MidTown, Inc. regarding development of the Eackle property at the corner of Hilton Avenue and Wynnton Road

*Fencing prevents livestock from entering waterways*

## Environmental Planning

Preliminary water quality monitoring for chemicals, nutrients, and DNA/microbial source tracking concluded in December 2017 for the Pataula Creek watershed. Staff monitored nine sites monthly for one-year to identify areas most highly impacted by pollution. Analysis revealed that deer and cattle are contributing to the fecal pollution in the watershed. Best Management Practices (BMPs) to address these sources will be installed in the coming year. Implementation of BMPs to address sediment runoff from dirt roads in the watershed are currently in progress. Management practices to be installed include aggregate, rip rap, ditches, and silt fencing.

Agricultural BMP installation is underway for the Kinchafoonee Creek watershed and is expected to be completed by December 2018. Over 7,500 feet of fencing to prevent livestock from entering waterways will be constructed and a well and four watering facilities will be installed to provide livestock with drinking water. Post-BMP monitoring will be conducted during the final nine months of the grant to determine the effectiveness of these management practices in improving water quality conditions.

## Zoning

RVRC staff provided planning and zoning technical assistance to Chattahoochee, Georgetown-Quitman, Stewart and Talbot Counties and the cities of Hamilton and Richland. RVRC staff updated the variance section of the zoning ordinance for Georgetown-Quitman County and the signage section of the zoning ordinance of the City of Hamilton. Staff also completely revised the zoning ordinances for the City of Butler and the Town of Pine Mountain. In addition, staff worked with the Town of Pine Mountain on a new sign ordinance. This technical assistance helps local governments remain current with evolving zoning case law.

*Sample of a Zoning Map*

## Geographic Information Systems

Staff began the year taking the first step of a multi-year project for the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) verifying road and traffic control data. GDOT's road inventory database needed updating. Using Federal Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) funds, RVRC staff is able to validate local roadway ownership, operation, number of lanes, surface type, median type, road names, and document the presence of traffic lights, stop and yield signs in our region. City and county databases from Sumter County were the first contract milestone completed, followed by Randolph County. At the end of the year, staff began working with Harris County.

Among the more routine GIS activities for the year were maintaining six county tax assessors' parcel data files for accurate tax mapping and creating project maps for a dozen Community Development Block Grant applications. Additionally staff completed the conversion of existing address files for Clay, Quitman and Randolph Counties. The addresses were converted to an "enhanced" or E-911 format, meaning the address of the caller in an emergency situation appears on the monitor of the E-911 call/dispatch center, facilitating quicker emergency response.

## Transit Activities

The River Valley Regional Commission administers the Pataula Transit System in Quitman, Randolph and Stewart Counties on behalf of the Lower Chattahoochee Regional Transportation Authority. Transit services are delivered by Resource Management Systems, Inc., from the facility in Springvale (Randolph County). This service delivery structure makes it possible for residents of three of the state's least populated counties to meet their employment, health care, social interaction and recreational needs. The RVRC staff continue to work with the Department of Human Services (DHS) to enhance coordinated transportation efforts across the region.

51,600
Trips were to or from 12 of the region's senior centers

+

481
Four-week bus passes were provided in Muscogee County

+

24,475
Miscellaneous trips were provided throughout the region.

=

**76,556**
**TOTAL TRIPS**

## Mobility Management Program

Mobility Management staff led the expansion and coordination of DHS transit into the Talbot County transit system this year. Trips previously paid with county funds are now chargeable to federal programs that generate increased revenues, which can be applied to the match requirements for the publicly-subsidized transit system.

*Talbot County Transit Van*

Mobility Management staff produce three deliverables each year that support the region's numerous transit services. The Existing Conditions Report provides an inventory and extensive mapping of transit entities and their levels of coordination in the region, allowing administrative staff to identify and facilitate opportunities for improvement. A Regional Transit Directory is maintained and distributed to increase public awareness of accessible transportation. The Regional Coordination and Action Plan allows local governments and transit entities to declare their interest in transit improvements. With this information, participants can more easily identify the potential for cooperative partnerships. The document also helps determine the overall appeal of transit enhancements in the region.

## Census 2020

For this once-in-a-decade event, the RVRC hosted technical training to prepare local governments for the Local Update of Census Addresses review and submission processes. Afterwards, staff began collecting and cross-referencing residential addresses of our local governments, their residential utility services addresses, electrical utilities and E-911 addresses for comparison with residential addresses of the U. S. Census Bureau. The Census Bureau will use consolidated lists from the RVRC to update the Bureau's in-house files which, will then be used by census takers in April 2020.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning

RVRC Bicycle and Pedestrian planning staff have been very active this past year implementing Complete Streets, developing safety and education initiatives, and coordinating events to encourage alternative forms of transportation. As a result, Columbus now has an adopted Complete Streets Policy, and Americus has an adopted Complete Streets resolution. Furthermore, both communities are very active in bicycle advocacy initiatives. RVRC staff planned and implemented programs and events that promoted cycling and walking as healthy, safe forms of transportation and recreation throughout the year. Staff served as technical advisors to the boards of Bicycle Columbus, Sumter Cycling, Safe Kids, Chattahoochee Valley Area Southern Off Road Bicycle Association, Minimum Grid-Maximum Impact project, Friends of the Dragonfly Trail System, and Standing Boy Creek Park Steering Committee.

*Prison to Peanuts Century Riders—Americus*

RVRC also maintains a regional bicycle and pedestrian website, activevalley.org. staff assisted with planning, marketing and implementation of multiple cycling events, including Americus' Prison to Peanuts event which had over 150 riders.

## Fair on the Square – Lumpkin, Georgia

Lumpkin's Fair on the Square celebrated its 15th year with 100 riders participating. Funds raised were designated to help restore the old jail. The Stewart County Historic Commission received a $5,000 grant from the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley to permanently designate 3 routes for bicyclists, naming them the Carter Butts Memorial Bicycle Route.

## Safe Kids Columbus and RVRC Partnership

RVRC bicycle and pedestrian staff partnered with Safe Kids Columbus to assist in children's bicycle and walking safety programs. RVRC donated $2,000 to the organization for assistance with purchasing 1,000 helmets that were given away at the annual Helmet Giveaway on December 15th at the Columbus Public Library. Staff were also instrumental in multiple bike rodeos and car seat trainings in Columbus as part of this partnership with Safe Kids Columbus.

*Columbus Mayor Teresa Tomlinson at her 8th and final Ride with the Mayor bike event*

## Bicycle Friendly Business Designations Within the River Valley Region

The League of American Bicyclists, based in Washington D.C., awarded this year's Bicycle Friendly Business designations across the country. Three businesses in the River Valley region were designated:

- Habitat for Humanity, Americus, Bronze Level
- Fuller Center for Housing, Americus, Silver Level
- Ride on Bikes, Columbus, Platinum Level

Ride on Bikes, a locally owned and operated bicycle shop in Columbus, became the first and only Platinum level business in the State of Georgia and 43rd nationwide. This designation is awarded to businesses that strive to encourage their employees to ride their bicycles to work and welcome patrons that visit their businesses by bicycle. Seven of the twenty-five (25) Bicycle Friendly Businesses in the state of Georgia are located within the River Valley region.

# Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

RVRC staff worked to implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that was completed in late 2017. Four key initiatives address the two key goals of our economic development strategy: Develop the People Resources of the Region and Sustain and Improve the Land Assets of the Region.

Develop the People Resources of the Region

RVRC staff worked directly with the Southern Lower Chattahoochee Council of Governments (SLCCOG) and Southwest Georgia Regional Development Authority to transfer governance directly to the four counties of the Southern Lower Chattahoochee Council of Governments - Stewart, Randolph, Georgetown-Quitman and Clay counties. The success of their cooperation has spurred their Rural Stars Dinner and recognition program for local businesses and their work with Columbus Technical College to identify and survey local businesses in the four counties. This will serve as the base for an intensive workforce development strategy for the SLCCOG counties.

Staff also worked in partnership with Georgia Organics to form the Columbus Food Oasis initiative to address access to fresh, local foods. This includes hosting monthly meetings, grant writing assistance, and work to build local capacity to increase both the demand and supply of locally grown produce.

Sustain and Improve the Land Assets of the Region

The Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) program is a state economic development certification. RVRC has been providing technical assistance to regional development authorities and elected bodies to encourage the development of industrial parks that meet GRAD due diligence standards. The program provides state approved assurances to businesses looking to relocate to an area that all roadblocks to land development have been addressed by the local community. This is seen as critical to encouraging good industrial sites in the region to attract investment.

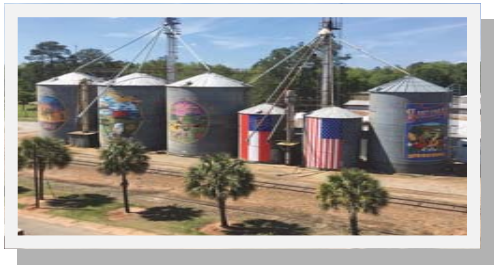
*Bankers' Luncheon held at the River Club in Columbus*

RVRC continues to support the redevelopment of property through the Georgia Brownfields program. The RVRC hosted a bankers' luncheon at the Columbus River Club in late 2017 to introduce local lenders to the state program that allows prospective property buyers to receive assurances that the property does not have environmental liabilities. Reducing risk is a way to make sure that properties can transfer ownership efficiently, making it more likely that they will redevelop rather than remaining an eyesore in the region.

*Brownfield: Formerly Allen's Foods, Montezuma, Georgia*

## Shellman Murals

The City of Shellman received two Tourism Product Development (TPD) Grants from the Georgia Department of Economic Development enabling the city to have murals painted on the grain bins next to the depot and the railroad tracks. The Grain Bin Murals were dedicated at a ceremony on May 21st .



*Shellman Grain Bin Murals*

*Pine Mountain: Representative Debbie Buckner, City Clerk Betsy Sivell, Mayor Jim Trott, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, and RVRC staff Jim Livingston*

## Revolving Loan Fund (RLF)

The River Valley Regional Commission Loan Committee approved a loan to an existing business, Empire Theatre, LLC also known as Empire Dance Studio, located in Cordele, Georgia in the amount of $75,000. This loan will be funded through the RVRC's USDA Rural Development Industrial Development Grant (RBEG/IDG) Revolving Loan Fund. South Georgia Banking Company of Cordele/Ashburn participated in the financing as well as the borrower injected funds. The business retained two existing jobs and will create one to two more jobs within the year.

## Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)

In April 2017 staff prepared fourteen (14) CDBG applications. The following were approved for funding in September 2017:

- Town of Pine Mountain – Street and Drainage Improvements $578,550
- City of Cordele – Street and Drainage Improvements $500,000
- City of Montezuma – Water System Improvements $750,000
- City of Talbotton – Sewer System Improvements $500,000
- City of Reynolds – Sewer System Improvements $490,000

On April 1, 2018, RVRC staff submitted nine applications for various communities for the FY18 CDBG funding cycle.

Over the past five years, the RVRC has helped write thirty-four (34) funded CDBG projects bringing a total of $16.5 million into the region.

*Cordele: City Manager Edward Beach, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, and Director of Housing and Urban Advancement Irene Cantrell*

*Montezuma: RVRC staff members Ansley Fitzner and Joel Hanif, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, and Representative Patty Bentley*

*Reynolds: RVRC staff Grant Richardson, Public Works Director Scott Jones, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, and Representative Patty Bentley*

*Talbotton: Representative Debbie Buckner, Mayor Tony Lamar, DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn, and RVRC staff Jim Livingston*

Middle Flint WORK SOURCE GEORGIA
Connecting Talent with Opportunity
A proud partner of the AmericanJobCenter network

The River Valley Regional Commission serves as the grant recipient and administrative entity for the local area Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) services. These services are governed by the Middle Flint Workforce Development Board (MFWDB), which is composed 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 age 17 and up within the region. These services lead to employment, enhanced employment, retention in employment, and individual self-sufficiency. WIOA Grant Awards designated for the area during Program Year (PY) 2017 and Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 totaled $1,111,737. These grant awards are for a two year period which ends June 30, 2019.

## Individual Training Accounts (ITA's)

*Classroom Training*

ITA's are training services which provide educational and/or occupational skills training to enhance an individual's employability. This training activity includes both classroom training and hands-on learning for specific educational and/or occupational related areas. Georgia has an Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) from which individuals can choose to receive the desired type of ITA training services. Technical colleges, public colleges and universities as well as private training providers are typically the location for ITA training services. Albany State University (Albany & Cordele Campuses), South Georgia Technical College and Georgia Southwestern State University are three ITA eligible training providers located within the area. Other Training Providers outside the area include; Truck Driver Institute, Central Georgia Technical College, and Middle Georgia State University. ITA participants receive assistance with fees for tuition, books, training supplies, and supportive services for transportation costs while in training. One hundred sixteen (116) individuals were served under this program.

*South Georgia Tech Aviation Participants*

## 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, skills needed for occupation and determine length of training time needed to master job tasks. WIOA customers are interviewed by the employer who later makes the final hiring decision.

*On-the-Job Training Participant*

The OJT participants are paid wages by the employer during the designated training period. The employer is eligible to receive a reimbursement for the training once the OJT participant successfully completes the training requirements. Two employers in the area received $34,027 in employee wage reimbursements. Forty-two (42) individuals were served under this program.

## Businesses and Employers Benefitting from WIOA Services

A total of one hundred twenty-seven (127) businesses/employers benefitted from serving as worksites for hiring WIOA participants, which includes Individual Training Accounts (ITA's) and On-The-Job Training participants. These 127 business/employers included; private and public employers, city/county governments, and charitable and community organizations.

## GED Plus Training Services

GED Plus training activities are designed to assist WIOA eligible customers with obtaining their General Education Diploma (GED) by offering basic literacy skills remediation. GED remediation training provides an instructor led review of subject areas in 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 in a classroom setting for a six-week period. GED examination fees and supportive services benefits are available to assist with the cost of training. **One hundred twenty-one (121) individuals were served under this program.**

**Credentials Attained by WIOA Participants Through March 2018**

| | |
|---|---|
| • Associate Degrees: | 14 |
| • Bachelor Degrees: | 1 |
| • Educational / Occupational Certificates & Diplomas: | 57 |
| TOTAL CREDENTIALS EARNED: | 72 |

## Work Experience Services

*Participant learning how to properly install flooring*

Work Experience is designed to enable individuals with limited or no prior work history to participate in a hands on learning opportunities. Individuals are placed with a participating employer to gain knowledge in the world of work, explore occupational career options, build upon existing skills, and bridge gaps to enhance employment opportunities.

Individuals participating in the work experience activity are paid wages during the training opportunity. Worker's Compensation insurance coverage is also provided during the training.

Employers who participated as worksites this year included; Sumter County Sheriff's Department, City of Americus, Macon County Board of Commissioners, Montezuma Public Library, Innovative Senior Solutions, Taylor County Board Of Commissioners, Flint Energies, Flint River Pharmacy, City of Marshallville, Fuller Center for Housing, Sumter County Boys & Girls Club, Middle Flint Community Service Board (CSB), and State Farm Insurance.

## One Stop Services

Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) Americus Career Center was selected as the Comprehensive One Stop Center for the area effective July 1, 2017. The One Stop Center has two part-time staff members to coordinate service delivery, partners' onsite scheduling, and the customer referral process. Partners in the One Stop Center are: Georgia Department of Labor, South Georgia Technical College, Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Middle Flint Workforce Services, and Southwest Georgia (SWGA) United YouthBuild. These partners have begun offering information and services through the One Stop Center this year. Some partners are co-located onsite on a part-time or permanent basis, while other partners are available through electronic access method. Partners hold quarterly meetings and training sessions to share information and enhance services available through the One Stop Center.

*GDOL One Stop Center Manager John Shaw*

## Incumbent Worker Registered Apprenticeship

Incumbent Worker Registered Apprenticeship training is a new endeavor in the Middle Flint Workforce Area and the state. This initiative benefits currently employed individuals that are selected by the employer for training to increase their education and skill level for purposes of advancement and talent development. Wage increases, employment position upgrades, and leadership development are results of the training. This program also benefits the employer by enhancing their workforce.

*Will Gordon and Paul Jackson, Journeyman Apprentices*

Interfor U.S. South was approved as a federal Registered Apprenticeship by United States Department of Labor (USDOL) to train individuals for Journeyman Apprenticeship occupations. Interfor has seven facility sites located in five local Workforce Areas in Georgia. This project is a statewide partnership between Interfor employer, the State Workforce office and five local WIOA Workforce areas. The local Interfor facility is located in Preston (Webster County). The Interfor Preston facility selected three individuals who are participating in the Journeyman project. Interfor has a total of 27- 30 individuals enrolled statewide for this project. Interfor plans to add employees each year to the Incumbent Worker Registered Apprenticeship project.

## Annual Performance Outcomes

The Middle Flint WIOA has eleven (11) Performance Measures reporting standards. Our local area negotiates performance measures annually with the State Workforce Division for these area performance goals. Our area exceeded the negotiated local performance levels for PY 2017.

*Middle Flint WIOA*

| FUNDING | PERFORMANCE MEASURE | NEGOTIATED LEVEL | ACHIEVED LEVEL |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adult | Entered Employment Rate Q2 | 78.0% | 111.8% |
| Adult | Enter Employment Rate Q4 | 70.0 % | 137.8% |
| Adult | Credential Rate | 77.0% | 129.9% |
| Dislocated Worker | Entered Employment Rate Q2 | 85.0% | 102.9% |
| Dislocated Worker | Entered Employment Rate Q4 | 80.0% | 125.0% |
| Dislocated Worker | Credential Rate | 83.0% | 120.5% |
| Youth | Entered Employment Rate Q2 | 57.0% | 118.7% |
| Youth | Entered Employment Rate Q4 | 61.0% | 155.3% |
| Youth | Credential Rate | 66.0% | 135.6% |

# AREA AGENCY ON AGING

The Area Agency on Aging's mission 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." In Fiscal Year 2018 the Area Agency on Aging provided services to clients that allowed them to remain independent and in their homes.

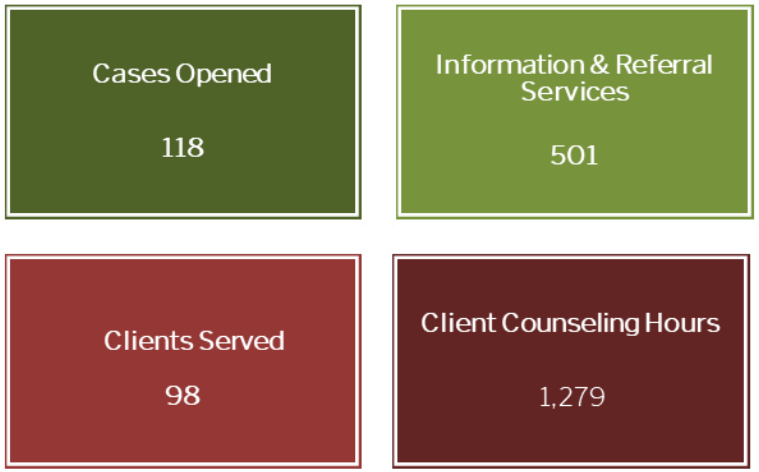
## COMMUNITY CARE SERVICES AT WORK

A client from Plains, with a traumatic brain injury following a car accident, was helped by the Community Care Services Program to return home. Due to the accident, he was paralyzed and in Intensive Care. After his discharge from the hospital, he began his convalescence and rehabilitation in a wheelchair. He was dependent upon his family for everything. With his drive and determination, he graduated from the use of a wheelchair to the use of a cane during ambulation. Subsequently, he felt more independent and expressed his desire to live on his own. However, he still required some assistance. He and his family decided to obtain the services of the Community Care Services Program, now known as the Elderly and Disabled Waiver Program (EDWP).

After evaluation, it was determined that he would require Personal Support Service as well as Meals on Wheels. He also required Adult Day Health services for mental stimulation that could not be provided during the absence of his friends or family. Because of the assistance from the EDWP, this client is now experiencing his long-desired independence along with an increased self-worth.

## Legal Services

The Elderly Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) provides legal representation, legal information and community education in civil legal matters. The following legal services were provided to our elderly clients:



## Evidence-Based Wellness Programs

The following Evidence-Based Wellness programs were taught by our AAA staff this year.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Chronic Disease Self-Management | 8 Lay Leaders | 43 People Served |
| Matter of Balance | 6 Coaches | 12 People Served |
| Tai Chi | 2 Instructors | 37 People Served |

## GeorgiaCares

Throughout the year GeorgiaCares staff provided information about Medicare and other related insurances.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| $927,030 Saved for Beneficiaries in Medicare Prescription Drug Costs and Medicare Savings Program Assistance | 260 Number of Applications for Medicare Savings Program and Low-Income Subsidy Program | 1,054 Beneficiaries Reached |
| 11 Volunteers | 463 Volunteer Hours | 91 Events Held |

## Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC)

Our ADRC staff was busy at work providing seniors, caregivers and people with disabilities information about resources and services throughout the region.

**1,941 Total Clients Served**

## GeorgiaCares At Work

*Cynthia Colson*

Cynthia Colson, a Columbus resident, is new to Medicare. Ms. Colson was in communication with an agent who represented several Medicare Advantage plan insurance carriers. The agent recommended for Ms. Colson to enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan that would cost her $490 a month to fill all her medications. When the agent asked for her banking information, she became uncomfortable and informed her daughter of the situation. Her daughter, who works with one of our partners at Access2Indepence, referred Ms. Colson to GeorgiaCares. GeorgiaCares completed a plan comparison and enrolled her in a plan that saved her $300 on her medications. Ms. Colson was elated with her savings and said "GeorgiaCares was extremely helpful in enrolling her in a plan, very patient and very detailed, which relieved me of the stress related to being new to Medicare."

## Assistive Technology

In FY18, the Area Agency on Aging opened two Assistive Technology Labs in the region. One lab is located in the Columbus RVRC office and is available by appointment, and the other lab is in the Americus office and is open the first Friday of every month. Grand openings were held for each lab.

Individuals are able to try out technology prior to purchase, which saves money as well as the frustration of returning items that don't meet all of their needs. All of the items in the AT labs are listed on the RVRC AAA website with information on how to purchase.

*An example of Assistive Technology*

## Senior Hunger

Senior hunger is something that is of concern to everyone in and out of the Aging Network. In an effort to combat the problem, the Commissioner of the Division of Human Services funded "What a Waste Grants" to two senior centers in the River Valley region in partnership with the National Foundation to End Senior Hunger. Participating centers were the Crisp County Senior Center and the Dooly County Senior Center. This project measures the food that is wasted and then accounts for the nutrients lost when the food is not consumed. A report is generated and sent to the senior centers which is used to develop goals to reduce waste. This has two effects; a better understanding of what foods are not being consumed, and reducing waste and cost of meals served. The photo shows the equipment used to measure the food prior to and after serving the meals. The plate waste is also measured prior to throwing away the food.

*Dooly County*
*Senior Center Manager Eileen Gilbert and Carolyn Suggs, Assistant Manager*

## Thanks Mom and Dad!

Two of our senior centers received $2,000 grants from the Thanks Mom and Dad Fund this year. The grant was a partnership with the Division of Human Resources. The Harris County Senior Center purchased potting soil, seeds, and materials to construct raised flower beds. The Crisp County Senior Center enclosed their patio, providing more space for their seniors to enjoy the Spring and Fall weather. They also purchased patio furniture and planted new flowers.

*Raised flower beds at*
*Harris County Senior Center*

*Enclosed patio at*
*Crisp County Senior Center*

## Seniors' Farmers Market Nutrition Program

All 16 counties in the River Valley region held a Seniors' Farmers Market for the third year in a row and served 1,222 clients. For the first time, a Farmers Market was held at the RVRC Columbus office. Two hundred sixty-seven (267) seniors attended and received a $20 voucher which they exchanged for fresh produce from two local Georgia farmers.

*Senior's Farmers Market was held at the Columbus RVRC office*

*Seniors buying fresh fruits and vegetables*

## Community Involvement

One of our meal providers has partnered with local groups in the community, asking them to make handmade birthday cards for seniors. Children from River Road Elementary, Brewer Elementary, First Baptist Church Children's Program, and the Griffin Club from Fort Benning made valentines for some of the Meals on Wheels Clients.

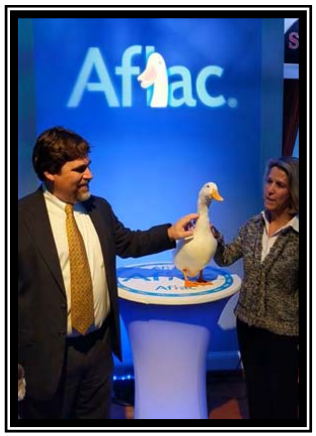
## River Valley Regional Commission Legislative Luncheon

The RVRC held its Ninth Annual Legislative Luncheon on May 23rd at the Josh Gibson Center in Buena Vista. It was well attended by many of our area legislators, including Representatives Debbie Buckner, Bill McGowan, Gerald Greene, Buddy Harden, and Senators Freddie Powell Sims and Ed Harbison.

*Speaker Senator Freddie Powell Sims, District 12*

## Columbus Day at the Capitol

Patti Cullen, Executive Director, and Jim Livingston, Community and Economic Development Director, attended Columbus Day at the Capital on Wednesday, February 7th. It was a great opportunity to support the region and meet with our legislative delegation. Fort Benning's commanding general Eric Wesley was on hand and stated, "We were all upstaged by a duck!"




*Community and Economic Development Director Jim Livingston, "The Duck", and RVRC Executive Director Patti Cullen*

## Senior Day At The State Capitol

Seniors from the River Valley Region joined seniors from around the state at the Capitol in Atlanta on February 7th to let the members of the General Assembly know the importance of senior issues. These seniors advocated on behalf of Co-Age priorities: additional funding for Home and Community Based Services, additional Funding for the Aging and Disability Resources Connection, Medicaid funded assisted living, personal care home requirements, and the Elder and Disabled Abuser Registry. During lunch, which was provided by the Georgia Council on Aging, seniors met with Representatives Patti Bentley and Carolyn Hugley as well as Senator Ed Harbison to discuss these issues.

*Representative Patty Bentley, with Macon County seniors, attending Senior Day at the Capitol*

*Representative Carolyn Hugley and Senator Ed Harbison speaking with seniors at the Capitol*

## 2018 Senior Wellness Walk

Thanks to our many sponsors and partners the 2018 Senior Wellness Walk was a huge success! There were almost 300 seniors in attendance and 35+ vendors. The May 4th event, held at Peachtree Mall, was kicked off by Columbus City Councilor Jerry "Pops" Barnes and seniors from Arbor Cottages with a short Wellness Walk followed by Karaoke led by RVRC's own DJ Emily Chambers. More than 100 door prizes were given out, during karaoke and a Tai Chi demonstrations led by Gail Simpson and seniors from Calvary Community.

*Calvary Community Seniors demonstrated Tai Chi*

# TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT ACT

*Cordele Crisp, County—Lake Blackshear Bridge Project—Photo courtesy of Scott Bridge Company*

*Muscogee County—Intercity Express Bus Park-n-Ride Service Project Dedication*

*Muscogee County – Aerial shot of the River Walk Bridges Project*

*Randolph County—SR 1 / US 27, Road Widening Project*

RIVER VALLEY

TIA

TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT ACT

*Your Penny, Your Progress*

January 2013 - June 2018
$250,424,178
TIA Funds Collected

*Talbot County—Pobiddy Road Project*

*Sumter County—Ground Breaking for South Georgia Tech Parkway Improvements Project*

*Muscogee County— Custer Road Interchange Project*

*Dooly County— US HWY 41 Passing Lane Project*

## Executive Director
Patti Cullen

## Assistant Executive Director
Sarah Walls

## Administrative Department
Emily Chambers, Finance Officer
Becky Holmes, Office Manager
Annie Thompson, Financial Assistant
Debbie Zwaga, Secretary/Receptionist
Tammy Collins, Finance Officer
Grace Grant, Executive Secretary

## Planning Department
Rick Morris, Planning Director
Allison Slocum, Senior Planner/Historic Preservation Planner
Julio Portillo, Regional Bicycle-Pedestrian Planner
Laura Schneider, Environmental/GIS Planner
Gerald Mixon, Planning Director
Joel Hanif, Regional Planner/Community Developer
Jarrod McCarthy, Mobility Manager
Mariyana Kostov, GIS Specialist

## Community & Economic Development Department
Jim Livingston, Community & Economic Development Director
Grant Richardson, Community Developer
Will Griggs, Community Developer

## Area Agency on Aging
Katie Howard, Director
Kia Barrow, Gateway Coordinator
Cheryl Maddox, GeorgiaCares Coordinator
Kassie Taylor, GeorgiaCares Volunteer Coordinator/ Caregivers Specialist
Dareion Hill, GeorgiaCares Program Assistant
Katrina Tanner, HCBS Program Manager
LaCarole Lloyd, Options Counselor
Robert Andrews, Case Manager
Marie Peterson, Monitor
Elizabeth Young, Community Resource Specialist/ADRC Counselor
Bill Weathers, ADRC Counselor
Eboni Key-Morris, ADRC Counselor
Franetta Miles, Wellness/Special Projects Coordinator
Gail Simpson, Fiscal Analyst

## Workforce Investment Department
Janice West, Director
Tenisha Tookes, Program Specialist

*Some of the RVRC staff participating at a staff activity*

*RVRC staff Christmas Party activity*

*Some of the RVRC staff at our Halloween Party*

710 Front Avenue
P. O. Box 1908
Columbus, GA 31902-1908

Phone: (706) 256-2910
FAX: (706) 256-2908

228 West Lamar Street
Americus GA 31709

Phone: (706) 256-2910
FAX: (229) 931-2745

**www.rivervalleyrc.org**