



**News in
the Region**
April 2019

2019 Senior Day at the Capitol A Big Success!

Seniors from across Georgia attended Senior Day at the Capitol on Feb 6-7, 2019. Attendees were able to meet with their representatives and senators to share information about the Co-Age priorities. Thank you to our state legislators for their support.



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Pictured below: Representative Randy Robertson; Marie Peterson, RVRC AAA; Katie Howard, RVRC AAA

Pictured Above: Katie Howard RVRC AAA, Rep. Gerald Green, Rep. Patty Bentley, Majority Caucus Secretary/ Treasurer Rep. Bruce Williamson, Marie Peterson RVRC AAA



Picture right: Representative Vance Smith; Marie Peterson, RVRC AAA; Katie Howard, RVRC AAA



Pictured above: Representative Carolyn Hugley and Katie Howard, RVRC AAA

River Valley Regional Commission's Executive Director Announces Retirement

As most of you have already heard, I will be retiring at the end of April. Who would have thought back in 1981 when Ron Starnes hired me at the Lower Chattahoochee Area Planning and Development Commission, as the Energy Planner, that I would still be here 37 ½ years later? Our agency has gone through three name changes, four offices, a merger (Lower Chattahoochee and Middle Flint Regional Development Centers) and multiple staff changes over the years, but even with all those changes our mission remained the same, to improve the quality of life for all residents of the region. This is something that I hope I played a small part in.

From the first Comprehensive Plan I wrote for the City of Hamilton in 1991, to my first Zoning Ordinance for Chattahoochee County in 1995, to numerous Community Development Block Grants projects I participated in, each endeavor brings back distinct memories to me. My involvement with the Georgia Planning Association, Georgia Association of Zoning Administrators, Georgia Association of Regional Commissions, and the National Association of Development Organizations has allowed me to learn and grow as a planner and director. This has always been more than just a job to me. It has been a part of my life. I will never forget the friendships I have made throughout the region and the state. It is all of you who have made this part of my life so special and I thank you!! Patti



River Valley Regional Commission Welcomes New Executive Director

The River Valley Regional Commission board selected Jim Livingston to be the new Executive Director effective May 1st. Jim has worked with the RVRC as the Community and Economic Development Director and has been with the organization since 2014.

Jim wrote the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the region that won a national NADO Innovation Award for its unique format and approach. He also wrote the Digital Economy Plan for the region in 2015 and helped write the Regional Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act plan in 2017. Jim said “I am excited for the opportunity and challenge of taking over for Patti. She has been a fantastic mentor and I have very big shoes to fill.”

Jim lives in Columbus with his wife and two high-school aged children, is active in Scouting, and enjoys fishing whenever he gets a chance.



Will the 2020 Census be the Same as 2010?

There are some important changes to the census in 2020.

- the US Census Bureau is building a more accurate address list and automating their field operations—all while keeping citizens' information confidential and safe.
- for the first time, citizens will be able to respond online, by phone, or by mail.
- the US Census Bureau will use data that the public has already provided to cut down on in-person follow up visits to nonresponding households.

How is Census Data Used?

- Distribution of more than \$675 billion annually in federal funds back to state, and local governments.
- Redistricting of state legislative districts.
- Forecasting future transportation needs for all segments of the population.
- Determining areas eligible for housing assistance and rehabilitation loans.
- Assisting federal, tribal, state, and local governments in planning and implementing programs, services, and emergency response.
- Designing facilities for people with disabilities, the elderly, and children.

Is Census data really confidential?

ABSOLUTELY! All responses to Census Bureau surveys and censuses are confidential and protected under Title 13 of the U. S. Code. Under this law, the Census Bureau is required to keep respondent information confidential.

In addition, under Title 13, U. S. Code, all Census Bureau employees swear a lifetime oath to protect respondent data. It is a felony for any Census Bureau employee to disclose any confidential census information during or after employment, and the penalty for wrongful disclosure is up to 5 years imprisonment and/or a fine of \$250,000.

If you have questions about the 2020 Census, please contact either Mariyana Kostov or Gerald Mixon at 706-256-2910.

Welcome New Council Members

The River Valley Regional Council welcomed four new members at its January and February meeting.

Damon Hoyte, Unified Government of Cusseta – Chattahoochee Commissioner, replaced former Commissioner Walt Rosso on the Council. **Ernest Jenkins**, Clay County Commission Chair, (not shown) replaced Lee Hubbard, who is no longer on the Clay County Board of Commissioners. **Matt Gunnels**, Marion County Commissioner, replaced Cecil McMickle, who is no longer on the Marion County Commission, and **Clay Jones**, Sumter County Commission Chair, came on board. We want to welcome these people to our Council and look forward to them becoming active members!



Damon Hoyte,
Cusseta-Chattahoochee
County Commissioner



Matt Gunnels,
Marion County
Commissioner



Clay Jones,
Sumter County
Commission Chair

2019 Community Development Block Grant Projects

RVRC staff worked with 14 communities to pursue a 2019 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application. These projects range from water line replacement in Plains, GA to housing rehabilitation in Talbot County. CDBG funding is a critical way local governments are able to address infrastructure issues in the region. Key issues for which this source of funding can be used is water problems, sewer issues, and flooding to help low and moderate income persons in your community.

Applications this year have been a little different than years past. The Department of Community Affairs has put an emphasis on compliance, timeliness and making sure all local governments who submit applications are fully compliant Qualified Local Governments. This has required us to put more resources towards making sure the communities we are working with remain compliant. This will be important for all local governments to maintain their eligibility for state funding. As always, the projects that score the best for CDBG funding are the ones with the best photographs of the issues. If you see problems, please get pictures to help tell the story for a CDBG application.

Biking News...

RVRC and Bicycle Columbus sponsored a table for the Track Pad Century. In partnership with Fort Benning and Ride on Bikes 385 riders came to cycle 40, 64, or 110 miles. These riders came from as far away as Alaska to ride in this event.

On February 19th, Sumter Cycling had their annual chili meeting followed by a chili dinner. During this meeting Mayor Blount awarded the Fuller Center with a Bicycle Friendly Business award, Silver level. Members from Sumter Cycling were also able to discuss with the public future cycling initiatives for the community.

On Wednesday, March 20th, 95 riders came out to the Midtown Full Moon Bike Ride. This was a family friendly 6 mile route through historic midtown which started and finished at "Jarfly", a new local restaurant. RVRC staff partnered with Midtown Inc. to provide safety lights to all riders and participants.



Best Management Practice Installations are Complete



In January, agricultural best management practice (BMP) installations were completed in Marion County, for the Kinchafoonee Creek watershed. These practices were implemented, in part, through funding from a 319(h) grant awarded by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). The focus of the grant is to improve water quality in Clear Creek, listed on Georgia's List of Waters for a sediment/ macroinvertebrate impairment, and to maintain supporting levels of fecal coliform in Lanahassee Creek which is listed as healthy. Environmental Planning staff worked with Two Rivers RC&D and NRCS to coordinate the installation of both structural and non-structural Best Management Practices (BMPs) to address each of these objectives. Structural practices installed include over 7,500 ft of fencing, over 3,500 sq ft of heavy use area protection, four (4) watering facilities, and one electric pump and water well. Non-structural practices include 44 acres of forage and biomass planting. These BMPs will restrict livestock from directly accessing water sources, and reduce soil erosion and sediment transport to streams within the watershed. Post-BMP monitoring will be conducted throughout the watershed to determine their effectiveness in improving water quality.

Protecting the Pataula Creek Watershed

Dirt road best management practice (BMP) installations have been completed in Stewart County, for the Pataula Creek watershed. These practices were implemented, in part, through funding from a 319(h) grant awarded by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD). The focus of the grant is to improve water quality in impaired segments of Pataula Creek which are listed on Georgia's list of waters impaired by sediment, macroinvertebrate and fecal coliform. Environmental Planning staff worked with the local road department to coordinate the installation of both structural and non-structural BMPs. Structural practices implemented include over 1,500 tons of stone spread over the road surface, over 250 tons of rip rap used to create ditch basins, and 550 feet of silt fence installed. Non-structural practices include 100 pounds of grass seed planted to stabilize soil along the roadside. These BMPs will reduce soil erosion and sediment transport to streams within the watershed. Post-BMP monitoring will be conducted throughout the watershed to determine their effectiveness in improving water quality.

Wellness Walk — May 3

*Columbus Convention and Trade Center
(New Location)*

8:00 AM to noon

Everyone Welcome!



**OLDER
AMERICANS
MONTH**



CONNECT, CREATE, CONTRIBUTE MAY 2019

South Georgia Tech's Georgia Occupational Award of Leadership



WIOA participant Kelsi Cannon, a practical nursing student from Ellaville, has been named as South Georgia Technical College's Georgia Occupational Award of Leadership (GOAL) winner for 2019. She will represent the college in regional and state level competitions, in search of being named the statewide Student of the Year and the face of technical education in Georgia. "I'm really honored to be able to have this, especially going against three other people who could have very easily won this award," Cannon said after accepting the award from Dr. John Watford.

Kelsi's story began when her parents divorced when she was nine. Because of that, she said she has had to grow up a lot faster than most people her age. In their home, finances were often strained and space was a hot commodity. With eight mouths to feed in a three-bedroom house, Kelsi began to work as a babysitter so she could pull her weight at just 13 years old. With her money, she was able to help buy her own school supplies, clothes and help pay for her cheerleading expenses.

At age 16, Kelsi took a leap that she knew would help herself and her family – she moved out of her family home and moved in with her older sister and brother-in-law. She said she knew early on that she wanted to follow in her sister's footsteps by attending SGTC to become a licensed practical nurse. In doing so, Kelsi could take advantage of multiple opportunities like the Dual Enrollment Program which allowed her to complete her core classes at SGTC while she was still in high school. In addition to being a hardworking student she was also a cheerleader and was voted as Schley County's 2017 Homecoming Queen.

Congratulations!

On December 3, 2018, Eckerd Connects Paxen celebrated the achievements of nine (9) WIOA participants as they walked in the South Georgia Technical College's graduation ceremony. Each of the participants came to us with an individual story of hardships and struggles. However, they all have taken the biggest step to overcome these hurdles by obtaining their GED (General Education Diploma) credential. We are proud of each one of them.



Pictured left to right: Angel Quaile, Hailey Guined, Lakeshia Williamson, Ms. Jennifer Novak-GED Instructor of Eckerd Connects Paxen, Marco Smith, and Alexis Grimes



Jennifer Childs, SGTC Nursing Instructor; Kelsi Cannon, SGTC 2019 GOAL winner; Sandhya Muljibhai, SGTC WIOA Coordinator

Broadband Survey

The River Valley Regional Commission is conducting Broadband Surveys to measure how much people in the region are using the internet. These surveys are identical to questions asked in 2014 and will give us a 5-year update of broadband use and demand in the region. This data will be important to determine where investment is needed for both federal and state broadband initiatives, helping us make the case for needed investment in the region.

There are two surveys. One is short, with a focus on getting basic information and one is longer and asks for more robust responses. The second survey also asks respondents to conduct a speed test of their internet capabilities. The Preliminary Survey (or the shorter survey) has a link to the other survey. If you have not taken both surveys yourself, please do so. Being familiar with how they work will help you to be able to explain the surveys to others.

Preliminary Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RiverValleyBroadbandShortSurvey>

General Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RiverValleyBroadbandGeneralSurvey>

Assistive Technology

A client in Columbus, GA was in need of assistance with several aspects of her life after being diagnosed with an intestinal disease that caused significant weight loss and lack of strength. Once such activity was the ability to get out of her bed in the morning. The client states that she would often wait until she felt she could pick herself up or she would call a family member to assist her. The case manager introduced the client to the home bed assist handle and showed her how the device might help her. The client reported that she had her son install the device and it has truly helped her when waking up in the morning. The client states that she has noticed a clear difference in her physical and emotional well-being throughout the day.



Home Bed Assist Handle

Buena Vista Film Overview

On February 26, Jim Livingston, Community and Economic Development Director, spoke to the Marion County Chamber of Commerce to update them about the film industry in Georgia and its potential for Marion County. The film industry in Georgia was a \$9.5 billion industry in FY 2018, with over 92,000 jobs in the state. Much of this work is in the Atlanta area, but there have been smaller productions in the region, including photo shoots at Pasaquan in Marion County. He told the group that the competitive advantage Marion County has for the film industry is their authenticity as a small town. Jim told the assembled chamber members "Don't be anything other than who you are". The continued growth of film in the state, as well as the exciting activity in Columbus with the Georgia Film Academy and the opening of Flat Rock Studio, makes Marion County a good candidate for future films.



New Lay Leaders Certified

On February 8th, River Valley hosted A Matter of Balance Coaches Class with twelve (12) people completing the class. Of the twelve (12) coaches, seven (7) were from the River Valley Region. This class was co-taught with staff from the Middle Georgia and Three Rivers Regional Commissions/Area Agency on Aging. We are excited about the expansion of the Evidence Based Programs with these new coaches and lay leaders. Please contact the Wellness Coordinator if you or someone you know is interested in attending or hosting a workshop.



Front Row standing: Elaine Allan, Front Row kneeling: Dean Lemmon, Mary Williams, Second Row: Chrissy Crabtree, Beverly Harris, Carolyn Suggs, Ashlee Perryman, Jacoya Clinkscales, Emily Rogers -Three Rivers RC/AAA, Third Row: Eric Preston, Lisa Deming, Angela Boiling, Very Back Row; Nichole Gaither - Middle GA RC/AAA, Franetta Miles – River Valley RC/AAA



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Chair—Clinton Perry, Jr.
Executive Director—Patti Cullen

We're on the Web!
www.rivervalleyrc.org



Macon County Peach Trees