

In the REGION

SOUTHERN GEORGIA DELEGATION HOSTS 30TH ANNUAL OKEFENOKEE OCCASION

On January 15th, hosts from sixteen Southern Georgia counties held the 30th annual Okefenokee Occasion at the Historic Freight Depot in downtown Atlanta. The large crowd of attendees included Governor Brian Kemp and First Lady Marty Kemp, numerous state legislators, and representatives from Georgia's various state agencies and statewide economic development organizations. *(Please see page two for more pictures of this event.)*



The Southern Georgia Regional Commission proudly serves Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, and Ware Counties.

SOUTHERN GEORGIA DELEGATION HOSTS 30TH ANNUAL OKEFENOKEE OCCASION (continued)



The event was hosted by the government and business leaders from the Southern Georgia counties of Appling, Atkinson, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Irwin, Jeff Davis, Lanier, Pierce, Turner, Ware, and Wayne.

Hosts and guests were treated to a delicious meal of barbeque, venison, and gator tail with all the trimmings provided by Richard's Meats and Seafood *from* Homerville. Following are a few pictures from the event.



2020 Regional Calendar

March 12th - 13th

-ACCG Lifelong Learning Academy, Tifton

March 26th

-RC Council Meeting, TBD

April 23rd

-RC Council Meeting, Pearson

April 24th - 27th

-ACCG Annual Conference, Savannah

May 28th

-RC Council Meeting, Pearson

June 25th

-RC Council Meeting, Pearson

June 26th - 30th

-GMA Annual Conference, Savannah

Local Government Services



Southern Georgia Communities Encouraged To Apply for PlanFirst

PlanFirst, administered through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), is a program designed to recognize and reward communities that clearly demonstrate an established pattern of successful implementation of their Local Comprehensive Plan. Having *PlanFirst* designation yields many benefits for communities, including the opportunity to apply for Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) each year for three successive years, bonus points on various DCA programs, and reduced interest rates on GEFA loans.

PlanFirst applications are due by May 15 of each year. To apply, local governments must prepare a 22-page application that describes how well the jurisdiction implements projects which are specifically listed in the Work Program of its Comprehensive Plan. Applicants who are selected will host a site visit from the DCA *PlanFirst* committee to showcase the

Work Program projects that have been implemented. Applicants must be Qualified Local Governments with an approved Service Delivery Strategy and must be current on all required reports to DCA. For more information, and to apply, visit <https://www.dca.ga.gov/local-government-assistance/planning/local-planning/planfirst>. The SGRC can provide assistance with *PlanFirst* applications for communities in our region.

The City of Fitzgerald was recently awarded *PlanFirst* designation for the 2019-2021 time period, and the City of Douglas was redesignated. Other recent *PlanFirst* designees in this region include: Cook County and the Cities of Adel and Tifton.

New SGRC Council Members



During the SGRC Council meeting in Waycross on January 23rd, Chair Joyce Evans swore in four new members. Pictured here (L to R): Johnny Wayne Jowers, Coffee County Chairman; Kenneth Petty, Echols County Chairman; SGRC Council Chair Joyce Evans; Jeff Lane, Cook County Chairman; and Taylor Scarborough, Nashville Mayor.

Small Business Lending

Small Business Lending Welcomes New Loan Board Members for FY20

The Small Business Lending Department would like to welcome Garrett Copeland, Stan Crance, and Will Harvey as three of the newest members of the Loan Board of Directors for the Southern Georgia Area Resource Development Agency and the Southern Georgia Area Development Corporation.



Garrett L. Copeland

Mr. Garrett L. Copeland is the Market President in Valdosta for the Citizens Bank in Nashville, GA. Prior to joining the Citizens bank in 2015, Mr. Copeland worked for local community banks in the Valdosta area after graduating from college. Mr. Copeland is a 2007 graduate of Valdosta State University with a degree in Speech Communications/PR.

Mr. W. Stan Crance is the Director of Business Recruitment and Existing Industry with the Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority where he began in 2015. Prior to his time there, Mr. Crance was Program Manager for the VSU Small Business Development Center working with small businesses in a 10-county



W. Stan Crance

territory. Mr. Crance is a 2005 graduate of Valdosta State University with a degree in Business Management.



William A. Harvey his position with WB&T, Mr. Harvey worked as a sales representative for a heavy machinery & equipment company in the Southeast Georgia region. Mr. Harvey is a 2003 graduate of the University of Georgia with a degree in Agricultural Economics.

These new board members, who were appointed by the SGRC Council, replace outgoing board members Kevin Hiers, Susan Swader, and John Flythe. The SGRC appreciates the time and dedication to the lending program throughout the years and wish them well in future endeavors.



**SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION**

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<https://www.facebook.com/SouthernGeorgiaRC>

Transportation & Environmental



Douglas Sidewalk Master Plan & Current Transportation Projects

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission Transportation Department staff is currently developing a Sidewalk Master Plan for the City of Douglas. This initiative is funded by a contract with the Georgia Department of Transportation for bicycle and pedestrian planning. SGRC staff will be in the field this month, actually walking the streets, to gain first-hand experience regarding pedestrian transportation in Douglas. Staff will then combine field notes with existing data and information to develop a priority list of sidewalk projects. This list will focus both on smaller projects like closing gaps

in sidewalks to larger sidewalk projects that connect major destinations. Given the proven benefits of walking for health and wellbeing, more sidewalks will contribute to making Douglas a healthier and happier community. The Master Plan is expected to be finished by May of 2020.

Elsewhere in the region, the Transportation staff is working on the following projects:

- ◆ designs for a new bicycle trail in Tifton
- ◆ parking study for Valdosta and Lowndes County
- ◆ update of the Valdosta-Lowndes MPO Transportation Plan
- ◆ *Complete Streets* or bike/walk friendly community trainings
- ◆ analysis of crashes near schools in Charlton, Cook, and Echols Counties to identify any potential roadway improvements that are related to school traffic

For more information, contact Corey Hull, Transportation and Environmental Director at chull@sgrc.us, or 229-333-5277.

**For more information on the
Metropolitan Planning Organization**

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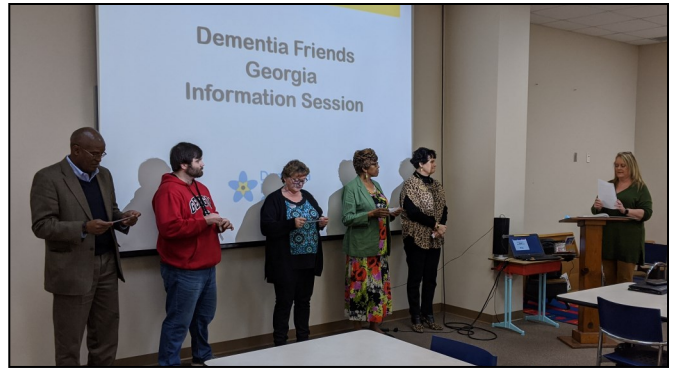
Area Agency on Aging

Area Agency on Aging (AAA) Offers Dementia Education Programs

According to the Alzheimer's Association of Georgia, there are approximately 140,000 people in Georgia living with Alzheimer's disease, which is a type of dementia. There are actually over 400 types of dementia that are recognized and Alzheimer's disease is one of the most commonly diagnosed types.

In addition to those who are living with dementia, there exists an even greater number of individuals who are caregivers and family members for someone with dementia. Therefore, we recognize a great need in our state, and in our region, to provide information on living with dementia, not only for those individuals diagnosed with the disease, but also for their caregivers and family members. Please see the following list of dementia education opportunities offered at SGRC-AAA:

- ◆ **Dementia Friends** - An information session to help people understand five key messages about dementia, how it affects people, and how we can make a difference in the lives of those living with the disease.
- ◆ **Dealing with Dementia** - A course that provides tools for both understanding and dealing with specific behaviors of those who are living with dementia.
- ◆ **Virtual Dementia Tour** - An impactful, hands-on experiential learning program that simulates what it is like in the life of a person who is living with dementia.



Dementia Friends Information Session in progress on January 29, 2020 in Nashville at the Berrien Youth Center.



Dementia Friends Information Session held in Folkston at the Charlton Senior Center on February 6, 2020.

For more information on AAA services please contact SGRC-AAA at: 912-287-5888 or 1-888-732-4464 (1-888-73-AGING). Visit the AAA Website www.sgrc.us/aaa.html and like us at www.facebook.com/SouthernGeorgiaAreaAgencyonAging/.



Susan Bowen was recognized recently for 20 years of dedicated service to the Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging. Pictured above are (L-R) Scott Courson, Director of Aging Services, Susan Bowen, and Laura Smith, ADRC Program Manager.

Workforce Development

WorkSource Southern Georgia Welcomes New Board Members

The Southern Georgia Workforce Development Board/WorkSource Southern Georgia welcomes the following new board members.



Chris Beckam

Tifton-Tift County
Chamber
of Commerce



Elton Dixon

Enay Coaching, LLC



Tom Clark

Georgia Printco



Katrena Felder

Coastal Pines
Technical College



Sean Panizzi

Teamtemps
Personnel
Staffing, Inc.



Savannah McClellan

Workforce Division Welcomes New Staff Person

The Workforce Division of the SGRC would like to welcome our newest team member, Savannah McClellan. Originally from Manor, Savannah now resides in Waycross with her three-year-old son, Waylon. Savannah enjoys spending time with her family and watching a good movie. Savannah previously worked in the Aging Department as a Assistant Transition Coordinator. Savannah is excited about her new journey with Workforce Development.



Geographic Information Services (GIS)

Drone Technology Services Offered at SGRC

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission GIS department now offers Drone Technology services to communities in the region. SGRC-GIS currently has two FAA certified drone pilots on staff who are ready to assist with small project aerial photography needs. SGRC-GIS's pilots are equipped and trained to safely fly the drones and to use best practices to capture needed information during flights. SGRC-GIS currently has a Phantom 4 Pro v 2 drone with a 4K camera that takes quality photos and videos.



Why use drones? A UAV, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (a drone) is able to reach or view areas that are not easily accessible, like the tops of buildings, water towers, tree canopies, detention ponds, etc. They are also extremely helpful during damage assessment after a weather emergency or fire, when damaged buildings or roads are too dangerous for human access. For example, drone flights over a flooded roadway can help emergency managers better assess the situation and determine which equipment and personnel would be safe and appropriate to dispatch.

Large aerial projects require planning prior to flight to be successful. Before SGRC-GIS staff arrives, flight plans are created around the target area. The drone will be set to take photos intermittently, as it flies, to ensure enough overlap between the photos. This will create a complete, large, high-resolution aerial image and maybe even a 3D model .

SGRC-GIS has flown a wide variety of projects over the last 2 years. Some examples include: a soccer facility in Lowndes County, a boat ramp along the Alapaha River, newly paved roads, building construction, utility facilities, and the City of Folkston Cemetery. In projects where high-resolution imagery is crucial, such as mapping cemetery headstones that are only a few feet apart, drone imagery is ideal. Drone imagery and videos can also be beneficial for mitigating environmental impacts of road and utility projects.

For more information, contact Rachel Strom at rstrom@sgrc.us, or 229-333-5277.



Information Technology (IT)

SGRC-IT Division Offers Helpful Advice to Local Governments on Assessing IT Needs

Many local governments are beginning to plan their budgets for a new fiscal year. An old adage, attributed to Benjamin Franklin, is beneficial to remember during this process and that adage is, “Failure to plan, is planning to fail.” While this may apply to all aspects of local government, it is especially true for IT assets that a government relies upon to function. Therefore, IT support and hardware replacement should be an important part of a local government’s FY2021 budget.

While incidental IT-related problems will arise from day to day, IT technicians often respond to critical IT issues that are entirely avoidable, more costly, and more disruptive simply because an upgrade, replacement of software, or hardware was not planned for.

At this time of year, local governments are encouraged to take a serious look at the computers and IT infrastructure they rely on to keep going each day. By taking an objective look at both resources and needs, local governments can take steps to avoid unplanned emergencies and unexpected upgrades.

The following questions are a helpful starting point for local governments to internally assess their IT needs and to in turn accurately plan for the IT needs in the coming fiscal year, while they are planning their FY2021 budgets.

Self-Assessment of IT Needs:

- In critical service areas, what are the ages of the desktops and servers being used?
- Are any of the above out of manufacturer warranty?
- Are any critical services provided on computers running an unsupported operating system or software?
- Do all computers on the network have up-to-date virus protection?
- Does your replacement cycle for computers and servers extend beyond 5 years?
- Do you have a regular backup schedule for critical servers and staff computers?
- Are you confident that your network switches, routers, and other devices are labeled, organized, and not reaching the end of their engineered life?
- What software support and upgrades are you paying for but not using? Why?

Once a local government has assessed its IT needs, the SGRC-IT Division can provide assistance to help plan the next steps.

Larry Adams, SGRC Director of IT Services, reminds local governments, “SGRC-IT encourages everyone to view and maintain IT infrastructure just like all other tools that are vital to local governments. A computer upgrade may not generate the excitement within a department that a new patrol car, bucket truck, or even new office furniture does, but it is a necessary part of doing business that must be planned for.” For more information about preparing an IT plan for the next fiscal year, please contact Larry Adams at ladams@sgrc.us, or 229-333-5277.

Contact the Southern Georgia Regional Commission



During the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Council meeting in Waycross on January 23rd, Chair Joyce Evans recognized SGRC-GIS Director Rachel Strom for her 20 years of dedicated service to the Regional Commission.



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SGRC 2020 Council Remaining Meetings Schedule

June 25, 2020 – 11:00 am
– Pearson Civic Center

July - No Meeting

August 27, 2020 – 11:00 am
-TBD

September 24, 2020 – 11:00am
– TBD

October - No Meeting

Area Officials Appreciation Dinner -October 22,
2020
(subject to change)

November – No meeting (combined with
December meeting)

December 10, 2020 – 11:00 am – TBD
(subject to change)