

# In the REGION

February  2018

Valdosta

(229) 333-5277

Waycross

(912) 285-6097

A publication of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission

*A leader in the development of local and regional programs since 1963.*

## **SGRC Council Member Elected as Georgia Association of Regional Commissions Board Chair**

The Georgia Association of Regional Commissions (GARC) recently elected Adel Mayor L.L. “Buddy” Duke III as Chair. Mayor Duke previously served as Vice Chair for four years. GARC fosters the interests of the Regional Commissions in Georgia which support local governments and related state and federal programs in the areas of planning, economic development, transportation, information technology, aging, and workforce development. Lamar Houston, retired Associate Vice President of Research University of Georgia, who represents Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, was elected to serve as Vice Chair.

Mayor Duke is a lifelong resident of Adel, Georgia. He attended Troy University in Troy, Alabama, and graduated with a B. S. degree in Mathematics. After college, Mayor Duke returned to Adel to work in the family-owned business, Adel Ice Company, Inc. In 1988, he was elected to the Adel City Council, a position he held for 26 years. He later relinquished his council seat in 2015 to run for Mayor.

Mayor Duke is also an Adel City Council appointee on the six member Cook County Economic Development Commission, and serves as chairman. Buddy also serves on the board of directors for the Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia, a position held since 2002. Locally, Buddy is a member of the board of directors of Cook Community Bank, and in January, 2014, was named "Man of the Year" by the Adel Cook County Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to his work in Adel and Cook County, Mayor Duke is an active member of Southern Georgia Regional Commission’s Council where he serves on the Executive Committee.



*Congratulations!*

# GeorgiaCares Staff Assists Hundreds During Medicare Open Enrollment

Area Agency on Aging: Wanda Taft



*GeorgiaCares Coordinator Linda Gail and MIPPA Specialist Haylee Metts provided Medicare assistance during the enrollment event at the Valdosta*

Representatives of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging (SGRC AAA) GeorgiaCares Program assisted over 600 individuals during Medicare Open Enrollment (October 15, 2017 through December 7, 2017). Counselors were able to help Medicare beneficiaries by reviewing and enrolling in Part D plan options, applying for Medicare Savings and Low-Income Subsidy Programs, and assisting with Prescription Assistance Programs resulting in over \$400,000 in savings for beneficiaries.

Medicare Open Enrollment occurs each year beginning October 15 through December 7. During this time, Medicare beneficiaries are given the opportunity to review their Part D Plan (prescription drug coverage) options for the upcoming year. Many beneficiaries may find the options to be complex and overwhelming. For this reason, the GeorgiaCares Program is always willing to coordinate, facilitate, and/or participate in outreach and enrollment event opportunities held throughout the region.

Many individuals chose to receive help by calling or visiting the SGRC AAA in Waycross. Other beneficiaries received individual counseling at various off-site stations such as the Leroy Rogers Senior Center in Tifton and the Charlton County Senior Center in Folkston. Enrollment events were also held through partnerships with Congressman Austin Scott's Office and the Fort Valley State University's Mobile Unit in areas such as Valdosta and Ashburn.

"Medicare Enrollment is a busy and very important time of year for beneficiaries," said GeorgiaCares Coordinator Linda Gail. "Reviewing plan options can save clients hundreds or even thousands of dollars each year. And many individuals come back to GeorgiaCares each year because they know that they will be able to make a decision based on reliable non-biased information."

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging develops, provides, coordinates and advocates for services that assist older individuals, at-risk adults, persons with disabilities, their families and caregivers. For more information or to receive assistance, contact the AAA's Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) at 912-287-5888 or 1-888-73AGING (1-888-732-4464). Or visit the AAA website at [www.sgrc.us/aaa.html](http://www.sgrc.us/aaa.html). Also, become a fan of "Southern Georgia Area Agency on Aging" on Facebook!

## Rural Zones: Revitalizing Georgia's Rural Downtowns *Fitzgerald and Nashville Designated*

The state has designated nine (9) communities in Georgia as Rural Zones. Included in this designated are the communities of **Fitzgerald** and **Nashville**. The Rural Zone program targets rural downtown areas that have been adversely impacted by local economic conditions by creating Rural Zones and offering economic development incentives. Portions of each community - primarily historic downtown areas - are now zoned to allow for tax credits to eligible businesses that create jobs and stimulate economic activity.

"The courthouse square and historic downtown has been the lifeblood of Georgia's rural communities," according to DCA Commissioner Christopher Nunn. "The purpose of the Rural Zone is to encourage small business investment and job creation to help preserve these small town assets and stimulate economic activity in the community."

Rural Zones focus on job creating and private investment in designated areas. The program includes three (3) tax credit incentives; a Job Tax Credit, Investment Credit, and Rehabilitation Credit.

**The Job Tax Credit (JTC)** will be \$2,000 per new full-time equivalent job per year, up to 5 years and not to exceed \$200,000 total or \$40,000 per year. New full-time equivalent job means an aggregate of employee worked hours totaling 40 hours per week between two or more employees. This credit is for the small business owner who opens a storefront and creates jobs.

**The Investment Credit** is equivalent to 25% of the purchase price, not to exceed \$125,000 total or \$25,000 per year. This credit is for people who purchase a building downtown and cannot be taken unless jobs are created and JTC is taken.

**The Rehabilitation Credit** is equivalent to 30% of the qualified rehabilitation, not to exceed \$150,000 total or \$30,000 per year. This credit is to offset development costs associated with the rehabilitation of a certified investor property. Similar to other incentive programs (i.e., Opportunity Zones and Tourism Development Act) this program will be the joint responsibility of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs and the Georgia Department of Economic Development. Both Commissioners will jointly review Revitalization Zone requests, and DCA will administer the program for approved areas.

## in the REGION

*Rural Zones continued...*

Eligibility requirements:

- ◆ Cities and counties with a population of less than 15,000
- ◆ Must have a concentration of historic commercial structures at least 50 years old within the zone
- ◆ Must prove economic distress based on poverty rate, vacancy of the downtown area, or blight.
- ◆ Must be in compliance with the state requirements regarding comprehensive planning and reporting, Service Delivery Strategy, Government Management Indicators (GOMI), and the Report of Local Government Finances.
- ◆ Must submit a feasibility study or market analysis identifying business activities that can be supported in the zone
- ◆ Must submit a master plan or strategic plan designed to assist private and public investment

If you would like more information please visit: [www.dca.ga.gov](http://www.dca.ga.gov).



## **SGRC Loan Program Assists JTN Investments, LLC dba Choice Automotive**

*Loan Services: Michelle Frey*

Choice Automotive Group opened its doors in 2012 in what was a Rhino Linings installation and truck accessory store at 1606 W. Hill Avenue in Valdosta. Our borrower, Travis Norris, had been managing the Rhino store and stayed on to manage Choice Automotive for owner Larry Carter. Under Mr. Norris's guidance, Choice Automotive expanded the truck accessory side of the business and became a full scale used car, truck, and SUV dealer. Mr. Norris decided to purchase the business in late 2017. He has over 15 years of experience in the industry and has managed the business since it opened.

Mr. Norris sought assistance from the Southern Georgia Area Resource Development Agency for the purchase of the business. SGARDA partnered with Commercial Banking Company to fund the purchase of the commercial real estate, as well as the assets of the existing business. SGARDA was able to offer a lower fixed rate for an extended period on their portion of the loan.

Check out Choice Automotive's selection of pre-owned cars, trucks, and SUV's and truck accessories on W. Hill Avenue in Valdosta across the street from Bojangles. You can find them on the web at <https://choiceautovaldosta.com> or by phone at 229-244-2777.





# 2018 Boundary and Annexation Survey

*Geographical Information Systems: Rachel Strom*

Don't miss your opportunity to participate in the 2018 Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS)! A response is necessary to ensure that the Census Bureau has current and accurate boundary information for each community.

We strongly encourage your participation in the 2018 BAS for the following reasons:

- Boundary updates are vital to the success of the 2020 Census population count!
- The federal government allocates more than \$675 billion in federal funds across the nation, state, and region.

### **Action Step:**

A response from your local government is required. Please contact the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) GIS Department to let us know if you have either "No Changes" or "Yes, we have changes." If you are unsure if you have changes, we can help with that too! If your community has had boundary changes in the past year, the SGRC can help with submitting those changes to the Census Bureau. You will also need to respond using the website listed below. SGRC can walk you through the process if you need help.

On the BAS website, you will find step-by-step instructions on how to start the boundary updating process and respond to the 2018 BAS.

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/bas.html>

### **Key Dates**

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>January 1, 2018</b> | Boundary updates must be legally in effect on or before this date to be reported in the 2018 BAS.                             |
| <b>March 1, 2018</b>   | Boundary updates submitted by this date will be reflected in the ACS and PEP data estimates and in next year's BAS materials. |

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## Supporting the 2020 LUCA Initiative, Part 2...

*Geographical Information Systems: Rachel Strom*

United States™  
**Census  
2020**

Friday, January 12th, Mr. William Curry of the US Census Bureau conducted a second informational session on this year's 2020 LUCA (Local Update of Census Addresses) at the Valdosta Office of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission. Highlights included: what to expect in the coming months with the LUCA program, the importance of BAS, and how Census population numbers affect community Federal funding opportunities. Participants were able to view sample addressing information, see specialized software created for this initiative, and ask questions relevant to communities in the SGRC region.

Also in January, SGRC GIS staff began collecting address lists from all our communities. We are

*Continued on page 6...*

## in the REGION

*LUCA continued...*

proud to report that the SGRC region has 100% enrollment in LUCA at the County level! This means that even if your individual municipality did not register to participate in LUCA, you can work with your County and SGRC GIS to make sure every address is counted. The most important contribution is a relatively simple one. Send us your address lists! Beneficial address lists usually come from the following sources: parcel data, E911 data, trash pickup and utility billing data. These lists will be used to validate and/or update the existing Census address list, and do not need to include any sensitive information - we are only interested in the residential street address!

In case you missed the January informational session, additional information on the LUCA initiative can be found at the following website:

<https://www.census.gov/geo/partnerships/luca.html>

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## THE CITY OF DOUGLAS RECEIVES \$528,484

*Community and Economic Development: Kimberly Hobbs*



The Georgia Department of Community Affairs awarded a \$528,484 grant to the City of Douglas to construct much needed water and street paving & drainage improvements that will allow for the expansion of an existing industry in Douglas-Coffee County, Elixir Extrusions, LLC. Elixir Extrusions is making a \$10 million private investment in its new metal fabrication facility and has committed to the creation of 100 fulltime jobs.

Elixir Extrusions specializes in custom aluminum extrusions and fabrication. The Company supplies linear and fabricated aluminum components to a variety of markets. With wide and robust capabilities, Elixir has the ability to fulfill the most stringent of requirements. Therefore, the Company is expanding its services by adding a new aluminum anodizing line and creating 100 new full-time jobs. The expansion will include constructing a 100,000 square foot facility to accommodate the integration of automated anodizing equipment. Once in operation, the aluminum anodizing line will be one of the largest of its kind in the United States.

Elixir Extrusions will be anodizing the aluminum components that are currently being manufactured, as well as aluminum components for other industries. In order to accomplish this, a new street will be constructed to allow approximately 100 trucks per day access to the new facility.

The total project cost for the water and street paving & drainage improvements is \$1,201,581 and in order for this project to come to fruition, multiple funding sources were required. In addition to the CDBG-EIP grant, the City of Douglas and the Georgia Department of Transportation will fund a portion of the project costs.

The successful CDBG-EIP grant application was written and submitted by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission. SGRC Community and Economic Development staff will administer the project.



# Protecting Your Personal Information

*Information Technology Services: Larry Adams*

Along with an infinite amount of useful information, the world wide web is crawling with every bug and malady imaginable. As you go about your travels on the internet, your traditional, locally operating virus scan software is what stands between you and these continuous attacks on your data security, computer performance, and privacy.

But just like with real bugs, spyware and viruses can be sneaky and often entice you to “feed” them. While a single “alert” popup on your screen may look harmless enough, it can turn on you and bring along with it a thousand of it’s pesky friends to ruin your good times and productivity.

If you ever receive a popup message while on a website that a virus has been detected on your computer, approach it with caution! It is most likely a virus or spyware disguising itself as a helpful warning. Many times, these “warnings” give you the option to fix the virus, or cancel and close the warning. **Doing ANY of these often can result in your computer contracting the latest malady.** In other words, even if you click the cancel or close button, it’s as good as an invitation for your computer to be infected. When messages like this appear, here’s the safest things you can do:

- **Don’t** click anything on the “virus alert” popup
- **Close** your internet browser
- **Shut** down your computer and restart if your internet browser won’t close
- **Use your own**, locally installed virus software to scan your computer.
- **Call our IT program** if you are unsure.

Unfortunately, we often repair machines that have been infected and most times, it was because the user fed the internet bugs by clicking “ok” or “scan” on a popup that appeared on a website they visited.

Just like you do not respond to strangers asking for your personal information to protect yourself from identity theft, you should never respond to any out-of-the-blue popup that offers to scan your computer for viruses. If you did not initiate the process using your locally installed virus software, then chances are it’s a just a bug wanting to be fed!

## Area Agency on Aging Attends At Risk Adult Crime Tactics (ACT) Training

*Area Agency on Aging: Wanda Taft*

Angela Swinford and Kacey Lee, representatives of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's Area Agency on Aging (SGRC AAA), attended the At-Risk Adult Crime Tactics (ACT) Specialist Certification training in Americus on January 30 and 31. The training was conducted by the Division of Aging Services Forensic Special Initiatives Unit.

The ACT training is open to primary and secondary responders including law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, EMS, employees of financial institutions, regulatory/social/victim service agencies, key healthcare providers, coroners, medical examiners and other professions who respond to the abuse, neglect, and exploitation of at-risk adults (the elderly and persons age 18+ with disabilities). The goal of the training is to equip primary and secondary responders with knowledge and skills necessary to address the needs of at-risk adult crime victims in Georgia as part of a multi-disciplinary team in order to advance public safety.

“Through the training, we learned that there are approximately 2.5 million at-risk adults living in Georgia,” said Angela Swinford. “The ACT Training provided valuable information on how to better detect neglect and abuse as well as how to properly report instances to insure prosecution.” Angela further explained, “The ACT Training also gave me a better understanding of the importance of collaborating with agencies such as Adult Protective Services and law enforcement to help bring justice for those who have been victimized.”

For more information about the labs or to learn about AAA services, contact the AAA's Aging and Disability Resource Connection at 912-287-5888 or 1-888-732-4464 (1-888-73-AGING). Or visit the AAA website at [www.sgrc.us/aaa.html](http://www.sgrc.us/aaa.html). Also, become a fan of “Southern Georgia Area Agency on Aging” on Facebook!

*Pictured left to right: Angela Swinford and Kacey Lee who assist AAA clients who transition from nursing facilities to community residence.*







Georgia Transportation  
Infrastructure Bank

## GTIB Funding Opportunities

*Transportation and Environment: Corey Hull*

The Georgia State Road and Toll Authority has announced the opening of the application cycle for the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank Grant Program and the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank Loan Program. The application window for both programs opened on January 22, 2018 and will close March 22, 2018. The GTIB Grant and the GTIB Loan are additional funding resources to help initiate and complete transportation projects. The GTIB will review all applications; however, priority will be given to bridge and highway (road) projects that are close to starting, have started, or are under construction and have been initiated by government units, particularly cities and counties. In addition to this, the project should add transportation and economic value to the local community and/or state. Here are a few highlights of the 2018 call for projects:

- \$13 million is available statewide in 2018
- Cities, counties, and other boards and authorities (that have the existing ability to own and construct a project) are eligible applicants/borrowers
- Eligible projects are generally road and bridges and include the engineering, right-of-way and construction costs
- Both Grants (more competitive) and loans are available. Historically, 44% of grants have been approved, while 81% of loans have been approved
- For 2018 the GTIB Loan interest rate is 2.39%

In FY2017, the City of Ocilla was a recipient of funds from both the loan and grant programs for road paving projects in the city.

If you are interested in applying for the GTIB Loan or the GTIB Grant, please contact Amy Martin at [amartin@sgrc.us](mailto:amartin@sgrc.us) or Corey Hull at [chull@sgrc.us](mailto:chull@sgrc.us) or by phone 229-333-5277. More information about the GTIB Loan and Grant Programs can be accessed on the GTIB website at:

<http://www.srta.ga.gov/gtib/#funds>





# 28th Annual Okefenokee Occasion



The twenty-eighth annual Okefenokee Occasion was held on January 10th at the Historic Railway Depot in Downtown Atlanta. This annual event allows local leaders one-on-one time to share Southeast Georgia issues with lawmakers. The Occasion was hosted by government and business leaders from the Southern Georgia counties of Appling, Atkinson, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Jeff Davis, Pierce, Tift, Turner, Ware and Wayne.





## Council Member Update

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission Council welcomed seven new members to its council at the January 25th meeting. Chair Joyce Evans swore in the following new council members:

- Robert Johnson - Mayor, City of Pearson
- Dick Larson - Mayor, City of Blackshear
- Jim Puckett - Mayor, City of Fitzgerald
- Bob Moore - Commissioner, City of Douglas
- Nick Denham - Chairman, Turner County
- Kenton McLaine - Chairman, Clinch County

Welcome new members and thank you for your willingness to serve!

# Welcome!



Evi Estep and Julia Shewchuk received plaques commemorating their years of service and loyalty to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission.

Pictured from left to right:

Evi Estep - 15 years of service

Julia Shewchuk - 10 years of service



327 W. Savannah Avenue  
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

1725 South Georgia Parkway, West  
Waycross, GA 31503

### SGRC Council

Joyce Evans, Chair    Lee Gowen, Vice-Chair    Peggy Murphy, Secretary

**Atkinson**

Lace Futch  
Bettye D. Williams  
Janice McKinnon

**Berrien**

Doc Sumner  
Michael Richbourg  
Janet Studstill

**Charlton**

James Everett  
Lee Gowen  
Dawn Malin

**Cook**

Debra Robinson  
Buddy Duke  
Vacant

**Lanier**

Dennis Fender  
Bill Darsey  
Vacant

**Tift**

Grady Thompson  
Julie Smith  
Brian Marlowe

**Governor's Office**

Vacant  
Vacant  
Vacant

**Bacon**

Andy Hutto  
Peggy Murphy  
Lisa Coley

**Brantley**

Skipper Harris  
Diane Johns  
Vacant

**Clinch**

Kenton McLaine  
Tom Kennedy  
Willie Hardee, Jr.

**Echols**

Bobby Walker  
Cheryl Garner  
Vacant

**Lowndes**

Joyce Evans  
Vivian Miller-Cody  
Anthony Payton

**Turner**

Nick Denham  
Sandra Lumpkin

**Lt. Governor's Office**

Keith Stone

**Ben Hill**

Steve Taylor  
Jim Puckett  
Jason Dunn

**Brooks**

Myra Exum  
Nancy Dennard  
Vacant

**Coffee**

A.J. Dovers  
Robert Moore  
Adam Smith

**Irwin**

Joey Whitley  
Matt Seale  
Mona Paulk

**Pierce**

Neal Bennett  
Dick Larson  
Andy Brannen

**Ware**

Carlos Nelson  
John Knox  
Barbara King

**Speakers Office**

Vacant

### REGIONAL CALENDAR

#### February 2018

⇒ 22 RC Council Meeting, Pearson

#### March 2018

⇒ 22 RC Council Meeting, Pearson

⇒ 7 GMA Early Spring Training, Tifton

⇒ 8 GMA 2018 Newly Elected Officials Institute, Tifton

⇒ 15-16 ACCG Spring Training, Tifton

⇒ 26-28 GCCMA Spring Conference, Jekyll Island

⇒ 30 Good Friday, RC Closed

#### April 2018

⇒ 27-30 ACCG Annual Conference, Savannah