



VIEWPOINT

Appalachian Council of Governments Quarterly Newsletter

First Quarter 2013

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**Serving six
counties and 42
municipalities
since 1965.**

The Appalachian Regional Commission

is a federal-state partnership that works for sustainable community and economic development in Appalachia.



ARC Awards Grants for Infrastructure and Job Training Projects

The Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) recently awarded grants to enhance economic development, infrastructure, and job training efforts in the region.

Oconee County was awarded \$500,000 to construct sewer lines along Highway 11 to serve the new Walhalla High School and potential future development in the area. The project is a joint effort between Oconee County, the School District of Oconee County and the City of Walhalla. The total project cost is estimated at \$1.8 million.

The City of Travelers Rest was awarded \$500,000 to construct an outdoor performing arts and cultural center on the site of the former Travelers Rest High School, adjacent to the Swamp Rabbit Trail in the City of Travelers Rest. The project is estimated to cost approximately \$1,087,000.

An ARC grant of \$375,500 was approved for the Pacolet River Passage Gateway Project to assist the Town of Pacolet in the construction of a round-about to alleviate a traffic hazard on SC Highway 150. This round-about will replace a dangerous T-intersection at the bottom of a hill where vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic are a concern. The round-about will feature two important safety features:

- a truck apron to accommodate larger vehicles as they make the turn; and
- refuge islands for use by pedestrians as they cross from Town Hall/Pacolet Museum to the activity center/river walk/trail, so they will only have to cross one direction of traffic at a time

The other component of the project is the creation of a pedestrian trail/river walk. This is proposed as the first phase of a multi-phase project to entice retail and other commercial entities to locate along the Pacolet River on the site of the former Milliken textile mill. This site is ideally suited for such development and is located across the street from the Pacolet Museum and the Historic Cloth Room, where activities are already being held.

The City of Pickens received \$400,000 for the Town Creek Park Project. The purpose of this project is to transform nearly 100 acres of city-owned land into one of the premier off-road recreational bicycling facilities in Upstate South Carolina. Town Creek Park will be the first park developed within the PELCOR (Pickens Easley Liberty Corridor) Initiative and one of the first parks in the state with unique bicycling features designed to enhance the rider's experience though challenge, wellness, education, and environmental awareness.

ARC approved a grant of \$250,000 for the Appalachian Development Corporation to recapitalize the Small Business Revolving Loan Fund for Economic Development. The purpose of the program is to provide access to additional reasonable-cost loan funds for small and start-up businesses in the region that would otherwise not be funded through conventional financial resources.

Spartanburg Community College received \$250,000 to purchase training equipment for two computer labs designated for production technology training programs and two health science laboratories in the Spartanburg Community College Downtown Development Center (the original location of Spartanburg High School).

For additional information on these projects, or the Appalachian Regional Commission programs, call Dirk Reis at the ACOG.

Fruits and Vegetables for Seniors!

The Appalachia Area Agency on Aging will be accepting applications for \$25 vouchers from the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). The vouchers will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis to individuals in Greenville and Spartanburg Counties, beginning in late May and continuing through mid-June. Vouchers are valid until October 31, 2013. The proposed timing of voucher distribution is tentative, until approved by the SC Department of Social Services.

The SFMNP Program helps area seniors afford fresh produce, while supporting small farms in the region



The vouchers may be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at local farmers' markets. The SFMNP Program serves individuals age 60 and older with limited household income. The SFMNP Program is intended to provide fresh, nutritious produce to seniors and to help support small farms in South Carolina. The South Carolina SFMNP is operated using USDA funds.

Voucher distribution in Anderson County is administered by the Anderson County Recreation Department (864-231-2237), and in Oconee County by the United Way of Oconee County (864-882-9743). Thus far, the program has not been expanded to include Pickens and Cherokee Counties due to limited funding. For more information on this program, please contact Marques Wideman at 864-242-9733 or by email at mwideman@scacog.org.

ACOG Board Member Chosen SCARC Volunteer of the Year

During its annual conference at Myrtle Beach in November 2012, the South Carolina Association of Regional Councils voted Mr. Neil Smith its volunteer of the year. Mr. Smith has served on the ACOG Board of Directors since January 2005.



Neil Smith is selected as SCARC Volunteer of the Year.

Since that time, he spearheaded the development of an effective organizational structure for the Workforce Investment Board that made it more accountable and increased its performance. Mr. Smith recognized the importance of the ACOG's fiscal oversight of this agency, expressed strong support of ACOG, and pushed for a positive solution.

Mr. Smith also serves as a member of the Finance and Transportation Committees and serves as chair of the Board's By-Laws Review Committee. As a county councilman, his involvement at the local level is invaluable to the ACOG. He ensures that funding at the local level is never an issue, takes the lead in the process to gain endorsement of the CEDS and its annual updates, informs ACOG staff of local issues and landmines, and consistently represents the COG in a very positive manner.

It is Mr. Smith's active leadership and enthusiastic support of the ACOG that make him truly deserving of this recognition. Congratulations!!!!



Past ACOG Board chair, Ed Elliott is elected SCARC vice-president.

SC Association of Regional Councils Elects new Vice-President

At its November annual conference in Myrtle Beach, the South Carolina Association of Regional Councils (SCARC) elected Mr. Ed Elliott as the new vice-president of the organization. Over the next year, Mr. Elliott will work very closely with the other elected officers on the Board to enhance regional cooperation and encourage a proactive approach to local governance.

Mr. Elliott is the past chairman of the ACOG Board and has worked diligently for many years to improve the quality of life for the residents of Upstate South Carolina. Congratulations, Mr. Elliott, on your election!



Senator Alexander Honored at Annual SCARC Conference

Senator Thomas Alexander was honored at the Annual SCARC conference, which was held in Myrtle Beach last November, for his twenty-five years of service to the Appalachian Council of Governments. Senator Alexander has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life for Upstate South Carolina - both as a Senator and as a member of the ACOG Board.

His dedication to this region and this organization is demonstrated by his twenty-five-year commitment. Senator Alexander, your efforts and willingness to serve are greatly appreciated!



Legislative Session 2013

The South Carolina Legislature is back in session, and a number of key issues dominate their focus. Generally, the following issues highlight this session:

- Dept. of Administration
- Tax Reform (exemptions)
- Abandoned Buildings
- Ethics Reform
- Budget
- Roads and Bridges
- Cyber Security
- Early Voting

These issues will seem familiar to many, due to the fact that they were carried over from 2012. It is believed these issues will be thoroughly debated and discussed during the course of this legislative session, and that most will be voted upon. The ACOG will try to keep you informed as these and other issues move through the process.





SHIP & SMP Basic Training for 2013

The Appalachian Council of Governments will once again be offering training for State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) and Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) counselors beginning in May. This training is for volunteers, staff members, and community partners who wish to offer unbiased Medicare insurance counseling to the senior and disabled populations of the Upstate. Counseling topics include a wide array of topics, including Medicare's A, B & D Plans, Medicare Supplements, Medicare Advantage Plans, and Medicare/Medicaid Fraud, to name a few.

When you hear "Aging isn't for Sissies", this is certainly true, when you consider the many complexities encountered as a consumer becomes Medicare eligible. SHIP counselors assist clients in navigating through the sometimes overwhelming options available. They perform complete individual assessments, which may sometimes determine that the beneficiary qualifies for low-income subsidy programs through various government programs, such as SCDHHS, SSA, ESAP, or SNAP.

SHIP counselors are not affiliated with any insurance companies, nor do they sell or promote any specific insurance program. To obtain certification, candidates must attend training, beginning Tuesday May 21 and continuing each Tuesday through June 25. Certification also requires that counselors commit to assisting persons throughout the community in making their Medicare choices during the Annual Medicare Open Enrollment period, from October 15 through December 7. They must also agree to participate in local health fairs when possible.

After initial certification, the annual requirement for retaining certification is the completion of 12 hours of related instruction. This program is endorsed by the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging, and this is just one of the many ways that the ACOG Aging Department fulfills its mission: To help seniors and their caregivers maintain their dignity and independence in their homes and communities. For more information please contact Tim Womack, Marques Wideman, or Kim Reyes at 864-242-9733.

ACOG Assists Cherokee County in Development of Business Retention and Expansion Study (BRE)

Did you know that most new jobs in America come from the companies who are already in our own back yards? While the announcement of a newly-arrived manufacturer will always grab the headlines, studies show that 60 to 80 percent of new jobs are created cumulatively by the local companies whom we sometimes take for granted.

Understanding this fact, the grass roots citizen's group - Cherokee 2020 - has commissioned ACOG to perform a local existing industry study. The goal of the study - called the Cherokee County Business Retention and Expansion Study, or BRE Study - is to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the county as a place for industry to operate. The BRE Study will make strategic recommendations on how the community can address its weaknesses, capitalize on its strengths, and support a thriving, job-creating industrial environment for generations to come.

How can a study accomplish all of this? With assistance from a Cherokee County Community Foundation grant, ACOG is leading an intensive fact-finding mission. The primary research method involves on-site visits and interviews with local industrial firms. Nearly forty of these industry visits have taken place since the project kicked off in December.

Each visit is led by ACOG economic development planner, David Shellhorse, and Jim Cook, the County's development board director. Citizen volunteers from Cherokee 2020 have also participated, as well as staff from both SC Works and the SC Manufacturing Extension Partnership. Individual company feedback is kept confidential, and topics discussed include local services, infrastructure, utilities, workforce challenges, site needs, and a variety of other subjects.

When the final BRE Study is released in June, the community will know one thing for sure: existing industry is regarded and not taken for granted in Cherokee County!



The BRE Study will assist Cherokee County in taking the necessary steps to support a thriving economic environment.

Revised Metropolitan Statistical Area Delineations

On February 28th, the US Office of Management and Budget released a bulletin announcing revised delineations for the nation's metropolitan statistical areas. Consequently, selected statistical areas in our region were impacted.

First, you might ask, "WHAT are statistical areas, and WHY are they important?" Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) have at least one urbanized area of 50,000 or more population, plus adjacent territory that has a high degree of social and economic integration with the core as measured by commuting ties. The government uses this designation for the purpose of applying uniform and consistent standards to the wealth of data collected, analyzed, and published by its myriad departments and agencies.



Business owners often rely upon statistical data about the demographic character of MSAs in order to delineate sales territories, develop marketing strategies, and determine the appropriate locations for operation of facilities. This data can be invaluable, not only for the entrepreneur seeking to launch a new business, but also for the established small business owner seeking to expand operations or anticipate marketplace trends.

In the Upstate, two MSAs have been redefined. Formerly, the Greenville-Mauldin-Easley MSA was comprised of Greenville, Laurens and Pickens Counties. This area has now evolved into the Greenville-Anderson-Mauldin MSA, which consists of the same three counties, plus Anderson County. Previously, Anderson represented its own MSA, but, based on the standards for defining these areas, it was deemed more appropriate to group Anderson with this larger MSA. Also, the Spartanburg MSA, formerly consisting of only Spartanburg County, has now expanded to include Union County. Standards for naming MSAs dictate that the title include the name of the principal city with the largest 2010 Census population located in the Metropolitan Division. If there are multiple Principal Cities, the names of the second-largest and (if present) third-largest principal cities will appear in the title in order of descending population.

In addition to Metropolitan Statistical Areas, standards also exist for the delineation of Micropolitan Statistical Areas and Combined Statistical Areas. For more information about the standards for delineating each of these statistical area types, contact the ACOG Information Services Department.



Appalachian Development Corporation Becomes State's First Community Advantage Lender

Appalachian Development Corporation (ADC) of Greenville is the first institution in South Carolina to qualify as a lender through the SBA's Community Advantage Program. Community Advantage is a pilot loan program that helps under-served small businesses - such as start-ups - access loans of up to \$250,000 through non-profit financial intermediaries.

Appalachian will use the Community Advantage Program to increase financing opportunities for new and developing businesses that are typically overlooked by more traditional lenders. ADC's Community Advantage service area includes Abbeville, Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Greenwood, Laurens, Oconee, Pickens, Spartanburg and Union Counties.

"We feel that the financing needs of Upstate small businesses, especially those that are new or developing and seeking small loans, are not being met by the financial industry right now," said David Mueller, executive director of Appalachian. "Our mission is to meet these needs."

The Community Advantage Program includes a technical and management assistance component for borrowers, which ADC will fulfill through its partnerships with non-profit and educational institutions throughout the Upstate, such as Visions International, Tri-County Technical College, and the Greenville and Spartanburg chambers of commerce.

Appalachian Development Corporation is a non-profit economic development lending organization based in Greenville that serves the Upstate. Its other financing programs include its Appalachian Loan Fund, the SBA 504 Loan Program, the SBA Microloan Program and the USDA Rural Development Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program.

WorkLink Celebrates Successful Tri-County Community Job Fair

On March 21, the WorkLink Workforce Investment Board held a job fair at Tri-County Technical College, bringing in over 60 employers or service agencies and attracting more than 500 job seekers. Attendees left the job fair saying positive things about their interaction with employers - hopeful that their efforts would be rewarded with an interview. Employers left the event with stacks of resumes from qualified candidates, prepared to fill available job positions.

The participants in the job fair included service agencies such as SC Works WorkLink, Goodwill, Adult Education, Department of Social Services and SC Vocational Rehabilitation. Several area staffing agencies were in attendance, as well as several large manufacturing companies, including Michelin, Imperial Die Casting, Dynamic Fluid Components, Reliable Automatic Sprinkler Company, Robert Bosch LLC, Schneider Electric and VOLT, and US Engine Valve. Tri-County Technical College and Southern Wesleyan University also participated.

An employer survey will be sent out in the coming weeks to determine how many attendees received interviews or job offers as a result of attending the event. Thus far, the results look promising, as one job seeker who attended the fair reported receiving a phone interview the very next day following the event.



The recent WorkLink job fair helped to make the connection between job seekers and potential employers.