

ACOG Region Experiences Continued Population Growth

According to 2005 population estimates recently released by the U.S. Census Bureau, the six counties of the ACOG region have collectively seen a 5.6 percent increase in population in the five years following the 2000 decennial census. With an estimated population of 1,086,702, the region now represents more than one-fourth of the state's total population.

Approximately 65 percent of the estimated increase was attributed to migration (both international and domestic), while approximately 35 percent was attributed to natural increase among existing residents.



Not surprisingly, Greenville County led the region, both in total population and percent increase, with an estimated population of 407,383, representing a 7.3 percent increase since 2000. Anderson County was next, with a 5.9 percent increase, followed closely by Oconee and Spartanburg Counties, each experiencing an increase of 5.1 percent. Cherokee and Pickens Counties showed the lowest population increases in the region, at 2.5 percent each.

The U.S. Census Bureau releases population estimates annually during the intervals between each decennial census. Population estimates are generally available for states, coun-

ties and municipalities. The 2005 municipality population estimates are scheduled for release this summer.

For more information, visit the U.S. Census Bureau web site at www.census.gov, or contact the Information Services staff at 864-242-9733.



Greenville Tech Awarded \$2 Million

Greenville Technical College has been awarded \$2 million to construct the first classroom building at their new Northwest campus, which encompasses 165 acres located along U.S. Highway 25 in the Berea area of Greenville County. The funds include \$1,500,000 from the U. S. Department of Commerce – Economic Development Administration (EDA) and \$500,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).

The 85,000-square-foot building will house general classrooms, distance learning facilities, and specialized training facilities for nursing, medical technology, and food service programs. The building is estimated to cost approximately \$13 million.

The ACOG staff assisted Greenville Tech in preparing the ARC and EDA applications.

ACOG Board Elects New Officers



At its February 24th meeting, the Appalachian COG Board elected the following slate of officers to serve for the next 12 months: Marion Lyles, Chairman; Philip Cheney, Vice-Chairman; and Judy Gilstrap, Secretary-Treasurer.

Mr. Lyles has served on the Board since 2001 and previously held the positions of Vice Chair and Secretary-Treasurer. He also serves on the ACOG's Regional Transportation Advisory Committee. He is a member of the Oconee County Council.

Mr. Cheney has been on the Board for eight years and served previously as Secretary-Treasurer. He is also a member of the Appalachian Development Corporation Loan Review Board and the Economic Development Information System (EDIS) Partnership. Mr. Cheney is a member of the Anderson City Council.

Ms. Gilstrap, a member of the Greenville County Council, was appointed to the ACOG Board in 2003. She also serves on the Appalachian Development Corporation Loan Review Board and the EDIS Partnership.

City of Travelers Rest

ACOG Facilitates Planning Retreat

ACOG staff met recently with the Travelers Rest City Council to facilitate a strategic planning session. Officials spent time establishing and prioritizing short and long term goals and objectives for the city. The discussion primarily centered on the city's efforts to deal with current and future growth in the area. Sewer infrastructure improvement and expansion, downtown revitalization and economic development topped the city's needs.

Like many small towns in the Upstate area, this once-quiet municipality is experiencing an influx of both residents and businesses. Situated in the merge of state highways U.S. 276 and U.S. 25, the municipality is fast becoming a stopping place for shopping and dining for many residents of northern Greenville County. The recurring theme of council during the planning session was to develop responsible strategies to promote and accommodate future economic development and improve the quality of life for the City's residents.

The past few years have seen a number of new restaurants and retail stores open within the City, capped off with the recent opening of a new Wal-Mart Supercenter. As a result, the current sewer infrastructure must be improved, and preparations for future growth must be made. Council also worked on developing strategies to provide a more pleasant atmosphere in the downtown area, with proposals made for road improvements, pedestrian walkways and revitalization of properties.

In all, council hopes these efforts will provide the City with the means to accommodate and promote further economic development. A mix of big box retail, light-commercial, industrial firms and dining is targeted for the highway corridor, with pedestrian friendly boutique shops and restaurants



surrounded by green-space targeted for the downtown area.

The City of Travelers Rest is currently participating in the ACOG/Appalachian Regional Commission Small Towns Program.

Chesnee Adopts Updated Zoning Ordinance



The Town of Chesnee Planning Commission is set to approve the update of their zoning ordinance at their April meeting. While the current ordinance had served the town's needs well, the first comprehensive review since the Town of Chesnee enacted zoning was necessary to address land use conflicts and recent issues that were not considered in the original ordinance. The Appalachian Council of Governments facilitated the Chesnee Planning Commission's update of the ordinance.

(Chesnee continued on page 4)

Development Corporation News

The Appalachian Development Corporation (ADC) and South Carolina Bank and Trust recently funded two projects that will provide recreational alternatives for Greenville County youth. In Simpsonville, the owner of Elite Gymnastics has purchased the building that she was previously leasing. The financing guarantees that Cristina Singeorzan will continue to mentor and teach gymnastics to anyone who is interested.

The staff, in addition to Cristina, is composed of two experienced gymnastics coaches and three assistants. They offer instruction in artistic gymnastics, including the vault, uneven bars, beam and floor routines, and also in the rhythmic gymnastics such as ball, hoop, ribbon, rope, clubs, and floor. Classes and individual instructions are offered to individuals from the age of 15 months and up. Elite also sponsors a competitive team that won National Championships in 2003 and 2004.

Also in Simpsonville, the ADC participated in the financing of a new 48,000 square foot indoor sports park to serve the need of skateboarders and bicycle stunt riders (BMX). The location is on Roper Mountain Road near I-85 and I-385. The park will be marketed to boys and girls, primarily ages 10 through 18 and their parents. Parents will be approached with the concept of having the child get a membership so the hourly or daily cost will be reduced. Safety gear such as helmets and pads will also be required, and will be available through the facility. The park has targeted an April 1 opening date and will operate seven days a week.

In other recent ADC actions, the Board approved loans to webQuix, Inc., of Greenville in the amount of \$103,200, and Reid's Residential Care,

(ADC continued on page 3)

Some Common Questions About the Medicare Prescription Drug Program

Q. I got muddled and signed up for the wrong plan. Can I still switch to another plan that I prefer? You have the right to switch plans once before May 15, the enrollment deadline for getting Medicare drug coverage this year. But you cannot switch if you've already changed plans once since Jan. 1. If you haven't switched before, signing up for another plan will automatically cancel your enrollment in the previous one.

Q. Why does one plan charge a lot more for the same drug than another plan? Each plan negotiates the price of each drug with its manufacturer. If a plan gets a good discount on one brand name but not on a competing drug used to treat the same condition, the plan will charge a lower copayment for the former ("preferred") drug and a higher copay for the latter ("nonpreferred").

Most plans arrange their charges in "tiers." Typically, Tier 1 is the copay for low-cost generics, Tier 2 for preferred brand names, Tier 3 for more expensive nonpreferred brand names and maybe a Tier 4 for uncommon and very expensive drugs. Since different plans may place the same drug in different tiers with charges varying as much as \$30 between tiers, it is important to compare copays (as well as premiums and deductibles) when choosing a plan.

Q. If a plan doesn't cover one of my drugs, do I have to switch to an alternative drug immediately? No. Medicare now requires plans to give new enrollees a grace period of up to 90 days, during which plans must cover existing prescriptions for drugs not on their formularies.

Q. Can I get drugs both at a local pharmacy and by mail order under the same plan? Yes. As long as the plan offers both options (not all do), you can have your prescriptions filled from either source—for example, using mail order for 90-day supplies of drugs you take regularly, and the pharmacy for short-term drugs such as antibiotics.

Q. I'm still working and have health and drug insurance from my employer. Should I sign up for a Medicare drug plan? It depends whether your drug coverage is "creditable"—that

is, at least as good as Medicare's. (Check with your employer's plan.) If it is, there's no need to sign up, and you won't incur a late penalty if in the future you need Medicare drug coverage. If it isn't creditable, consider enrolling in a Medicare plan now to get better coverage and avoid a late penalty.

Use caution, however. Dropping your employer's drug coverage (even if it is not creditable) may also mean giving up your medical benefits. In that case, you might want to keep both but enroll in a Medicare drug plan, too. This would add to your costs, but you would avoid a late penalty for Medicare coverage if you or your employer terminates your current benefits in the future.

Q. I get my drugs from the VA. Can I sign up with a Medicare drug plan, too? Yes. Drug coverage under the Veterans Affairs health program is regarded as "creditable," but veterans are allowed to enroll in a Medicare drug plan as well, without risk of losing their VA medical or drug coverage.

Q. Can I still get some of my drugs from manufacturers' assistance programs when I'm in a Medicare plan? There are no rules that prevent you receiving free or low-cost medicines from patient assistance programs run by drug companies while enrolled in a Medicare plan. It depends on whether the companies continue these programs for Medicare beneficiaries. Some companies are not doing so.

Some companies are proposing a new program to help low-income beneficiaries pay for drugs in the doughnut hole, but the plan would begin only if federal authorities decide it does not violate anti-kickback laws.

Q. I was turned down for Extra Help because my income was a little too high. Is there anything I can do? You could reapply. The income limits for Extra Help (the part of the Medicare drug program that gives substantial assistance to people with low incomes) were recently raised when new federal poverty guidelines for 2006 were issued. The income limits are now \$1,225 per month for a single person or \$1,650 for a married couple living together.

To reapply (or apply for the

first time) call (800) 772-1213 or go to www.socialsecurity.gov.

Q. I paid full price at the pharmacy because my enrollment in a Medicare drug plan wasn't recorded in the system. Can I get a refund? Yes. Save your receipt and contact your plan about the refund process. (If you've lost the receipt, your pharmacist can probably provide a duplicate.)

Q. A Medicare drug plan gave me wrong information in an attempt to sign me up. Who can I complain to? In a complex program some incorrect information is inevitable, but reports of questionable practices by some drug plans are beginning to emerge. You can complain to Medicare at (800) 633-4227 or to the Inspector General's Office of the Department of Health and Human Services at (800) 447-8477 or hhsti@oig.hhs.gov.

For additional information or inquiries about enrollment, contact the Appalachian Area Agency on Aging at (864) 242-9733 or (800) 434-4036.

Reprinted from AARP Bulletin, March 2006.



(ADC continued from page 2)

Inc., of Spartanburg in the amount of \$50,000. Recently funded loans include a \$200,000 loan to Green River Cabins, LLC of Spartanburg County, a \$75,000 loan to the Kee Company of Travelers Rest, and SBA 504 loans to the Regal Inn of Greenville (\$286,000), the Kee Company (\$513,200), and Xenix, Inc., of Spartanburg (\$501,000).



The Ombudsman Corner

Honoring Resident Preferences

What You Hear:

“We don’t have enough staff to accommodate individual schedules. You will be woke up at 6 a.m.”

“Because of our scheduling, your bath will always be at 9 a.m.”

“If you don’t like the meal entrée, your only option is a peanut butter sandwich.”

The Fact:

A nursing home must make reasonable adjustments to honor residents’ needs and preferences.

Freedom of choice is a vital part of a resident’s quality of life. A nursing home should feel like a home rather than a health care assembly line. Accordingly, the Nursing Home Reform Law requires a nursing home to make reasonable adjustments to meet resident needs and preferences. For example, a resident has the right to “choose activities, schedules, and health care consistent with his/her interests, assessments and plans of care.” (Section 483.15(b)(1) of Title 42 of the Code of Federal Regulations)

The resident or resident’s representative should not feel bound by a nursing home’s standard operating procedures. It does not necessarily matter that up to now the nursing home has never allowed residents to sleep past 6 a.m., or has refused to serve Chinese food, for example. If a requested change in procedure is reasonable, the nursing home must make the change.

Of course, the \$64 million question is “What is reasonable?”, but this question has no scientific answer. The definition of “reasonable” is not precise; residents and family members must be prepared to explain why the benefit from a proposed change is worth whatever inconvenience or expense may be involved. More enlightened nursing homes are realizing the benefits—both to residents and nursing homes—of giving more control to the residents and individual staff members.

The goal is to change the culture of nursing homes so that care is more “resident centered.” By implementing this “cultural change,” nursing homes across the country have improved resident care and customer satisfaction, and have done so while making a profit. The resulting message to nursing homes is: “Good care is good business.”

In requesting a change, the resident or their representative should write to the nursing home and explain why the change would be good for the resident and why the law requires such a change. Do not be hesitant about making a request to the nursing home. The nursing home is paid to care for each resident and there are legal and moral reasons why each resident is entitled to be treated as an individual human being.

Information gathered from: Carlson, Eric with the National Senior Citizens Law Center with Support from The Commonwealth Fund. “20 Common Nursing Home Problems—and How to Resolve Them.” December 2005.

Your Local Ombudsmen: Nancy Hawkins, Jamie Guay, Jessica Arnone, Rhonda Monroe, Sandy Dunagan and Celia Clark; phone: 864-242-9733.

(Chesnee continued from page 2)

The Planning Commission’s focus was to improve the organization of the ordinance and resolve key issues that have arisen since the ordinance was developed. The update used recommendations from the Comprehensive Plan to develop standards that addressed the location of mobile homes, apartments and duplexes in the community. The changes also included reformatting the existing administrative and procedural sections of the ordinance to make the document easier for the public to use. Other significant additions to the ordinance included standards for parking lots and cellular tower location. The zoning map was updated as well based on recommendations from the planning commission and input from town council members.

Spring Cleaning



South Carolina Family Caregiver Support Program
SC Aging Network
Supporting Caregivers

It is spring and time to rid your household of some of its clutter. If you’re a caregiver, or have ever been, you may have supplies you no longer need occupying valuable space. Items from briefs to transfer benches often occupy space because they are no longer being used for the care recipient. They were invaluable when you needed them, and could be invaluable to others and free up some space at the same time.

Many organizations in the Upstate area would be happy to accept these gently used, or in the case of disposables, never-used, supplies. A donation to the local church, civic group or shelter can be a great service to the community. The Family Caregiver Support Program sees the need for supplies on a daily basis and can accept donations of unused supplies. These supplies are then redistributed to eligible people in the throes of caring for loved ones at home. Following a year of repeated major disasters in this country, many organizations that normally assist people are tapped out and are in need of help themselves.

For more information regarding donations or information regarding the Family Caregiver Support Program’s services, please contact either Debra Brown or Sam Wiley at the Appalachian Council of Governments. The program serves Anderson, Chero-

(Caregiving continued on page 5)

New Leadership and Recognition in Workforce Development



Pictured left to right, Butch Harris receives award from Ed Parris.

During the January 2006 Board meeting, the Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board elected Ed Parris as chairperson. Mr. Parris has served on the Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board since its inception and previously served on the Private Industry Council. He is owner-president of Management Recruiters in Pickens County and is chairperson of Alliance Pickens.

During the March 16th Board meeting, Leon "Butch" Harris was presented the Outstanding Service Award for Distinguished Leadership as Chairperson of the Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board from May 2004 through December 2005. Mr. Harris is the Plant Manager of the Timken US – Honea Path Plant. Ed Parris stated, "Butch has been a real dedicated and conscientious leader in the past year as chairman of the Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board. It has been a real pleasure to serve with him. I look forward to his continued input in the future."

Also in the area of Workforce Development, in February, Margaret "Peggy" Torrey was named new Workforce Development Director for the South Carolina Department of Commerce. In her new role, Ms. Torrey will direct the Workforce Development Program. She most recently served as Associate Vice President of Education Pol-

icy at the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce where she studied the state's workforce development needs and delivery system. She also played an integral role in the passage of the Education and Economic Development Act.

Correction in March Viewpoint Issue—Right Picture and Wrong Caption



Easley City Council and ACOG staff member Joe Newton.

We apologize. You would think that if civic-minded city council members gave up a day of their personal time to conduct an all-day planning and goal-setting retreat at ACOG, we could at least get the proper caption on their photograph. In our March issue, we incorrectly confused the captions under the photographs of the hardworking and handsome folks of Easley with the hardworking and handsome folks of Belton. Both recently conducted planning retreats at ACOG's Greenville office.



Belton City Council and administration.

In any case, we take our hats off to these and many other councils who take important time out to plan and strategize for their communities. Now as to who is more handsome? We aren't going there.

(Caregiving continued from page 4)

kee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens and Spartanburg Counties, and we can also offer the names of Advocates in other regions. The toll-free number is (800) 925-4077; the number for the switchboard is (864) 242-9733, or you may e-mail to brown@scacog.org or swiley@scacog.org.



Did You Know?

Pendleton, in Anderson County now, was too near the edge of the new county to be the courthouse seat. It is on the National Register of Historic Places, one of the largest historic districts in the nation. Belton is named for railroad pioneer Belton O'Neal. Honea Path is a Cherokee name -- 'Honea' means 'Path'. The town of Piedmont is named after the geographic province. It has a rich heritage in textiles. Pelzer is named for textile pioneer Francis Pelzer.

VIEWPOINT

Appalachian Council of Governments
P. O. Box 6668
Greenville, South Carolina 29606

Address Service Requested

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
GREENVILLE, SC
PERMIT NO. 1604
