

# South Carolina's Councils of Governments: Partnerships, Progress & Promise—Part III

*(This is Part III of a five-part series detailing the contributions of South Carolina's Councils of Governments to the state's economy and quality of life.)*

COG partnerships have continued to grow through the years. In addition to long-standing relationships with local jurisdictions and federal agencies, many state agencies have come to realize the benefits of partnering with the COG system to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness. Several of the COGs' current state partners are featured below.

### Budget and Control Board

The COGs act as Affiliate Data Centers for the Board's Office of Research and Statistics, housing and distributing all types of statistical information.

### Office of the Adjutant General

The COGs work with the Office's Emergency Management Division, preparing Natural Hazard Disaster Mitigation Plans for each county in South Carolina.

### Health & Human Services

Many COGs serve as Area Agencies on Aging, contracting with Health and Human Services to provide a variety of state-sponsored programs such as the Nursing Home Ombudsman program and Family Caregiver program. These COGs oversee millions of dollars in funds contracted to service

provider organizations.

### Department of Transportation

The COGs and the S. C. Department of Transportation (DOT) have entered into a long-term working relationship focused heavily on rural highway planning and project development and, in some cases, on urban transportation needs. COG Boards of Directors make recommendations to DOT and its commissioners regarding priorities for highway improvements.

In 1998, the COGs began a long-term bonding program with SCDOT, leveraging millions of dollars in highway improvement funds, recommending road improvement priorities and administering the program at the regional level. This partnership brings transportation planning to the county and regional levels, allowing for greater local input into improvement priorities, which are updated annually.

### Employment Security Commission

Many COGs contract with the Commission to administer the Workforce Investment Act program, which provides for labor force training in each county.

### Department of Health & Environmental Control

Many COGs contract with DHEC to develop and maintain regional water quality management plans. The partnership with the COGs promotes

*(S. C. COGs continued on page 2)*

# Small Towns Technical Assistance Program



The Council of the City of Woodruff conducting a planning retreat in ACOG's boardroom earlier this year. Woodruff is one of three new jurisdictions participating in the Small Towns Technical Assistance Program.

Three new communities have been approved for participation in a technical assistance program targeted at small municipal governments. Jurisdictions were identified based upon need, size, and willingness to participate. A total of 12 communities are currently involved. The program, in its third year, is sponsored by the **Appalachian Regional Commission** and is being managed by the Appalachian Council of Governments.

In years 1 and 2, the nine initial jurisdictions included Reidville, Pelzer, West Pelzer, Norris, Six Mile, Iva, Inman, Liberty, and Belton. In the current year 3, three new participants have just been added to include the towns of **Blacksburg, Chesnee and Woodruff.**

Over the last two years, ACOG has worked intensively with the original jurisdictions. Depending on local needs, ACOG has provided a wide

*(TA Program continued on page 4)*

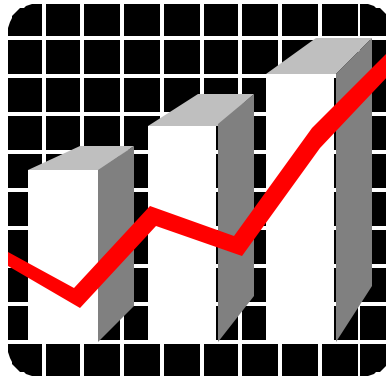
## Upstate Economy: Third Quarter Update

**T**he third quarter Economic Activity Report of the SC Upstate revealed a continued mix of activity throughout the region. Through recruitment efforts, Upstate economic developers are working hard to bring new jobs into the region. Although a number of third quarter announcements suggest that these efforts are paying off, continued layoffs underscore the importance of establishing a more diverse Upstate economy.

As we entered the third quarter, the state's unemployment rate rose to a nine-year high of 7 percent in July. The July unemployment rate for our six-county region rose to 6.9 percent. As the quarter came to a close in September, the unemployment rate for the state and region dropped to 6.4 percent and 6.0 percent, respectively, suggesting a slight improvement in the job market.

In Anderson County, Sargent Metal Fabrication celebrated the opening of its new \$5.5 million facility recently completed at the Anderson Regional Airport Industrial Park. This new larger facility enabled the addition of 25 new jobs to the company's existing workforce. Orian Rugs, Inc., also announced plans to invest \$8 million and add 10 new jobs at its plant off SC Highway 81 North. These announcements were tempered, however, by the closing of Maxxim Medical, Inc., in Honea Path, which resulted in the loss of 75 jobs.

Cherokee County celebrated news that an unnamed German manufacturer and a New England-based textile company have expressed strong interests in occupying two vacant manufacturing facilities. The two companies, along with Suminoe Textile Co. Ltd., which plans to occupy the former Paragon Plant, would create as many as 230 jobs. The county did not, however, escape the quarter without layoffs, as Fall River Manufacturing announced plans to close its Gaffney plant and lay off 20 workers.



In Greenville County, Standard Motor Products, Inc., announced expansion plans that will add 200 jobs to its Greenville manufacturing facility. Plans also moved forward for the automotive research park, which could ultimately add 20,000 high-tech jobs to the Upstate economy. Unfortunately, layoffs were also prevalent in Greenville County headlines, as over 700 workers lost their jobs through major cutbacks by Kemet Corporation and through the closures of Insignia Financial Group and Albany International.

Approximately 50 new Oconee County jobs stand to be created through the expansion of Johnson Controls in West Union, while another 15 new jobs will result from Valenite's expansion of its manufacturing facility on Highway 123 near Westminster.

Now that infrastructure is in place and access is provided by the newly completed Highway 123 interchange, officials are aggressively recruiting tenants for the Pickens County Commerce Park. The importance of their job-creating efforts was underscored as Central Textiles, Inc., announced plans to close its Pickens plant, resulting in the loss of 140 jobs.

Like those of other Upstate counties, third quarter announcements in Spartanburg revealed a mix of promise and uncertainty. Construction moved forward on the QS/1 headquarters facility, which will house 240 employees by next September. Conversely, 128 jobs are to be lost through closures of the Spartanburg Waukesha

Bearings Plant and the Woodruff RST&B Quilting and Bedding Company.

The S. C. Appalachian COG Information Services Department publishes the Economic Activity Report of the SC Upstate. Sourced from various media releases, this quarterly publication lists details for industrial and commercial projects that involve new construction, expansion, and renovation. Statistics on plant closings, lay-offs, and hiring plans are also included. Please contact the Information Services Department at 242-9733 to purchase the publication for a single quarter or to order a yearly subscription.

*(S. C. COGs continued from page 1)*

water quality planning, focused on individual basins, which are shared by several service providers. This reduces local conflicts while enhancing efficiency and cost effectiveness. COGs also have responsibility for reviewing sewer discharge permit requests for compliance with the regional plans. They also have assisted in hosting regional air quality meetings.

### Department of Commerce

The COGs and the S. C. Department of Commerce have had a long-standing relationship relating to the state's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

At the local level, the COGs help with project and application development, ranking and grant administration. This is an especially useful service for smaller communities that do not have internal capacity to prepare applications and administer grants. COG assistance is critical to citizens receiving the benefits of grants.

The COGs have also assisted the S. C. Department of Commerce with statewide water and sewer system mapping and providing databases on industrial sites and buildings and quality of life attributes.

## Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board Recognized

**T**he Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board received the Joe A. Young Award, which is given to the Outstanding Local Workforce Investment Board of the Year by the South Carolina State Workforce Investment Board. The award was presented at the Statewide Workforce Development Conference held October 26-29, 2003, in Hilton Head, South Carolina.

The award was given based on the following criteria: effective broad planning and oversight of the local Workforce Investment Area's services to ensure those services represent the workforce development needs of the local area; facilitation of increased business participation in WIA activities; coordination and establishment of linkages among its members to further the local area's activities and create an integrated workforce system; and successful leveraging of non-WIA resources through collaboration and planning with partner agencies and businesses.

Two projects highlighted this year are the Partnership with Adult Education and a study conducted by Clemson University. The Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board has a unique partnership with Adult Education in Anderson School Districts 1 & 2. During the strategic planning retreat in January 2003, the board decided to look at the skill set needs of employers, as compared to the skills possessed by employees. In an effort to bridge the gap between these two, the Board discovered that the Board's Adult Education representative had already developed a curriculum designed for this purpose. She formed a committee of employers and key partners to revise and define the use of this curriculum. They had an opportunity to pilot the program when a large textile plant closed in the small town of Honea Path. This event was devastating to the community. The town mayor was eager to provide this program and volunteered space for the classes. The graduation rate for the pi-



Pictured: Mr. Pat Hudson and Ms. Sylvia Hanna, State Workforce Investment Board; Mr. Doug Douglas and Ms. Julia Sermons Hoyle, Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board; and Mr. Roosevelt T. Halley, S. C. Employment Security Commission.

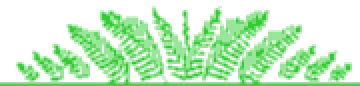
lot program was astounding, 91 percent of the 23 participants graduated. The title of the program is "WorkCore Certification, Essential Skills for the Workplace." The six-week program focuses on soft skills necessary for any workplace. An optional extra week can be added with an emphasis on skills necessary for manufacturing. We anticipate that in addition to manufacturing, there will be modules developed for other industries such as banking, health care, etc. The board recognizes the WorkCore certification as a credential for WIA performance purposes. The State Adult Education Department is planning on implementing this project statewide.

After reviewing the "State of the Workforce Report" commissioned by the board, the planning committee decided they needed more information. They contracted with Clemson University to conduct surveys to determine why individuals do or do not take advantage of the services available in the One-Stops. The study has gone a step further, to look at the attitudes of unemployed workers. The survey is trying to determine if the unemployed take responsibility for their situation. Do they blame external circumstances such as the economy or NAFTA, or do they take the responsibility for keeping their skills current?

For more information on the Pendleton District Workforce Invest-

ment Board, please go to the Board's website at [www.pendletondistrictwib.com](http://www.pendletondistrictwib.com).

Congratulations to the Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board.



## COG Adopts Statement of Support for Guard and Reserve



Pictured left to right: ACOG Vice-Chairman Eddie Wynn, Chairman Dozier Brooks, Colonel Suzanne Newton, and Executive Director Bob Strother.

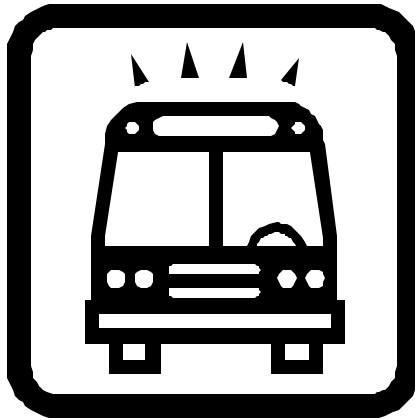
In September the Council of Governments' Board heard a presentation from Army Reserve Colonel Suzanne Newton and adopted a resolution recognizing the National Guard and Reserve as essential elements for the nation's strength and well-being. Through the resolution, the COG pledged not to deny employment or limit career opportunities because of military service and to grant leaves of absence for training.

## Tri-County Transportation Study

**E**arlier this year, at the request of several local governments, transit providers, and human service agencies, the Council of Governments conducted a study of transit in the Anderson-Oconee-Pickens County area. Through statistical and geographic analysis, as well as interviews with local officials and focus group meetings, several challenges emerged, the most significant of which included:

- The presence of many elderly persons and others without access to personal automobiles in outlying areas who are unable to make trips for basic needs such as grocery shopping, medical services, employment, and education;
- A lack of coordinated transit among human service providers, resulting in many having to provide transportation to their clients, some clients not being able to reach the services they need, and inefficiencies in service provision;
- Significant growth and development, leading to increasing traffic congestion, safety concerns, and air quality issues; and
- The lack of a transit connection to Greenville.

On November 19<sup>th</sup>, the ACOG held a meeting at Tri-County Technical College to present findings, discuss options for addressing challenges, and seek input for future action. In addition, Mr. Glennith Johnson, the Assistant Director for Mass Transit with the S. C. Department of Transportation, presented the SCDOT vision for coordinated regional transit, discussed similar initiatives in other parts of the state, and shared lessons learned from those efforts. Officials from the two fixed route transit providers in the area, Clemson Area Transit and Electric City Transit, noted that work and discussions are already underway to extend their routes to outlying municipalities. While the group agreed that over time a regional approach or regional transit authority is the best answer, they identified several



challenges and questions associated with doing so. For the short range, it was recommended that strategies for incremental improvements be pursued. Three steps were outlined for moving forward. These include:

- Supporting the Clemson Area Transit and Electric City Transit efforts to expand routes into outlying municipalities;
- Conducting a forum with human service providers in each county to get additional information on their transit services, client needs, and special requirements of their riders. Information developed will be utilized to identify and foster opportunities to coordinate services; and
- Identifying marketing strategies to enhance the perception and utilization of public transit.

The group will meet again in early May to report on progress of the three strategies. For additional information concerning this initiative, please contact Dan Wagner or Steve Pelissier at ACOG.

## Development Corporation News

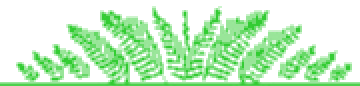
Recent transactions include a loan to J & K Precision Components, Inc., West Union in the amount of \$75,000. The company makes small machine and plastic parts for a variety

of customers and will employ up to 12 people.

Another loan to ACT Southeast of Easley was closed in the amount of \$50,000, enabling this nine-year-old business to remain in existence. The company welds saw blades for metal saws and will employ up to six people.

The Appalachian Development Corporation was notified by the Small Business Administration that the project to Sweetiebyrd Development/Five Forks Car Bath, Inc., was approved for funding in the amount of \$435,000. This project involves construction of an automated car wash facility at Five Forks Plaza in Simpsonville. New Commerce Bank is the primary financial institution on this project.

The project to Richardson and Sons for a day care facility in Spartanburg was funded using the Small Business Administration's 504 program for an amount of \$140,000. This project provides general day care service in the South Spartanburg area and employs 11 people. First Citizens Bank was the primary lender in this \$350,000 project.



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range of services including Council training, strategic planning, computer programming and training, business license studies, land use planning, utility rate studies, budgeting assistance, financial management, municipal administration, consulting and general troubleshooting.

ACOG is in the process of meeting with the councils and staff of the three newest municipalities, conducting a needs assessment study to determine how the towns can best be served. ACOG will then schedule technical assistance visits and initiate work on identified projects. Meanwhile ACOG will commence orientations and training for the Town Councils and will schedule dates for council retreats and strategic planning sessions in the next few weeks.

## Ombudsman Corner

### *From Good to Bad to Worse – Now What?*

Nursing Homes and Assisted Living Facilities all have problems that they deal with on a consistent basis. Certain problems will prove easier to correct than others. As you may notice, common problems are just that: common. They occur in all facilities all over the nation. However this does not mean the problems are not important. All problems should be addressed and efforts made to resolve them.

Common problems range from: not being taken to the bathroom when the resident needs to go; not getting enough fluids; not getting enough to eat; not receiving appropriate skin care; not being groomed properly; not receiving range of motion exercises; no encouragement of independence; and not being allowed to make choices. If not addressed, these problems can turn into severe problems that may cause needless pain and suffering for the resident. When there is good communication between the resident, family members and staff, the problems can be identified quickly and efforts can be started immediately to resolve the problems. Think about solving these problems as a step-by-step process.

- Work with the staff, especially through the care planning process, to promote needed rehabilitation and restorative services. Also during the admission process, it is important to let staff know about common behaviors the resident had at home. This will assist the resident in continuity of care.
- Look for evidence that staff are carrying out both preventive and restorative programs.
- Ask questions if you discover preventive or rehabilitative programs are not occurring as promised.
- Notify staff if you discover a prob-



lem with proper care not being provided, allowing them the opportunity to take corrective action.

- Check with other residents and families in the facility to see whether they are receiving these programs or appropriate care.
- Use the Family Council as a resource if other residents have the same problems.
- Use outside resources, if necessary, including the Ombudsman Program, regulatory systems, and state licensing and certification agencies.
- As a last resort, use citizen advocacy groups, the press, and legal action.

Please remember that communicating with the facility staff will help prevent common problems from escalating into severe problems. Let them know what your concerns are before taking any action. Allow them the opportunity to accept responsibility and implement corrective action in resolving the problem.

Local Ombudsmen: Celia Clark, Sandy Dunagan, Jamie Guay, Nancy Hawkins and Rhonda Monroe.

*Information gathered from: Nursing Homes: Getting good care there. Burger, Sarah, et al. 2002.*



### ARC Approves Grants for Work Force Training Projects

The Appalachian Regional Commission recently approved ten grant awards totaling \$386,895 for work force training projects in the region. All of these projects are being undertaken in direct response to the needs of the business and industry community served by the schools.

**Tri-County Technical College**, which serves Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens Counties, was awarded a total of \$124,738 to upgrade the Medical Laboratory Technology Program and the Welding Program, and to install a “Smart Classroom” system that will be utilized by all students in the Business and Human Services Division.

**Spartanburg Technical College**, which serves Spartanburg and Cherokee Counties in the ACOG region, will receive a total of \$160,205 to upgrade equipment to industry standards in the Commercial Graphics Technology, the Industrial/Electrical Technology, and the Automated Manufacturing Technology programs. The college will also use the ARC funds to provide new testing and GIS equipment to update the material testing and survey labs for the Mechanical, Civil, and Engineering Graphics Technology programs.

**Anderson Districts 1 & 2 Career and Technology Center** was awarded \$64,155 to upgrade and enhance their electronics lab in the Electricity/Electronics Program and in the Automotive Mechanics Technology Program.

**Hamilton Career Center** in Oconee County will receive \$37,800 to upgrade equipment used to train students for Computer-Aided Design (CAD) jobs and to retrain adults in the industry. The school will also use the ARC funds to implement a computer lab for the Licensed Practical Nursing Program.

# VIEWPOINT

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