

Labor Force Statistics Now Fast and Easy

In today's age of technology, companies looking for a place to expand their businesses often begin the site selection process by conducting online research of possible expansion locations and then compiling a "short list" of candidates through a process of elimination. Typically, candidates face elimination early in the process if inadequate information is available during the company's online research. Consider the following scenario:

Benjamin Cole, the president of Minnesota Machine Works, is looking to expand his company into the Southeast. Through conversations with Upstate Alliance delegates at a recent trade show, he has learned about the many advantages of doing business in Upstate South Carolina, but he needs to gather some specific information on the region's work force before placing us on his "short list."

Thanks to a partnership between the S. C. Employment Security Commission, U. S. Census Bureau and U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, detailed work force statistics for Upstate counties are now available at Mr. Cole's fingertips through the Internet. Each quarter, the Census Bureau links South Carolina employer and worker data to other administrative records to produce unique indicators of employment, workforce composition, worker flows and earnings. These indicators can be further categorized by time, area, gender, age group, and industry.

For instance, through the selection of several very specific variables, Mr. Cole can see that, in the second



quarter of 2004, Greenville County had a total of 5,103 persons working in machinery manufacturing, with overall average monthly earnings of \$4,427. He can also see that this branch of manufacturing had 367 new hires in the county, with average monthly earnings of \$3,831. Turnover for machine manufacturing in Greenville County was 6.1 percent.

If desired, Mr. Cole may retrieve a further breakdown of this data by gender and age group. Data may also be retrieved for various geographic levels, including counties, metropolitan statistical areas and workforce investment areas. In addition to providing area statistics to "long distance" researchers such as Mr. Cole, the online database can also serve as a valuable "in-house" tool for local economic development professionals who must routinely compile data in response to requests for information from site selection consultants.

In the past, county-level labor force data showing any degree of detail would typically be several years old at the time of its release. The availability

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Notable ACOG Accomplishments, 1965—2005

Over the past 40 years, the Appalachian COG has helped bring in nearly one-half billion dollars in federal and state grants for the region. Almost \$100 million of that amount went for multi-county or region-wide efforts. Many early projects, like the construction of the Cherokee Foothills Scenic Highway (SC 11), are still highly visible and relevant today.

Other projects were even more visionary. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the COG helped establish and equip a network of vocational high schools throughout the six-county area. Significant funding also went to build the region's technical college campuses. Prior to 1980, almost all the technical college buildings were at least partially funded with Appalachian Regional Commission dollars.

In the 1970s, ACOG established a regional tourism program that evolved into the Discover Upcountry Carolina Association. A cooperative purchasing program saved local governments hundreds of thousands of dollars on bulk purchases before they became eligible to buy under the state contract. A junk car removal program helped rid the area of unsightly abandoned vehicles and associated health risks. A regional arson prevention program brought investigators together for the first time to identify strategies for reducing the incidence of arson and sharing investigative techniques.

When Home Rule was established in 1975, the COG responded by creating a Governmental Services De-

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ESGR—Employer Support for the Guard and Reserves



Anderson County Administrator Joey Preston and County Council Chairwoman Gracie Floyd sign the Five-Star Statement of Support for Employer Support for the Guard and Reserves.

Since the terrorist attacks on the United States, the onset of “Operation Enduring Freedom” and the activation of thousands of National Guard and Reserve troops, employers are playing a critical role in national defense. One way in which local governments can publicly demonstrate their support for their National Guard and Reserve employees is by signing a **Statement of Support** for their Guard and Reserve employees.

In the Upstate, ESGR governmental participants include the Appalachian Council of Governments, Anderson County, Anderson County Sheriff’s Department, Cherokee County, Clemson University, Greenville County Sheriff’s Office, Greenville County Detention Center, and the Spartanburg Sheriff’s Department.

Nationwide, 1.3 million Americans serve in the Reserve Forces—Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Coast Guard Reserve, Air Force Reserve, Air Guard—and make up more than half the national defense strength.

A Statement of Support serves two very vital functions. First of all, it demonstrates the strong level of support

for our Guard and Reserve, which is important during this critical time; and second, it sends a clear message to the service members that while they’re serving their country, they do not have to worry about their civilian jobs.

Upstate city and county governments can get information on the ESGR program by contacting the S. C. Adjutant General’s Office, Joe Smoak, at (803) 806-2672 (e-mail at jo-seph.smoak@sc.ngb.army.mil), or by going online at www.esgr.org. Ask about the **5-Star Employer** program and serve the people who are serving us.

Home for the Holidays?



One of the hardest things to deal with on a day-to-day basis is the loneliness and isolation related to being the caregiver of a loved one. Whether caring for a senior or a child, the restrictions and limitations can become overwhelming at times. When the caregiver realizes he or she is wearing down emotionally and physically, it is time to call for help.

“Respite” is what the professionals call it. You may call it “just watching” or “sitting with” or whatever you think appropriate, but it is relief of some kind from the day-to-

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Development Corporation News

The ADC Board has approved a loan of \$135,000 to Promo Pipeline. The loan is part of a \$510,000 project that introduces a new product that is an Internet bulletin board posting of incentives. The company is located in Greenville County and will employ up to eight people.

The ADC Board has approved a loan of \$200,000 for a new skateboard and motor cross bicycle facility in Greenville County. The facility is currently not named, as the principals plan to sell the naming rights. The company will employ up to eight people.

A loan of \$160,000 has been approved by the ADC Board for Elite Gymnastics of Simpsonville. The principal is purchasing the building that they have been leasing. Primary financing is being provided by South Carolina Bank and Trust. The company will increase by two instructors, bringing the total employees to seven.

A \$200,000 loan to Upstate Medical Rehabilitation in Greenville was approved. The project involves the construction and equipping of a new office complex. Bank of America is providing primary funding of \$2,200,000 for the project. The company will employ up to eight additional people while retaining the current staff.

A loan for a new company, In-negrity, LLC, in the amount of \$150,000 was approved. The principal is starting a production facility to produce a recently patented fiber product that he has developed. The ADC will provide \$150,000 of the \$300,000 equipment cost, with the balance of the project coming from BB&T of South Carolina and investors. The company will employ eight people and will be located in Greenville County.

A \$100,000 loan has been closed and funded to Bates Batteries, Inc., for working capital to open a new

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State Revolving Programs Announce Rates for FY 2006

The South Carolina Budget and Control Board has announced the FY 2006 interest rates for the State Revolving Fund (SRF) for Wastewater and the SRF for Drinking Water.

The SRF for Wastewater is sponsored by EPA under authority of the Federal Clean Water Act. Since 1989 South Carolina has received over \$325 million in federal and state matching funds to capitalize the fund. For FY 2006, over \$60 million is available for wastewater projects at interest rates from 1.00 percent to 3.50 percent. Municipalities, counties, and special purpose districts are eligible to apply for loans through this program to construct wastewater facilities, including relocation of sewer lines due to highway widening and non-point source projects such as stormwater. The program allows up to 100 percent financing of all eligible costs, including 20-year reserve capacity. All projects must be on the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) priority list to be eligible for a loan. Projects, however, may be added to the list at any time by submitting a priority questionnaire to DHEC.

In 1997 the U.S. Congress authorized funding to capitalize a revolving loan fund for drinking water to facilitate compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. The SRF for Drinking Water funds are available for drinking water supply or distribution system improvements, including relocation of water lines due to highway widening. The SRF for Drinking Water operates virtually the same as the SRF for Wastewater. For FY 2006, over \$16 million is available through this program.

The interest rates for both programs are:

- **Standard Rate – 3.5%:** Applies to all systems with more than

10,000 population and all systems with Median Household Income (MHI) greater than \$37,082 (State MHI) regardless of size.

- **Small System Rate – 2.5%:** Incentive rate for small systems of less than 10,000 population and MHI less than State MHI.
- **Hardship Rate – 1.0%:** Available to systems that would meet the small system rate and their Level of Effort (LOE) is more than 1.25%. (LOE is annual cost of water or sewer based on 6,000 gallons monthly usage divided by system MHI.)

These low interest rates for FY 2006 significantly reduce annual debt service costs, as well as the total amount paid over the life for the loan. Such savings directly benefit the rate-paying customers and the system.

For more information on either of these loan programs, contact Ms. Trish Comp at the S.C. Budget and Control Board in Columbia (737-3808), or Dirk Reis at the ACOG.



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of this quarterly updated database offers valuable, very detailed statistics which are maintained on an ongoing basis to provide more current information. This searchable database is accessible at <http://lehd.dsd.census.gov/led/datatools/qwiapp.html>. For more information on these new Quarterly Workforce Indicators, please contact the S.C. Employment Security Commission by e-mail at lmicustomerservice@sces.org.

Workkeys and the Career Readiness Certificate

States and communities nationwide are using WorkKeys, a standard job skills assessment system that is recognized globally. This system measures real-world skills to create portable credentials—so an individual can demonstrate they have the skills necessary for many jobs and careers.

This workforce skill testing is typically conducted in these basic areas of need for most employers: Applied Mathematics, Locating Information, and Reading for Information.

Whether a student, an individual in the workforce, or one looking to enter the workforce, WorkKeys can provide reliable, relevant information about an individual's skill levels.

This assessment tool can show skill levels required in today's and tomorrow's workplace, and it can help the individual make better career and educational decisions.

The WorkKeys system is the most efficient assessment process available. Using the unique job profiling component along with skill assessments, the process is able to show how a person's skills compare to an employer's specific job requirements—providing a targeted solution that saves time and money.

How to Be Certified after WorkKeys Assessment? Following WorkKeys testing, an individual can be eligible for a Career Readiness Certificate. The WorkKeys score determines a certificate level:

Certificate Level

Bronze – WorkKeys Level 3
Silver – WorkKeys Level 4
Gold – WorkKeys Level 5

When a certificate level is met, a credential is awarded by the S. C. Department of Education's Office of Adult and Community Education.

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Volunteer Ombudsman Program

The South Carolina Volunteer Ombudsman Program is a first for the state, and it is well underway. After several years of development, the program was finally approved and implemented this past August. The need for advocates for residents of long term care facilities is ever growing as this population continues to grow. It will peak in the years to come with the Baby Boomer generation joining the ranks. South Carolina is one of the last states in the country to implement this program and will now join the success of the other 44 states participating nationwide.

Sixty percent of residents in nursing homes never get visitors; a staggering statistic. This program helps to alleviate this problem, as well as to improve the relationship between residents and the facility staff. The program involves sending volunteers into nursing homes and assisted living facilities as friendly visitors for the residents living there. These volunteers will be confidants and friends to the elderly who have no family that visit them.

Too often residents have concerns that they are afraid to voice to anyone working in the facility. Once a relationship is established, these volunteers will be non-biased outlets for the residents to share their concerns. Volunteer Ombudsman will only follow up on a complaint or concern if given permission by the resident or the resident's responsible party. The most important thing is that these residents have someone to listen to them and someone to make sure that their rights are being respected.

Every resident in a long term care facility has certain privileges under the Resident Bill of Rights, but many do not know this even exists. Another responsibility of the Volunteer Ombudsman will be to educate residents, families, facility staff, and the community on these rights. Volunteer Ombudsmen want to empower residents to become as independent as possible, and know-

ing their rights is the first step towards that independence.

The Volunteer Ombudsman Program in the Appalachian region has made great steps in implementing the program since August. In the last two and a half months, recruitment of volunteers and facilities has been the focus of the new program. Brochures and presentations have been given to attract volunteers to the program. AARP has also published an article in a recent magazine explaining the program and asking for volunteers. Over twelve potential volunteers have been interviewed, and out of those, seven volunteers have been recruited to begin training.

The following volunteers have been recruited from several counties in the Upstate: Mr. and Mrs. Craig Brandon from Pickens County; Mr. Lamar Bailes from Oconee County; Ms. Janette Gianopoulos from Spartanburg County; Mr. and Mrs. Don Groezinger from Cherokee County; and Ms. Fawn Owens from Anderson County. These seven have started the training process and have gone through a one day workshop in Columbia with the State Ombudsman and State Ombudsman Volunteer Coordinator.

The next step for the volunteers is to shadow an Ombudsman on a friendly visit to a facility in the Upstate. The following facilities have volunteered to participate in the new program and will have one or two volunteers assigned to their facility as volunteers are recruited and trained: Briarwood Living Center in Greenville County, the Peachtree Centre in Cherokee County, Country Heritage in Anderson County, Countryside Village in Pickens County, Magnolia Place in Spartanburg County, Mountainview in Spartanburg County, Richard M. Campbell Veterans Home in Anderson County, Rolling Green Village in Greenville County, Morningside Assisted Living in Anderson County, Manning House Assisted Living in Greenville County, and Stroud Memorial Nursing Home in Greenville County.

The Ombudsman Program would like to thank all volunteers and volunteer facilities for participating in this program. We are off to a great start and hope to have volunteers into facilities by the Christmas holiday. If you have comments, questions, or would like to volunteer, please contact us!

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



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day duties of caregiving. One of the main purposes of the Family Caregiver Support Program is to assist in providing short-term or bridge assistance in the area of respite care. In this consumer-directed program, many options are available from which to choose. You may see someone coming into your home as the best option. Another caregiver might think it more suitable to have their loved one in a professional facility of some sort. Options—from in-home care and institutional care to adult day centers—can provide much needed breaks at very hectic times of the year such as this upcoming holiday season.

If you are the caregiver, or know of a caregiver in need of some respite care, contact us at the Family Caregiver Support Program. Our phone numbers are (864) 242-9733 and toll free at (800) 925-4077. Family Caregiver Advocates Debra Brown and Sam Wiley will be happy to speak with you and discuss what possibilities exist.



Medicare Prescription Drug Program Update

SILVERxCARD will end on December 31, 2005, and will be replaced with the new Gap Assistance Pharmacy Program for Seniors (GAPS). GAPS will provide state pharmacy assistance to supplement the new Medicare prescription drug coverage for seniors. Individuals already participating in SILVERxCARD do not need to apply for GAPS.

Starting January 1, 2006, Medicare will offer prescription drug coverage for people eligible for Medicare. Under the new Medicare Prescription Drug program, most people who join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan (PDP), after paying a monthly premium, will be responsible for 100% of their drug costs between \$2,250 and \$5,100. This gap in Medicare drug coverage that many people will face is being referred to as the “doughnut hole” or gap in coverage. GAPS will provide state pharmacy assistance to “fill the gap” for seniors’ Medicare prescription drug coverage when their drug cost reaches the “doughnut hole.” With GAPS, seniors will only have to pay 5% of their prescription costs between \$2,250 and \$5,100, rather than having to pay the full amount of their drugs without this state assistance.

IMPORTANT - To benefit from GAPS, you must select a PDP that is participating in GAPS. Not all PDP’s will be participating in GAPS. After December 5, our office will have a list of participating plans.

The new Medicare Prescription Drug plans will cover many prescription drugs. Individuals will receive information about the different drug plans available in the area. When you receive the information on the different plans, make a list of all the medications that you take. If you need a specific drug that is not covered, you may apply to your selected drug plan for an exception to get the coverage for that drug. A good resource is the “Medicare & You 2006” handbook that is being provided by Medicare.

You can join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan starting November 15, 2005. If you do not pick a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan by December 31, 2005, your coverage will not begin January 1, 2006, and you could miss prescription drug coverage. Coverage does not begin until you have joined a drug plan. You will receive a new prescription drug card from the Medicare drug plan you join.

The federal government provides **Extra Help** with Medicare prescription drug costs for those with limited income and resources. Your monthly income must be between \$798 (\$1,069 for a couple) and \$1,196 (\$1,604 for a couple). Your countable resources must be below \$11,500 (\$23,000 for a couple). Resources are defined as money you may have and property you may own. If you think you may qualify for Extra Help, please apply right away. This Extra Help will benefit you more than GAPS. Online applications for Extra Help are available at www.socialsecurity.gov or call 1-800-772-1213.

If you have questions about the new GAPS program call 1-888-549-0820. If you have additional questions about Medicare, you may contact them at www.medicare.gov or 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). Be sure to indicate that you have Medicare.

Important things for you to remember

- If you think you qualify for Extra Help through the Social Security Administration, apply right away.
- Look at your “Medicare & You 2006” handbook.
- Select and join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan between November 15 and December 31, 2005 so your coverage will begin January 1.
- Join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan (PDP) that participates with the S. C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Ask

your PDP if they participate with the DHHS GAPS program.

- You cannot use your SILVERx-CARD after December 31, 2005.
- Contact the Appalachian Council of Governments Area Agency on Aging at 864-242-9733 for a schedule of enrollment events in December and January to answer questions and to assist with enrollment.

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If a certificate level is not at the skill level matching employment goals, the Career Readiness Certification process offers classroom instruction in any skill area where improvement is needed—through teacher-led coursework and computer-aided materials.

Real World Example

How WorkKeys/Certificates Can Boost a Career—Nursing aide positions require a Level 3 in Applied Mathematics, Level 4 in Reading for Information, and Level 4 for Locating Information. If an individual tests at a Level 3 in all three tests, they would need upgrading in two areas. Training can then be targeted to those areas.

Career Readiness Certificate Highlights—Serves as a standard measurement for workplace skills

- Identifies basic skills required by many industries and occupations
- Serves as a portable credential
- Shows prospective employers that the certificate recipient possesses the basic skills for successful job performance

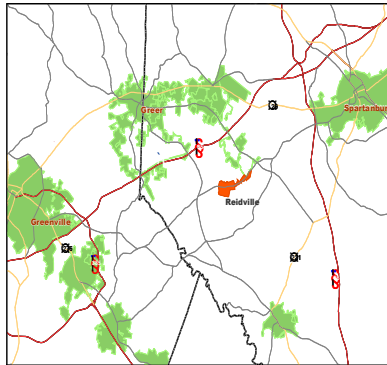
To learn more, contact your local Adult Education Program.

In Anderson, Oconee and Pickens Counties, WorkKeys and the S.C. Career Readiness Certificate Program are sponsored by Adult Education and the Pendleton District Workforce Investment Board.

Reidville in the Path of Growth

Imagine facing a population growth rate of 188%! That's what the once sleepy little town of Reidville has to look forward to over the next three years or so. With a 2000 U. S. Census population of just 478, Reidville ranks as one of the smallest towns in the Appalachian region. With dedicated volunteers serving on Town Council and the Planning Commission, a very enthusiastic staff of one who wears numerous hats, and some help from Spartanburg County, the Municipal Association of South Carolina, and the Appalachian Council of Governments, the Town can count several successes over the past 12 years, including re-organizing its governmental structure, conducting its first election in years, purchasing a town hall, adopting a complete set of municipal codes from scratch, and annually operating in the black with one of the smallest revenue streams of any municipality in the state.

With its proximity to Interstate 85, the GSP Airport, and BMW, Reidville now finds itself in the path of growth, as developers seek new areas to provide for housing that is convenient to both Greenville and Spartanburg. Grading and preliminary development activities are underway for a new 190-unit subdivision in the Town, with preliminary plans submitted for a 150-unit development directly across the street. When built out, these two subdivisions could add 900 people to the community. In response, Town officials realize that the growth will require significant changes to the way it conducts business. One of the first impacts is felt by its planning and development regulation process. Potential impacts are overwhelming, and any mistakes in the review process could have significant long term results. To help ensure that code requirements are met and that the subdivisions are developed correctly, Town officials are working with staff from ACOG to interpret its Land Development Regulations Ordinance, provide guidance to the Planning Commission,



Located between Greenville and Spartanburg, with excellent access to I-85, the GSP International Airport, and BMW, Reidville is poised for growth.

and review permit administration. Reidville and the ACOG have enjoyed a strong relationship over the past 12 years. We look forward to continuing to work with the community as it makes its way through the dramatic changes it is facing.



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partment, a unique cadre of professional public administrators whose purpose was to assist in the transfer of governance to county and municipal entities. That department is still active and remains essential to the increasing complexities of governing at the local level.

The 1980s saw the initiation of a pilot project for community long term care; a project since replicated on a statewide basis, and providing a valuable, ongoing service today. Two COG programs encouraged recycling efforts: one for waste oil and another for paper, glass, metals and other recyclable goods. An export development program facilitated training for small manufacturers who wanted to enter the global marketplace, and provided a roadmap and resource directory to help guide them along the way. Numerous small town functions were computerized through the COG's Small Towns

Automation Project, and many still use the COG's technical support today. The late 1980s also saw the creation of the Appalachian Development Corporation, and a revolving loan fund that has grown into a multi-faceted small business lending program worth over \$23 million.

The 1990s brought technological challenges and the ACOG responded by creating AppNet, a regional telecommunications system, and the Economic Development Information System (EDIS) partnership. The latter program spawned *InfoMentum* and *InfoMap*, software applications that have become a crucial part of marketing the six-county region to the world. The Appalachian Development Partnership provided a blueprint for regional strategic planning that, five years after its inception, had accomplished almost 90 percent of its objectives.

Transitioning from the 20th to the 21st century, ACOG participated in a pooled bonding program that brought in over \$155 million in highway improvement funds. The six Upstate counties financed the construction of a new ACOG office building, which was, as one county official said, "the greatest example of regionalism he'd ever seen." A new ARC-funded program provided focused technical assistance on the region's smallest municipalities. And, after the tragedy of September 11th, the ACOG established the region's first terrorism awareness training program, providing training for nearly 1,500 first responders during the last few years.

During the past 40 years, the Appalachian COG has played a significant role in strengthening local government, helping provide a stable and diversified regional economy, and enhancing the quality of life for area residents. These successes have been made possible by the Appalachian COG Board of Directors: men and women of vision, intellect, and courage – serving their jurisdictions and, more importantly, the collective community of Upstate South Carolina.

VIEWPOINT

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store in Spartanburg.

The ADC has closed and is funding a \$1,163,200 expansion project for The Kee Company in Travelers Rest.

A second loan of \$50,000 has been closed and funded to Pro Weave LLC of Anderson for expansion of its golf towel and throw production.

A loan of \$200,000 to the Champion Group for a new rodeo facility in Gaffney has been closed and funded, with \$160,000 of the funding coming through Community Reinvestment Fund.

An SBA 504 loan in the amount of \$209,000 to Advanced Environmental/Rechee Enterprises has been closed and funded.