

# Quarterly SCARC Board Meeting Draws Another Packed House

**I**t was nearly standing room only at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Columbia when the S. C. Association of Region Councils' (SCARC) Board of Directors held its quarterly meeting there on May 14<sup>th</sup>. SCARC President Chris Christopherson exclaimed, "It makes me feel so very good to see the level of interest shown by the Association membership in attending and actively participating in these quarterly meetings. It shows me that we are on the right track and have the right attitude about promoting the benefits of regionalism and intergovernmental cooperation."

Part of the new level of interest may have to do with President Christopherson's introduction of Board level training as a part of the quarterly meeting agenda. Policy members from COG Boards across the state have been exposed to a variety of leadership training topics including "Board and Staff Relationships" and "Effective Marketing of COGs," designed to encourage advocacy for the COGs and strengthen the relationships between COGs and their member jurisdictions.

In line with that philosophy, one of President Christopherson's recently appointed SCARC committees introduced a document entitled *COG Board Member Role and Responsibilities "How You Can Do the Best Job Possible for Your COG and Your Community."* The document was approved by the SCARC Board for statewide distribution among the COGs.

Another attraction at the meeting was former Greenville Mayor Bill



Workman speaking on "Prosperity in the Twenty-First Century." Mr. Workman encouraged the group to remain active and vigilant in addressing South Carolina's future economic success. "You have to keep moving. If you sit still, poverty will come to you. You have to *cause* prosperity if you're in the economic development business."

The group's next meeting will take place in September, at which time the Association will unveil a report showing the impact South Carolina's COGs have had on the state's economy and quality of life. Eddie Wynn, Chairman of the COG Impact Report Committee, reported that he and the other committee members were very impressed with the information that has been gathered so far. "Last year alone, the COGs were responsible for pumping over \$712 million into the state's economy," Wynn said. "I believe you will be very pleased with this report. It will be a useful marketing tool, and will make all of us proud to be a part of the COG system in South Carolina."



# SCACOG.ORG — Web Site is Ready to Serve

**A**fter a long period of dormancy, the official web site of the Appalachian Council of Governments is again fully functional and packed with valuable information.

In addition to essential information about the agency and the Board of Directors, the site also features a calendar of events, a search tool, and access to the *Viewpoint* newsletter archives. A prominent link leads to the



Appalachian Development Corporation web site, where users may download applications for the Revolving Loan Fund and monitor current development projects.

The pages for each ACOG department provide an overview of services and project descriptions, staff contacts, and links to other pertinent web sites. Entries in the general Calendar of Events link back to detailed event descriptions or registration forms within the sponsoring department.

The site provides access to the  
*(Web Site continued on page 3)*

## ARC Alternate Federal Co-Chair Visits Region

Mr. Richard J. Peltz, Alternate Federal Co-Chair of the Appalachian Regional Commission, visited the Appalachian region of South Carolina on May 8-9. Mr. Peltz was appointed to the position by President Bush and confirmed by the Senate on November 18, 2002. Prior to his ARC appointment, he served as deputy secretary for local and area transportation at the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and, prior to that, as District Administrator for Congressman Bill Clinger of Pennsylvania's fifth district.

Mr. Peltz was accompanied on his visit by Dan Neff, ARC's Local Development District Director, who is the liaison between ARC and the 72 Local Development Districts in the 13-state Appalachian region. Also joining them on a tour of recently funded ARC pro-



From left: Richard Peltz, Ron McCracken, Mayor Chris Christopherson, and Dan Neff at RJM Manufacturing

jects was Bonnie Ammons, Director of the Division of Community Grant Programs at the S.C. Department of Commerce.

ACOG Executive Director Bob Strother, along with Steve Pelissier, Planning Director, and Dirk Reis, Grants Services Director, conducted the tour, beginning with a visit to Pelzer and Belton to hear about the work being done through the ACOG's Small Towns Technical Assistance Program. This program, which has received ARC funding assistance for the past two years, has greatly assisted these and other small communities in a wide



From Left: Dan Neff and Richard Peltz at BMW Plant

range of activities such as computer programming, budgeting, utility rates and capital planning, public information, personnel practices, strategic planning, public services, and training. Skip Watkins, Town Clerk of Pelzer, spoke about the computer programming assistance provided by the ACOG that greatly improved Pelzer's efficiency and accuracy in utility billing. In Belton, Mayor Rufus Callahan, City Administrator David Watson, and Clerk-Treasurer Laurie Kennedy spoke about ACOG's involvement in helping the City to analyze their budget, set spending priorities, establish utility rates and other fees, and provide training to city staff and department heads.

After a lunch at Sullivans in Anderson with Gracie Floyd, a member of Anderson County Council and the ACOG Board, the group visited Tri-County Technical College, which serves Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens Counties. Robbye Mauldin, Executive VP; Martha Addis, Dean of Instruction; and Cari Morningstar, Grants Director, discussed with Mr. Peltz the importance that ARC funding has had through the years in helping Tri-County Tech to upgrade training equipment and to keep up to date with industry demands. Mr. Peltz seemed genuinely impressed by the training that is available at the technical colleges and by the equipment and facilities.

A quick drive through the new Pickens County Industrial Park showed Mr. Peltz, Mr. Neff, and Mrs. Ammons

what Pickens County has to offer industrial prospects that are looking for a Class A Industrial Park. ARC funds were used to assist Pickens County in constructing the roads and storm drainage system in the new park, which also has all other utilities including gas, sewer, water and fiber optic available. The group also saw the work that is being undertaken to construct entrance and exit ramps off of Highway 123 to serve the industrial park.

The tour continued on Friday with a quick trip up a portion of U.S. Highway 25, which is designated by ARC as an Appalachian Development Highway System corridor. ARC funds are appropriated each year from ARC for improvements to Highway 25, including widening, which is currently underway.

A visit to RJM Waste Equipment Company in Easley, a manufacturer of waste containers and compactors, provided an example of the importance of the ACOG Revolving Loan Fund Program funded by ARC. Mr. Ron McCracken, President of RJM, and Easley Mayor Chris Christopherson spoke to the group about how the funds provided through the Revolving Loan Fund allowed the company to obtain a loan from a bank to start the company, which now employs 35 people.

Donaldson Center Industrial Air Park was the next stop on the tour where Peter Cevallos, the Airport Manager, gave an overview of the history of Donaldson and provided information about what Donaldson means to the economy of the area. The ARC has provided funding for several improvements at Donaldson, resulting in many jobs for area residents. These improvements include an Automated Weather Observation System, ramp improvements, and a parallel taxiway. Mr. Peltz seemed very impressed and complimented the city and county on their cooperation and foresight in developing and operating the facility.

After a tour of the BMW plant,  
*(Visit continued on page 4)*

## Terrorism Training

**T**he Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) provides a unique environment and opportunity to offer specialized advanced training to state and local emergency responders in the management and remediation of incidents of domestic terrorism, especially those involving chemical agents and other toxic substances. CDP is a division of the Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP), U. S. Department of Homeland Security.

With the closure of Fort McClellan Army base in 1999, the Department of Justice converted parts of the post from Army training use, to civilian emergency responder training use at the CDP. CDP manages the Chemical Defense Training Facility, which is one of two locations in the United States where individuals can be trained in a contaminated environment using "live agents" (actual toxic substances). This facility is invaluable in both providing training on the use of specialized equipment and in providing the confidence gained by being able to have operated in an actual contaminated environment.

The CDP offers a number of courses including the **WMD Hands-On Training (HOT) Course**.

The **WMD HOT Course** consists of a two-day advanced training program providing hands-on training with personal protective equipment (PPE), advanced sampling and monitoring equipment, evidence collection and preservation, mass casualty triage, and explosive/ordnance secondary devices and searches. The course also incorporates performance of advanced hands-on WMD related tasks in a toxic agent environment.

**Responders who have completed the WMD Terrorism Awareness Training program offered by the Appalachian Council of Governments are eligible to attend a WMD HOT course, provided they meet the following requirements:**

- Must have duties as a city, county, or state emergency responder.



**Center for Domestic Preparedness,  
Anniston, Alabama**

- Must submit training application for the WMD HOT to the State Emergency Management Division through the County Emergency Management Office.
- Must submit copy of WMD Awareness Certificate as proof of course completion.

The WMD HOT Course training is suitable for all levels of fire, law enforcement, EMS, public health and other emergency management personnel.

Also offered are: Weapons of Mass Destruction Hazardous Materials (HazMat) Technician, Weapons of Mass Destruction Incident Command, and WMD Law Enforcement Protective Measures (a short "train-the-trainer" course).

Representatives from local, state, and federal emergency response agencies are eligible to attend training at the CDP. The training, travel, meals, and lodging are provided at no cost to the state or local organization or responder.

For **further information**, contact Joe Newton at ACOG or via e-mail at [newton@scacog.org](mailto:newton@scacog.org)

## Senior Farmers' Market Project

The Appalachia Area Agency on Aging and the Greenville, Spartanburg, Anderson and Oconee County Councils on Aging, in partnership with

the S. C. Department of Social Services and the Department of Agriculture, will be issuing free coupons to individuals age 60 and older that have limited income. The coupons can be used to purchase produce at local farmers' markets from June through October 15, 2003.

Individuals with a monthly income of \$1,384 or less, or who receive SSI or food stamp benefits, are eligible for the coupons. Individuals must apply in person, provide proof of identity and residence in the county where sign up is being held.

This program is intended to supplement senior diets with fresh, nutritious produce and to support South Carolina's small farmers. South Carolina is one of several states that received USDA funds to operate the Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

For sign up locations June 16-21 in Greenville, contact Senior Action at 467-3660; and for locations in Spartanburg County, contact Senior Centers of Spartanburg at 596-3910. For information about the program in Anderson and Oconee counties, contact SENIOR Solutions at 225-3370. For additional information, contact Beverly Allen at the Council's office at 242-9733.

*(Web Site continued from page 1)*

*FactFinder* database, a comprehensive collection of tables containing vital demographic and economic information for the Upstate and surrounding region. Users may choose the link for SC-UPSTATE-INFO.ORG to quickly find web resources for economic development, media, health services, government, education, and libraries in the Upstate.

ACOG's Economic Development Researcher, Cricket Jenkins, improved upon the existing site framework to recreate a site that was concise, easy to maintain, and uncomplicated to use. The site has a flexible format that will accommodate more features in the future. Ms. Jenkins monitors the feedback, so please visit the Comments Page to let us know what you think! For more information, please contact Cricket Jenkins or Carol Andersen (864-242-9733).

## City of Easley Long Range Transportation Recommendations

**O**n May 12, 2003, Easley City Council formally endorsed the recommendations made by the Long Range Transportation Advisory and Study Committee. The Committee, which has been in existence since July 2002, had presented its recommendations to Council at a previous work ses-



Intersection improvements for US 123/SC 93 are scheduled to begin in several weeks.

sion. The Committee's mission has been to recommend future transportation projects for Easley, as well as to promote the implementation of the plan. As evidenced by the 2000 census, the community has experienced a significant population growth over the last ten years and traffic, both local and flow through, has increased as well. A need to provide relief has become apparent. The Committee is comprised of local residents, business leaders, and government officials. It has met regularly to study issues such as road levels of service (current and projected), railroad crossings, projected growth areas, safety, air quality, transit, and quality of life. Reviewing this data has allowed the Committee to prioritize intersection improvements, short range corridor improvements, and major long term projects. The Committee's recommendations include eleven projects ranging from intersection improvements, such as US 123 and SC 93 (pictured), to a long range project of extending SC 153 toward SC 183 in Dacusville.

Now the Committee will focus on advocating for funding of the road improvements approved by Council and address other transportation issues such as air quality, transit, and quality of life. The Appalachian COG's Planning Services Department has provided technical assistance to the Committee. For more information, including a full list of improvements, please contact Dan Wagner at the Council's office.

*(Visit continued from page 2)*

arranged for the group by Max Metcalf, Assistant Manager for Corporate Communications at BMW, the group visited with the Greer Development Corporation (GDC) and the Greer Commission of Public Works. Kerry Leonard of the GDC gave an overview and a demonstration of *InfoMentum*, a decision support system which is used by all of the county economic development directors and which was developed and implemented by ACOG with financial assistance from ARC. David Swenson, Director of the GDC; Jerry Balding, General Manager of the Greer CPW; and Tony Cannon, Energy Manager of Greer CPW spoke about the growth of the Greer area and the fact that Greer was the fastest growing city in the state between 1990 and 2000. Much of that growth can be attributed to the BMW plant and the suppliers that have located in the area, which would not have been possible without substantial upgrades to water and sewer facilities, which ARC helped to fund.

All of the local officials that participated in the tour thanked ARC and South Carolina for investing ARC funds in these projects and pointed out that those investments have paid significant dividends through increased employment and wealth. However, there was also a recognition that there is still work to be done, that not everybody is benefiting from these investments, and that continued funding for ARC is appropriate and needed.

## Newry Infrastructure Project Wins Award

**T**he Newry Infrastructure Project has won the South Carolina Community Development Association (SCCDA) Award of Excellence. This award is given annually in conjunction with the SCCDA's spring conference, held this year on May 18-20 in Charleston. Uniquely, it is not awarded by a panel but is voted on by the community development professionals from across the entire state of South Carolina in attendance at the conference.

Dirk Reis and Judith Romano of the ACOG, with the approval and endorsement of Oconee County, nominated the project and gave a presentation on May 20 at the annual SCCDA conference. Four other projects were also nominated for the award. After the presentations, the audience voted and the Newry Infrastructure Project won by a large margin.

The Newry Infrastructure Project replaced and upgraded water and sewer service in the Newry Mill Village in Oconee County. The project was funded by a \$500,000 Community Development Block Grant, \$500,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission and \$600,000 from the S. C. Budget and Control Board, all applied for and received by Oconee County. The County also contributed \$200,000 in local funds. This project was especially important because it broke new ground in intergovernmental cooperation between Oconee County and the City of Seneca. Through an intergovernmental agreement between the City of Seneca, the Oconee County Sewer Commission, and the County, Oconee County agreed to own the sewer collection lines. The agreement also established that the City of Seneca would own the water lines in the mill village, and would be contracted by Oconee County to maintain the sewer collection lines.

The Award of Excellence recognizes the innovative and cooperative  
*(Newry continued on page 6)*

## 2002 Year-End Review

**S**outh Carolina's economy was sluggish throughout the year due to the effects of a national recession and significant job losses in manufacturing. In February 2001, the month before the national recession began, the state's unemployment rate was 4.6 percent. The unemployment rate climbed as high as 6.3 percent during the year, the highest level in six years. There were nearly 32,000 more unemployed workers in December 2002 than in February 2001. The unemployment rate for 2002 was 6.0 percent, slightly higher than the national average of 5.8.

The nonagricultural count advanced 0.6 percent to 1.77 million in January 2003 compared to January 2002, adding 11,200 jobs. Despite this growth, job creation was more moderate when compared to previous years. The average number of workers added each year from January to January during the last decade was 55,000.

Over the past 12 months, government climbed 7,800, led by advances in local government and education (+4,300). Educational and health services added 4,000, with health care and social services accounting for its robust growth over the year. Financial activities rose 3,200, led by strong gains in real estate. Leisure and hospitality rose 1,800, led by gains in accommodation and food services. Manufacturing continued to spiral downward, losing 11,800 jobs, primarily in durable goods (-7,500). Professional and business services shed 1,200 jobs.

In 2002, a total of \$4.2 billion was invested in South Carolina, adding an announced 20,945 new jobs. Over the past 10 years, approximately \$50 billion has been invested in the state, accounting for more than 448,000 jobs. In 2002, existing firms accounted for over 75 percent of the job creation total. The state's rural counties accounted for 8,093 new jobs, up 25 percent from the previous year's level. The leading manufacturing sectors in terms of capital investment activity were transporta-

tion equipment (\$1.04 billion), metals and capital equipment (\$709 million) and chemicals (\$386 million).

Spartanburg County led the state in investment, recording \$866.1 million, followed by Greenville (\$487.5 million) and Anderson (\$257.0 million). These counties accounted for nearly 40 percent of the state's investment activity. Greenville County ranked first in the number of announced jobs created, with 2,180, followed by Richland (1,954), Lancaster (1,883), Charleston (1,705) and Spartanburg (1,498) counties.

The state's annual average unemployment rate for 2002 climbed to 6.0 percent, up from 5.4 percent in 2001. Eleven counties averaged double-digit unemployment rates, led by Williamsburg County at 14.4 percent. Conversely, 14 counties averaged unemployment rates below 6.0 percent. Beaufort County had the state's lowest unemployment rate, at 2.8 percent.

The unemployment rate for Columbia MSA averaged 3.5 percent for the year. The Charleston and Greenville-Spartanburg MSA's unemployment rates averaged 4.0 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively.

The 2003 economic outlook is cloudy at best. The South Carolina Coincident Index, which is comprised of a set of key variables useful for gauging current economic conditions, slipped 0.8 percent over the year. The main contributor is the fact that the economy continues to struggle with a jobless recovery, due to a more moderate job growth in 2002 as compared to previous years. On a brighter note, the South Carolina Leading Index, which is comprised of a set of key variables useful for gauging future economic conditions, rose 2.9 percent in 2002. Of the five components that compose the index, the largest gain came from a decline in jobless claims and a surge in home building. Average weekly claims for unemployment insurance fell 43.2 percent, comparing the last week of December to the same period in 2001. Residential

construction surged 14.5 percent in 2002, boosted by the unprecedented period of low interest rates.

Technical Note: Employment data for 2002 are the first in South Carolina using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). NAICS has replaced the Standard Industrial Classification System (SIC) as the basis for collection and reporting of industrial employment in the United States. NAICS reflects the shift in U.S. employment away from manufacturing toward services.

(Reprint of an article by Mike Daniels, Research Coordinator, Labor Market Information, South Carolina Employment Security Commission, appearing in the January 2003 issue of the *South Carolina Workforce Trends*.)

## Development Corporation News

The Board approved a loan to PockerKnocker's Reproduction Lighting and Wares in the amount of \$30,000 for the store on Haywood Road in Greenville. The business is owned by Carolyn Hallissey, who expects to create two jobs. Primary financing is to come from Greenville First Bank.

The Board approved a loan of \$150,000 to Custom Forest Products, Inc. The project will keep 20 jobs in Spartanburg County rather than losing them to North Carolina. The business is owned by Eric Foust, who operates it as a pallet and crate manufacturing company. Champion financial is to provide primary funding in the amount of \$210,000.

Pro Weave, LLC, was approved for a \$150,000 loan to be used for equipment and working capital. Pro Weave manufactures throws and golf towels in Anderson, South Carolina.

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# VIEWPOINT

**Appalachian Council of Governments**  
**P. O. Box 6668**  
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approach taken by Oconee County and Seneca to resolve what had been a serious health and safety hazard. Without assistance, the water and sewer lines in the mill village would have continued to deteriorate until the entire village was uninhabitable because it did not have a reliable water and sewer system. Regional cooperation saved the mill village, which is justly recognized by the SCCDA Award of Excellence.

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BB&T Leasing will provide primary funding. Ten new jobs are to be created in addition to retaining the existing five jobs.

A loan to World Indoor Sports for \$200,000 was funded for an expansion of the facility located in Simpsonville.

A \$200,000 loan to Blue Ridge Medical Center in Seneca was closed, allowing the business to purchase additional equipment to be used in the treatment of back pain.

A loan to Monarch Cleaners was closed and funded in the amount of \$85,000, allowing two dry cleaning establishments in Greenville County to change ownership and remain open.