

COUNTY GOVERNMENTS HOLD RETREATS

The Walton County Board of Commissioners held a day-long retreat at its Historic Courthouse on May 25th. The session was facilitated by Executive Director **Jim Dove** and Executive Assistant **Mott Beck**. The retreat began with staff presentations on finance, tax assessment, planning & zoning, public facilities, fire and rescue, public works, E-911, and water resources. Following those presentations, the Board discussed short-term goals to be addressed during the next 12 to 18 months. Goals receiving the greatest attention included: Increasing Fire Suppression and Rescue Personnel, Providing Water to Unserved Areas, Parks & Recreation, and Addressing Road Needs in Preparation for Coming Growth, Public Works, and Jail Improvements.

A retreat for the Jackson County Board of Commissioners was held at the Fire Training Center on June 21st. The retreat began with an overview of the demographics of Jackson and surrounding counties. This was followed by identification of the county's strengths and challenges, a review of the 2016 Audit, and a Budget update. New software for Finance, Human Resources, and Public Development was also discussed along with the SPLOST V closeout and use of excess proceeds. A portion of the meeting was utilized to address topics suggested by Commissioners prior to the meeting. Finally, BOC members identified and prioritized goals. These included: Providing a County Wide Agricultural Facility, Maximizing Use of Social Media Within the County, Maintaining Rural Heritage, Addressing County Legal Services, and Developing a Short and Long Term Transportation Plan.



Walton County Retreat (above) and Jackson County Session (below)



UNION POINT APPROVED FOR \$100,000 GRANT FOR FIREFLY TRAIL

With the approval of Union Point's application for a \$100,000 grant to partially fund the Firefly Trail from downtown to the Union Point Steam Academy, a third "model mile" of the planned 39-mile pedestrian and bicycle path comes closer to fruition. Union Point will receive the maximum amount available through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources grant, which is funded by the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP). The city has pledged to provide matching funds, and Firefly Trail, Inc. will provide additional cash match.

The funds will build a paved path, 10- to 12-foot wide, from downtown Union Point to the Union Point STEAM Academy elementary school, located about 0.6 miles north of the city on SR 77. The school's front lawn is bisected by the abandoned corridor of the historic Georgia Railroad's Athens Branch, which the trail will utilize wherever possible. Currently, the only access to the school is via highway, so the trail will create the first and only "safe route to school" for families in Union Point.

"I am grateful that the Georgia Department of Natural Resources is investing in this critical trail project," said Rep. **Trey Rhodes** in announcing the grant via press release. "The proposed Firefly Trail will be a great addition to Union Point, as it is sure to drive economic development and enhance the quality of life for our citizens. This Recreational Trails Program grant is a tremendous win for Union Point and will play a major role in helping to further develop the Firefly Trail in our community."

News of the grant's approval came as Firefly Trail, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established to promote creation of the trail, approached the final weeks of its campaign to raise matching funds for "Model Miles" in Union Point, Maxeys, and Athens-Clarke County. Like Union Point, Maxeys received a \$100,000 DNR Recreational Trails Grant in 2016 and is working to build its Model Mile within the next year (the NEGRC's Planning & Government Services Division staff developed both successful RTP applications). Athens-Clarke is currently building a 0.8-mile segment, primarily using Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax dollars, that includes two major bridges.

Please contact Senior Planner **John Devine**, AICP, at jdevine@negrc.org to obtain additional information.

HOPE ALLEN – THE FACE OF PERSEVERANCE

Hope Allen, of Morgan County, was laid off from a job she loved in 2007 at the age of 49. Initially, Hope was optimistic that she could find employment. She had a good severance package and unemployment insurance and didn't think that it would be an issue for her to get another job. As Ms. Allen states, "The Great Recession impacted many, and people forgot about the middle age Americans that lost everything - healthcare, jobs, homes - some recovered and some did not".

As Ms. Allen searched the Georgia Department of Labor website recertifying her unemployment insurance benefits, she found information on Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funding. She met with **Kim Meadows**, WIA Career Advisor, who listened carefully and identified her need for a job quickly. Ms. Meadows referred her to a three-month Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) training program. Ms. Allen had to care for her elderly mother, and this training allowed her to provide for her mother's care in the home which saved the family thousands of dollars in long-term care and

increased her quality of life. She was able to work part-time to assist with income as well as care for her mother in the home.

After Ms. Allen's mother passed away, she was able to begin the process of furthering her nursing career goals. She took requisite courses to prepare her for the long range goal of being a nursing instructor. She was accepted into Athens Technical College, but due to 2nd semester course challenges, she withdrew in good standing with plans to return the next year. However with time being of the essence, she was accepted into a Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) training program at Central Georgia Technical College.

To compound matters, Ms. Allen's husband had a heart attack while working out of state, and she was in an accident which totaled her car. But, in spite of all that, she persevered and graduated LPN training. She still had to pass the nursing licensing examination. April, 2017 was an awesome month for Ms. Allen. She passed the nursing examination and began working at the Quiet Oaks Retirement Home in Oglethorpe County. She plans to continue working while pursuing training that will qualify her to serve as a nursing instructor.

Ms. Allen said, "I think that it is important for people to know what good work you all do. People think that you just pay tuition, but the service you provide is far more valuable. You are a coach and a mentor. There are so many resources to help you succeed in school, graduate, and enter the workforce. I really feel like it took a village to get me to this point and I thank the WIA for being a very important part of my village." Hope's journey as a nursing student lasted a decade and dealt with many twists and turns, but her story is one of perseverance, hard work, and help from governmental agencies.

For further information on the Northeast Georgia WorkSource Georgia (formerly known as WIA/WIOA) services and programs, contact the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's Workforce Development Division at **(706) 369-5703**.



Hope Allen

2017 B.J. SMITH COMMUNITY SERVANT AWARD RECIPIENTS HONORED

The 12th B.J. Smith Community Servant Award Ceremony, hosted by the Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board (WDB), was held on Tuesday, June 6th in Ila. B.J. Smith served in many roles as a community servant. Prior to his active board involvement in Madison County, he served as a meteorologist with the National Weather Service beginning in 1972. He was stationed at the Athens Ben-Epps Airport. While with the Weather Service, he had his first experience with the local area's Summer Youth Work Experience program serving as a worksite supervisor of JTPA summer youth participants. After retiring from the weather service in 1990, he joined the Northeast Georgia Private Industry Council, the predecessor to the Northeast Georgia Workforce Investment Board, as the Madison County private sector representative. He was actively involved on the Madison County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, and worked on the economic development committee.

Mr. Smith felt that providing people with the tools necessary to ensure their own successes was much more fruitful than providing temporary handouts. After his passing in March, 2005, the Workforce Investment Board desired to honor his commitment to community service as well as his memory. The B.J. Smith Community Servant Award was established in February 2006 with the first awards presented in June of that year. Including this year's winners, a total of 34 deserving youth has been awarded this scholarship in the Northeast Georgia region over the past 12 years.

The 2017 B.J. Smith Community Servant Award winners each receive a \$1000 college scholarship. Information on this year's winners follows:

Tylar Rivers lives in Greene County and is a 2017 graduate of Greene County High School. Tyler will be attending Georgia Military College, where she plans on pursuing a degree and a career in Physical Therapy. Tyler has volunteered within her community at the Local Food Bank, Relay for Life, and the Back to School Bash. While attending High School, Tyler was active with the BETA Club, DECA and UGA Leadership.

Zakia Hall lives in Madison County, and is a 2017 graduate of Madison County High School. Zakia will be attending Savannah State University, majoring in Accounting. Her goal is to further her education by getting a Master's Degree and CPA license to become a financial auditor. Zakia has volunteered for a number of community service projects through the National Honor Society, including the Jean Drive, High School grounds clean-up and Relay for Life. While in High School, Zakia was on the Volleyball and Track teams. Zakia was awarded a Youth Leadership award by the Madison County Chamber of Commerce.

Amber Bullard lives in Jasper County, and is a 2017 graduate of Jasper County High School. Amber will be attending the University of Georgia and majoring in Social Work. She wishes to further her education by going to graduate school as well. Amber not only worked at the Jasper County Family Connection office during the Summer Work Experience program, but also volunteered there throughout the school year by participating in the Back to School Rally and Backpack lunch program. Amber teaches Sunday School, and directs the annual Christmas play at her church. While in High School, Amber was a member of the Beta Club, National Technical Honor Society, and National Society of High School Scholars.

These scholarships are presented to students currently enrolled in the WIOA In-School Youth program within the 12 county region. The scholarships will assist with books, fees, tuition and related expenses during the recipient's freshman year of college. These scholarships will be coordinated with other financial assistance the student may qualify for, i.e. Hope Grant/Scholarship.

For further information on the WIOA In-school Youth Program, please contact **Rima Sullivan**, NEGRC/ WIOA Youth Program Specialist, **(706) 369-5703**.



B.J. Smith Community Servant Award Recipients



DCA HOSTS ARC FUNDING WORKSHOP

Four of the NEGRC's counties (**Barrow, Elbert, Jackson and Madison**) lie within the Appalachian Regional Commission's (ARC) boundary area. These counties are eligible to participate in ARC's programs that include funding opportunities that align with ARC's five goals listed below:

- Creating economic opportunity through entrepreneur assistance and business development strategies.
- Promoting a ready workforce by improving the education, knowledge, skills, and health of residents to work and succeed in Appalachia.
- Investing in critical infrastructure; especially broadband; transportation, including the Appalachian Development Highway System; and water/wastewater systems.
- Strengthening Appalachia's community and economic development potential by leveraging the Region's natural and cultural heritage assets.
- Building the capacity and skills of current and next-generation leaders and organizations to innovate, collaborate, and advance community and economic development.

Local governments as well as other entities are eligible to apply for these funds. The Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) manages the ARC program statewide and is hosting a pre-application workshop to provide eligible applicants with information about the application process. This workshop is scheduled for **July 13, 2017 from 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at DCA's offices in Atlanta**. To pre-register, RSVP annaka.woodruff@dca.ga.gov (before July 7th).

For further information, please contact **Burke Walker**, Director of Planning & Government Services (PGS), at **(706) 369-5650** or email: bwalker@negrc.org.

REMINDER

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission **will not** meet in July. The next meeting will be held on **Thursday, August 17th at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn**. Information regarding the meeting will be forthcoming.



Have a Safe & Happy 4th of July!



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Athens, GA 30605

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Update

REGIONAL MEETINGS JULY

20	3:00 p.m.	Firefly Advocacy Group	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
26	9:30 a.m.	Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room



Sincerely & Respectfully,