

GEORGIA'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Last month on August 30th, Governor Brian Kemp announced that fifty-nine Georgia communities will receive a total of \$41 million in federal assistance to help grow their local economies. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) allocated the funding to Georgia's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which is administered by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA).

Three Northeast Georgia communities submitted CDBG applications for 2019: Oconee County, Jasper County, and the City of Hoschton. All three were prepared by the NEGRC's Planning & Government Services (PGS) Division. Of those three, two received 2019 CDBG Awards: **Jasper County** and the **City of Hoschton**.

The CDBG program is available to eligible local governments through a competitive grant program. Each year, CDBG supports community projects that create jobs and assist citizens with low and moderate incomes.

Over the past decade, Georgia's CDBG program has invested in health care facilities that have helped more than 35,000 Georgians gain access to improved health services, provided resources for critical water and sewer improvements serving more than 177,000 residents in rural areas, supported the construction or enhancement of community facilities to serve more than 16,000 youth and senior citizens, and helped to create more than 6,100 new jobs through the Employment Incentive Program (CDBG-EIP).

More information regarding Georgia's CDBG awards is available on DCA's website under "Newsroom."

Congratulations to Jasper County and the City of Hoschton! All three Northeast Georgia communities that applied contributed an amazing amount of effort and deserve recognition.

Requests for NEGRC assistance with preparing a 2020 CDBG application are due October 1st. To request assistance or for more information on CDBGs, contact **Eva Kennedy**, NEGRC Director of Planning & Government Services, at ekennedy@negrc.org or **(706) 369-5650**.

USDA TO HOST "GEORGIA COMMUNITY PROSPERITY SUMMIT" IN ELBERTON

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is providing a series of "National Community Prosperity Summits" designed to foster hope and opportunity, create wealth, and build assets in communities nation-wide. It will convene a range of participants from various agencies and organizations including: state, federal, non-profit, academic, tribal, and development organizations. These partners will meet to provide information in these areas:

- Assist communities in the development of local prosperity councils
- Connect attendees to the USDA and other relevant federal programs
- Illustrate successful practices for developing key partnerships
- Model success for communities and future generations of communities

To help connect USDA with Georgia and the NEGRC's rural communities, the "Summit" is planned for a date in November (TBD) **from 9am-4pm at the Athens Technical College's Elberton Campus** located at 1317 Athens Highway in Elberton. This event is an opportunity for NEGRC leaders to engage with USDA and learn more about the White House Rural Prosperity Taskforce. **Mike Beatty**, Director of USDA's Office of Partnership and Public Engagement in Washington, DC, is coordinating the "Summit" with **Joyce White**, State Director for Georgia and USDA's Rural-Development Office.

Please check the NEGRC website and for further details at: www.negrc.org. Also, please email **Matthew Mentor**, NEGRC Administrative Support Specialist, at frontdesk@negrc.org if you would like to be placed on the "Summit" contact list.

2ND ANNUAL "SENIOR CELEBRATION"

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) held its 2nd Annual "Senior Celebration" on Friday, September 6, 2019, at the Jefferson Civic Center in Jefferson, Georgia.

This day was created as a way to support, honor, and show appreciation to the seniors that reside in the northeast Georgia region. The much-anticipated event featured food, music, dancing, prizes (including 24 beautiful baskets – each senior center donated two baskets—and 1 participant from Jasper County won the grand prize of \$247). The NEGRC's Area Agency on Aging (AAA) staff provided participants with information on senior programs, promotional items, bingo prizes, and other items for the approximately 550 senior citizens in attendance.

Guest Speakers included the following:

- Steve Quinn, Mayor of Jefferson;
- Kevin Poe, Jackson County Manager;
- Burke Walker, Executive Director of Northeast Georgia Regional Commission

This year's sponsors included Jackson County Senior Center, Newton County Senior Center, McDonalds (Gaines School Road – Athens), Chick-Fil-A (Athens & Winder), Chill's Grill & Bar (Athens), Cici's Pizza (Athens), Cracker Barrel (Athens), Coca-Cola (Athens), East Athens Walmart, GA Foods (Covington), Northeast Georgia AAA, Northeast Georgia Regional Commission and Woodmen of America. Thank you to our sponsors for helping make the 2019 "Senior Celebration" a success! For information about the NEGRC's AAA programs, contact **Peggy Jenkins**, NEGRC AAA Director, at pjenkins@negrc.org or **(706) 369-5650**.



Barrow County Senior Center Participant wins gift basket



Gentleman from Barrow County Senior Center wins gift basket of decorative pillows



Northeast Georgia Seniors enjoying bingo



Seniors enjoying music provided by DJ James

OCONEE COUNTY RECEIVES 2020 PLANFIRST COMMUNITY DESIGNATION BY THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS (DCA)

PlanFirst is DCA's program to recognize and reward communities that clearly demonstrate an established pattern of successfully implementing their Local Comprehensive Plan. DCA recognized Oconee County's hard work and successful comprehensive-plan implementation and acknowledged the community's commitment to identifying opportunities and setting goals to move the county forward.

Participation in the **PlanFirst** program lasts for three calendar years. Designated communities are encouraged to reapply to renew their designation for an additional three-year period.

PlanFirst designation brings significant recognition and rewards, including eligibility* for the package of incentives listed below:

- Statewide recognition as being an exemplary, **PlanFirst**, community;
- The ability to apply for CDBG annually during the designation period;
- Bonus points on DCA programs such as the Redevelopment Fund or Employment Incentive Program or the Downtown Revolving Loan Fund;
- Hands-on assistance from DCA staff to help implement community work program activities, and
- Other incentives that are under consideration and will be announced as they are approved.

For more information on **PlanFirst**, visit DCA's website: <https://www.dca.ga.gov/local-government-assistance/planning/local-planning/planfirst>. For questions related to comprehensive planning, contact **Eva Kennedy**, NEGRC Director of Planning and Government Services, at ekennedy@negrc.org or **(706) 369-5650**.

*Governments designated as **PlanFirst** are required to maintain their Service Delivery Strategies in order to take advantage of the benefits from the State offered as **PlanFirst** incentives.

NEWTON COUNTY RESIDENT COMPLETES NURSING DIPLOMA PROGRAM AT GEORGIA PIEDMONT TECHNICAL COLLEGE

[The letter below from a WIOA participant to her WIOA Counselor was reprinted, with permission, as a testimonial to the WIOA program and its impact on a northeast Georgia resident.]

August 16, 2019

Dear Ms. Maxwell,

Sometimes, good things really do happen to those who wait. At least, that is my story. At the age of 51 (!), I decided to go for my dream, and I mean really **go for it!** I enrolled at Georgia Piedmont Technical College, and promptly registered to take all four prerequisites for the Licensed Practical Nurse program. My advisor at the time, (sorry, I can't recall his name) seemed a little hesitant, gingerly pointing out that these were not "easy" classes. Nevertheless, and somewhat naively, I insisted on moving "full steam ahead!". In the back of my mind, I knew it was "now or never". Almost, as if a sign from Heaven above, as I was walking out of the building, I overheard one student talking to another about this "fantastic program that had helped pay for school". I stopped dead in my tracks and turned around to inquire. "What was that? Did you say they paid for your program?"; I asked. The young lady confirmed that I wasn't hallucinating and wrote down the name of the program, "**WIOA**". That was all the confirmation I needed!

After completing the semester, self-confidence starting to bud, I sat for the TEAS exam. I did reasonably well, applied to the Program and was accepted! So far, so good, right? Wrong! It occurred to me, I hadn't worked in over a year, had no savings and would need a financial miracle to pay for books, fees, tuition, etc. That was when I reached out to WIOA. When I received acceptance into the program, I cried. I felt lucky, blessed, fortunate and many other ways, but overwhelmingly, I felt like, "now, I could do it." I can start over and I will become self-sufficient. I can be who I was meant to be; do what I was meant to do. I will never forget thinking, "Somebody somewhere believes in me!" and, "Why are these people so nice?" and, "Wait

a minute, the 'government' is pretty smart. Why have me stay at home all day contributing nothing to society in terms of tax dollars, when I could learn valuable skills, make money, and contribute to local, state and federal coffers?" It absolutely made sense.

Two weeks ago, I graduated from the LPN program, with an overall 3.89 GPA. I'm proud of that. I want to thank my wonderfully supportive WIOA counselor, Shelby Maxwell. She was always on top of every emailed inquiry, reimbursement request, or progress report. She was supportive, compassionate and nonjudgmental. At times, I could hear my inner voice, embarrassed to need help and to be returning to school at my age, but Ms. Maxwell never made me feel that way, and for that I am grateful. ***I would not have been able to begin the LPN program, let alone complete it, without the financial support from WIOA, period.*** And, I wouldn't be writing this thank you letter. I am grateful. I am humbled. Mostly though, I am hopeful. Thank You.



Very Truly Yours,
Thamani Delgado, GPN (Graduate Practical Nurse)

For questions or information about WIOA, contact **Carol Cofer**, NEGRC Director of WIOA, at (706) 369-5703.

GEORGIA SMART COMMUNITIES CHALLENGE

The Georgia Smart Communities Challenge is a first-of-its-kind opportunity for communities of any size in Georgia to receive funding and support that enables them to envision, explore, and plan for their "smart" future. Georgia Smart supports cities to explore the use, deployment, and/or integration of smart community technologies into their jurisdictions and operations. These technologies include: intelligent infrastructures, information and communication technologies (ICTs), Internet of Things (IoT) devices, and other computational or digital technologies (such as data centers and portals, web and smartphone applications, and automated digital services).

The Georgia Smart grant provides \$50,000 toward the development of a community-based "smart" technology project, intended to improve citizens' lives in inclusive and equitable ways. Communities awarded the grant also receive technical assistance from a Georgia Tech researcher and access to unique resources to execute their projects, including connections to industry experts and access to technology solutions.

The next Georgia Smart Communities Challenge application period will open in early 2020. If you are interested in participating or have questions about Georgia Smart, please contact **Monica Sagastizado, NEGRC Project Specialist**, at msagastizado@negrc.org or **706-369-5650**. Visit www.smartcities.gatech.edu/georgia-smart for additional information.

NEGRC OFFERS BICYCLING AND WALKING PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING ASSISTANCE

An annual contract between the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the NEGRC facilitates bicycling and walking planning and educational services for local governments. Planning & Government Services (PGS) staff are available to assist with related local needs, including:

- **Complete streets plans, ordinances, and implementation** to target infrastructure and policy measures designed to improve walking and bicycling conditions
- **Trails and greenways plans** to define connective networks and priority corridors for active transportation and recreation

- **Safe Routes to School plans** to improve safety in and around school zones
- **Walk and bike audits, specific-area and neighborhood-level plans, corridor improvement strategies, and demonstration projects** to create high-quality public spaces
- **Low-cost walking and bicycling plans** to make efficient use of limited resources
- **Educational programs** on many of the topics listed above, including low-cost improvements, complete streets foundations, and "Bike-Friendly Driver" training (NEGRC staff is available to discuss custom programs tailored to individual municipalities and counties)

In addition to the safety benefits that these projects can provide, they also tie into community and economic development, placemaking, tourism, public health, natural resources, and other areas that improve communities.

To access the NEGRC's available services, discuss other creative solutions to your community's needs, or share local success stories, please contact **John Devine, AICP, NEGRC Principal Planner**, at jdevine@negrc.org or (706) 369-5650.



Athens-Clarke County's North Oconee River Greenway in Dudley Park, with the historic Georgia Railroad/"Murmur" trestle at left

NEGRC STAFF PLAN FOR BREAST CANCER AWARENESS WALK

Save the date for **October 30, 2019 at noon**. Each year, NEGRC staff and friends come together to show our support for people afflicted by breast cancer by participating in a *Breast Cancer Awareness Walk*! We gather at the NEGRC Headquarters' building and walk together along Research Drive. Each year during this event, we take donations and all proceeds go to the Loran Smith Center for Cancer Support at Piedmont Athens Regional Foundation. Last year we raised over \$800 for this cause. If you would like to support our efforts, we welcome your participation in the walk or to donate. Those interested in walking can plan to meet on **October 30, 2019 at noon** at the NEGRC to walk with NEGRC staff (*WEAR PINK!!*). Others are welcome to make a donation for our walk and our fund-raising event.

For further information and to RSVP to walk (by October 28, 2019), please contact **Olivia Wintz**, NEGRC Career Advisor Program Specialist, at owintz@negrc.org or **(706) 369-5650**. (Any check donations can be made payable to: Piedmont Athens Regional Foundation and mailed to NEGRC, Attn: Olivia Wintz, 305 Research Drive, Athens, Ga 30605-2795.





305 Research Drive
Athens, GA 30605

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Update

REGIONAL MEETINGS OCTOBER

16 th	1:30 p.m.	Aging Advisory Council	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
17 th	Noon	NEGRC Council	Athens Holiday Inn
17 th	3:30 p.m.	Firefly Trails Advocacy Group	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
24 th	8:30 a.m.	ADRC	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
29 th	9:00 a.m.	ADRC	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
30 th	1:00 p.m.	AAA/ China Delegation	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room