

AARP LIVABLE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

The AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Livable Communities Initiative was launched in 2012 in the United States as an affiliate program of the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. AARP works collaboratively with elected officials; policy makers; local leaders; planners; citizen activists and residents to help towns, cities, counties and communities nationwide to be more livable for people of all ages. This nationwide initiative encourages these diverse communities to prepare for the rapid aging in the US population by paying increased attention to the environment, economic and social factors that influence the health and well-being of adults 50 plus and their families. AARP Livable Communities and AARP State Offices are working together with our local leaders and residents to identify their community's specific needs. Afterwards, we create and implement programs, policies and projects that will help meet those needs.

America is aging at a very unprecedented rate. More importantly and closer to home, Georgia is aging. We know that most adults that are 65 or older want to stay in their homes or neighborhoods so they can age in place. To provide a numeric framework of why this work is so important, here is some data to think about. Right now, one in three Americans is 50 or older. Every day, 10-thousand people turn 65. By 2030, one out of every 5 people in the US will be 65 or older. That's about 75 million Americans. What does this mean – it means that by 2035, we will have more people over the age of 65 than under 18. That is HUGE – is your community ready for this dramatic change? Think about this – in 2030, the population of 85 and older will increase dramatically to almost 10 million.

Therefore, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity or income, we can all agree that improvements to our diverse communities benefit everyone. AARP's Age-Friendly Initiative is not about older people. It's about everyone regardless of age thriving in their livable community. All of us want the same things, for example:

- Safe, accessible and affordable places for you and family to live, work, play and thrive.
- Accessibility to shops, businesses and community services for you to interact with daily.
- Live near friends, family and people you rely on.
- Boomers and millennials want the similar things – to have a shorter commute; live close to retail and services; variety of mixed housing choices and live near robust public transit options.

By partnering with local leaders and policy makers nationwide, AARP is committed to helping create communities with a better civic, economic and social life for all residents. In Georgia, there are eight (8) Age-Friendly Communities, including Athens-Clarke County. To learn more about the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Livable Communities, visit www.aarp.org/livable-communities/. To enroll your community and join our network, visit www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/.

At January's NEGRC Council meeting, **Kay Sibetta**, Associate State Director, Community Outreach with AARP Georgia, presented information about AARP Georgia and their programs suitable for local-government participation. She was joined by Kay Argroves, AARP Board member. Kay, during her presentation, noted that "AARP Georgia is working hard with its community partners to become an Age-Friendly State. So far, AARP Georgia has enrolled 8 communities and counting. Nationwide, AARP has enrolled 6 states, over 430 communities and 1 US territory." For more information and technical assistance with your Membership Application, please contact **Kay Sibetta**, Associate State Director, Community Outreach with AARP Georgia at ksibetta@aarp.org or call **404-870-3788**.



(L-R) Kay Sibetta, Burke Walker, and Kay Argroves at the NEGRC Council meeting.

ACHIEVING CAREER EXCELLENCE

Through a unique partnership with Jackson County Correctional Institute (JCCI) and Lanier Technical College, and the Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board, ACTION, Inc. has made a positive impact in the lives of men seeking a second chance.

ACTION, Inc.'s program, Achieving Career Excellence (ACE), focuses on special populations including ex-offenders, veterans, and individuals recovering from substance abuse. Funding for this program is provided by the Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board utilizing federal Workforce Innovative and Opportunity Act funds. Through this grant, the **ACE program has successfully graduated 100% of the 23 inmates from Jackson County Correctional Institute who have participated in a Welding training program over the past 24 months.**

Lanier Technical College provides instructional and hands-on welding training to the ACE participants in a welding lab located at the Jackson County Correctional Institute. The entire 60-hour curriculum is conducted over a duration of 10 weeks. The trainees study MIG, TIG and stick welding. The trainees are tested following their program of study and receive a Certification in Gas Metal Arc awarded by the American Welding Society.

Throughout the course of the program, ACTION Inc.'s Career Coaches provide essential employment and life skills training which includes workshops on conflict resolution, cognitive and behavioral thinking, effective communication, and financial management. This training is imperative to the participants' success as it helps them to gain the confidence they need to return to society, enter the workforce and succeed on their own. Prior to release from JCCI, the Career Coaches also work with each participant to develop a plan that addresses any potential barriers that may hinder their success and connects them with other agencies and organizations which may provide additional resources and services. In addition, the Career Coaches maintain regular communication with each participant for one year upon program completion to offer continued mentorship, guidance, and assistance where needed.



"From my perspective, the welding program for the inmates has had a positive impact," Lanier Technical College welding instructor Jerry Owen said. "Many of these people have little in the way of 'hands on skills' thus far, and the welding program gives them a skill they would not have otherwise obtained. Also, a lot of them have had little positive success in their lives, and completion of the welding course and the certification gives them something to be proud of. Even if they choose not to have a career as a welder, I think the fact that they successfully learned a difficult skill may make it possible for them to try and learn another skill of some kind in the future."

~ ACE participant, Jamie Allums

"It is such a pleasure to see Robby happy for the first time in months. He feels needed and has the satisfaction of fulfilling that desire," said life-long friend of ACE program participant **Robby Dyche**. Robby graduated from the ACE program and has secured a job for the first time in two years.

Counselor **Christopher Wagoner** from Jackson County Correctional Institute reports participation in the ACE program has a positive impact in the attitudes, demeanor, and behavior of the participating inmates and in the way that they interact with other inmates and staff.



Welding Instructional Class at JCCI led by Lanier Technical College Instructor, Jerry Owen

The mission of ACTION, Inc. is **to help individuals and families break the cycle of poverty and achieve their greatest potential**. Holding true to the mission of the organization, the ACE program is designed to help reduce the recidivism rate by providing the opportunity for individuals to take advantage of a second chance to truly change their lives.

In addition to the partnership between the Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board, ACTION, Inc., Lanier Tech and JCCI, the success of this program would not be what it is without the partnerships with local employers. The ACE program partners with several local businesses which include Kubota Industrial Equipment in Jefferson, which currently employs three JCCI ACE program graduates.

Of the 23 program participants who have completed the welding training at JCCI, 20 participants (87%) are currently employed, with five working at Kubota and five with Universal Forest Products in Jefferson.

Charles Hadwin, an ACE program graduate, recently returned to Savannah upon completion of the program, where he obtained full-time employment at Dorsey Trailer as a trailer mechanic. Charles stated that training helped him in a number of ways. "When I came in for my interview,

I knew a little bit about what I was talking about. I did get my certificate, and they got a copy of it here at work. It's helped me big time. I'm very grateful for it (the training). It's made a world of difference. I wouldn't be able to get this job. Some of the welds here aren't exactly the same. Everything was set up in the perfect scenario in the classroom, but it helped me just enough to figure it out."

ACTION, Inc. also partners with Lanier Technical College and the Potter's House in Jefferson, Georgia to deliver a Manufacturing / Forklift / OSHA 10 / CPR Certificate program that has successfully graduated 33 participants.

For information on the ACTION, Inc. ACE program, contact **Laurie Rhodes (706) 546-8293**.

For information on other programs funded by the Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board through federal WIOA WorkSource Georgia funding, contact the NEGRC's Workforce Development Division at **(706) 369-5703**.

EXPLORING RURAL DOWNTOWN SUCCESSES

Staff from the Northeast Georgia, Three Rivers, Georgia Mountains, and Northwest Georgia Regional Commissions, along with DCA staff, explored rural downtown successes in the Northeast Georgia Region in February. The four Regional Commissions, along with the Atlanta Region, make up Georgia's Local Development Districts (part of the Appalachian Region that spans 13 states, from southern New York to northern Mississippi). Of particular interest were projects that incorporate a mixture of housing types in downtown areas, the use of public funds to stimulate private development, and unique ways of attracting visitors and residents to a downtown. Staff from the cities of Greensboro and Madison highlighted applicable projects and efforts in their communities, while sharing difficulties encountered and future needs and initiatives. Points of interest included the Genuine Georgia store, the Mary-Leila Lofts, Greensboro's historic cotton warehouse/Greensboro Electric Bottling Company building (now Oconee Brewing Company), and historic downtown Madison, including the Town Park.

Special thanks to the cities of Greensboro and Madison for the hospitality and sharing of advice and lessons learned.



Genuine Georgia owner, Cynthia Smith, describes the business' origins as a Greensboro Downtown Development Authority initiative and the store's ongoing mission to showcase Georgia artists.

Weaving past with present: through research and determination, preservationists in Madison tracked down the original manufacturing molds used to create the Cooke Memorial Fountain, originally erected in front of the Morgan County Courthouse in 1908. The recast (shown here) is located in Madison's Town Park. The last remaining piece of the original fountain, the "Grecian Maiden," is displayed in Heritage Hall.





Regional Commission staff from Appalachian Region Local Development Districts and Appalachian Regional Commission Program Manager, Annaka Woodruff, stand outside the Oconee Brewing Company in Greensboro, recipient of a 2018 Excellence in Preservation Award from the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation.

From left: Delmos Stone (NWGRC), Laurin Yoder (GMRC), Samantha Bishop (NWGRC), Annaka Woodruff (DCA), Eva Kennedy (NEGRC), and Paul Jarrell (TRRC)

GDOT PREPARES 2020 STATE RAIL PLAN

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) is preparing a State Rail Plan that includes both freight and passenger rail services. The Plan will include a comprehensive inventory of Georgia's rail networks and outline a vision for rail's future across the State.

As part of the plan's development, GDOT is seeking stakeholder input across the state that includes rail providers, local and regional governments, economic developers and the public at large. In January, GDOT conducted three stakeholder meetings with one held in Gainesville at GDOT's District 1 office. The meeting included breakout sessions where attendees considered freight, passenger, and rail safety issues and facility needs. The January 29, 2020 meeting was attended by several NEGRC governments including **Chairman John Daniell** (Oconee), **Commissioner Tim Denson** (Clarke), **Bob Thomas** (Elbert) and **Burke Walker**, NEGRC Executive Director. Stakeholder engagement will continue throughout the plan's development and through July 2020. An online survey is available to those interested in participating at www.dot.ga.gov/IS/Rail/StateRailPlan.

The plan is important to consider the future and create a vision for freight and passenger rail in Georgia. Georgia leads the southeast in active rail networks with over 4,600 miles of active lines. The State also is served by two Class I freight lines through CSX Transportation (CSX) and Norfolk Southern Railway (NS). These two railroad cover 3,288 route miles in Georgia. Passenger rail in the state is served by four Amtrak routes with stations in Atlanta and Savannah receiving 88% of ridership. In addition, a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was completed last year for passenger rail service from Atlanta to Charlotte, North Carolina with one potential route traveling through Northeast Georgia and Athens ("Greenfield Route").

A draft of the State Rail Plan 2020 is expected in Fall 2020 and available for comment. For additional information, contact GDOT Rail Program at RailProgram@dot.ga.gov.



GDOT Regional Rail Stakeholder Meeting and Introductory Remarks.



Participants identify freight opportunities



Small group discussions focused on specific rail topics

MARCH 25, 2020: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION TRAINING

Save the date for the next Historic Preservation Commission Training, co-sponsored by DNR's Historic Preservation Division, the Georgia Alliance of Preservation Commissions, and the City of Hogansville. Agenda and registration information forthcoming.

LOCAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Georgia Planning Act of 1989 requires all of the state's cities and counties to adopt and maintain comprehensive plans to be certified as Qualified Local Governments (QLG). The existing five-year update schedule ensures that local plans are current, useful, and, critically, implementable.

The Community Work Program, a mandatory element for every comprehensive plan in Georgia, includes a five-year list of projects called the Short-Term Work Program (STWP), accompanied by a Report of Accomplishments on the previous plan's STWP. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) requires work program elements to be both specific and implementable. Projects that incorporate facility construction, specific-area or -content plan development, or ordinance adoption are exactly in-line with the DCA's goals for local plan implementation.

The NEGRC's Planning & Government Services Division is available to provide direct assistance to cities and counties in Northeast Georgia for comprehensive-plan implementation. Our staff are experienced in developing:

- Plans for bicycling and walking, economic development, historic preservation, housing, natural resources, public transportation, recreation, tourism, and other areas
- Design guidelines for downtowns, historic districts, etc.
- Ordinances (and ordinance amendments)
- Grant and loan applications for public facility and infrastructure projects
- Maps and GIS-related products
- And other work upon request

When these projects are included in the local government's STWP, the NEGRC is often able to offset project fees with state planning funds, accompanied by local fees. Local governments initiate the process of obtaining NEGRC assistance through a project request letter. *We recommend discussing the project with PGS staff prior to submitting a formal request.*

For more information on local comprehensive plan development and implementation, please contact **John Devine**, AICP, NEGRC Principal Planner, at jdevine@negrc.org.

Plan Implementation Meetings

PGS staff are required to meet with local governments on a biennial basis to discuss local and regional plan implementation. Chief Elected Officials from Barrow, Clarke, Morgan, Newton, Oconee, and Walton Counties, as well as the municipalities within those counties, should expect to attend a Plan Implementation Meeting this spring.



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Update

REGIONAL MEETINGS
MARCH

17 th	8:30 a.m.	Workforce Development Board	Location TBD
17 th	10:00 a.m.	Aging Advisory Council & CARE-NET	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
19 th	12:00 p.m.	NEGRC Council Meeting	Athens Holiday Inn
20 th	3:30 p.m.	Firefly Trails	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
25 th	9:00 a.m.	UOBWA Meeting	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room