

## NEGRC PRESENTS ANNUAL AWARDS

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) at its scheduled June Council meeting awarded **Billy Pittard** the "Robert L. and Betty Williford Distinguished Northeast Georgian Award." The award is presented annually to an individual who supports regional cooperation and contributed to the advancement and quality-of-life of the region.

The award is named after the Willifords who themselves were strong advocates and supporters of the NEGRC and state and regional partnerships. They lived in Elberton, Georgia where Mr. Williford was a newspaper publisher and influential in the development of the Richard B. Russell Dam. Mrs. Williford, a graduate of Vanderbilt University and the University of Georgia, devoted most of her life to literacy and as an educator.

This year's recipient is the current Chairman of the Oglethorpe County Board of Commissioners, Chairman of the NEGRC Council, and former president of the Association of County Commissions of Georgia. Chairman Pittard was elected to public office in 2008 and has served two consecutive terms as Chairman. During his terms, he is noted for leading efforts to partner with adjacent county governments to offer cost-savings in needed road construction and resurfacing projects. His twenty years of work experience in the private sector contributed to his emphasis on fiscal policies and cost-saving measures.



*Billy Pittard [left] pictured with Burke Walker, NEGRC Executive Director, receiving the "2020 Distinguished Northeast Georgian Award."*

The award was made on behalf of the NEGRC Council and presented by its NEGRC Award's Committee Chairperson, **Amrey Harden** of Oconee County. In presenting the award, Harden said, "Chairman Pittard has done so much for not only his home County of Oglethorpe but for the entire State of Georgia and the Northeast Georgia Region. He is very deserving of this award. Our thanks to him for all that he has done over his many years of service."

NEGRC Chairperson Pittard's term will conclude at the end of the year after he leaves public office. **Bill Palmer** of Elbert County will succeed Pittard beginning on January 1, 2021.



*Blaine Williams receives the "2020 NEGRC Administrator of the Year" award.*

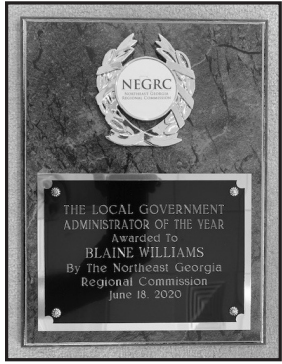
The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) also presented its "2020 NEGRC Local Government Administrator of the Year" award. This year's recipient is **Blaine Williams**, Manager of the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government.

This award is given to a city or county manager, clerk, or other person who embodies the spirit of public service, dedication, and professionalism. These persons serve as a model for management, leadership and integrity. The award honors an individual who gives exemplary service to a local government in the Northeast Georgia region.

In 2016, Williams came to Athens-Clarke County from Floyd County, Georgia where he served as both assistant-county and later county manager. He also was formally employed by the Middle Georgia Regional Commission and later as the City of Rome's Downtown Development Director. He is a graduate of Presbyterian College and holds a master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Georgia. He is currently the fourth county manager of the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County.

In making the selection, the NEGRC Awards Committee noted Williams's managerial leadership during the year and particularly during Covid-19.

The award was presented to Williams by **Burke Walker**, NEGRC Executive Director, via video-conference. ACC Mayor **Kelly Girtz**, a NEGRC Councilmember, attended the meeting and delivered Williams' the award "virtually" from City Hall.



The award was made on behalf of the NEGRC Council and as selected by the NEGRC Awards' Committee. This year's Awards' Committee included **Amrey Harden**, a NEGRC Council private-sector representative from Oconee County, **John Daniell**, Chairman of the Oconee County Board of Commissioners, and **Dodd Ferrelle**, Mayor of Winterville.

Congratulations to this year's award recipients!

## DNR FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administers a variety of competitive federal and state funding opportunities to build trails, protect habitat and water quality, and achieve other similar conservation-minded goals. Qualified local governments may apply for these resources to implement eligible projects. At a recent grants workshop, DNR staff reviewed the long-standing Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and the Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP), now entering its second year. Each of these programs provide substantial outside revenues for construction, maintenance, and land acquisition as described below:

### Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

Georgia's allocation of federal LWCF funding is available in awards of up to \$500,000 on a biennial basis, with the next cycle of applications open from September 1, 2020 through October 31, 2020; all projects are subject to a requirement of at least 50% matching funds (cash and/or in-kind) and the minimum award amount is \$25,000. Examples of competitive project types include: ballfield construction, fencing, and lighting; restroom additions and parking lot construction at existing parks; and splash pads.

### Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Program (GOSP)

The Georgia Outdoor Stewardship Act of 2018 (and a corresponding public vote in favor) provides for "an annual allocation of 75 percent of the revenue derived from the state sales and use tax with respect to the sale of outdoor recreation equipment to a trust fund to be used for the protection and preservation of conservation land." (HR 238) The application

period for the GOSP's second funding cycle is scheduled to open on August 1, 2020 and close on October 16, 2020. Local project sponsors are required to provide at least 25% of total project costs in matching funds or in-kind contributions, and a minimum of \$500,000/maximum of \$3,000,000 in state funding is available for individual projects. As with the LWCF, a wide variety of project types are eligible for GOSP funding: land and water trail development and maintenance, acquisition, invasive species removal, riparian zone restoration, reservoir enhancements, etc.

*Please note for each of these programs:*

- **Project guidelines and application requirements are substantial:** it is likely that only sponsors with pre-conceived, existing projects will be able to meet the deadline with all necessary materials. In these cases, NEGRC staff are able to assist with framing projects *for future years' application windows*.
- "Tracks" around ballfields or small pocket parks, sidewalks, and other similar undertakings are ineligible for GOSP funding and may not be competitive for LWCF awards.

Contact **John Devine**, AICP, NEGRC Principal Planner, at [jdevine@negrc.org](mailto:jdevine@negrc.org) or (706) 369-5650 for more information.

## JOHNSON RECEIVES NEGRC WORKFORCE AWARD

For fifteen years, the "**B.J. Smith Community Servant Award**" has been awarded to one or more deserving high school seniors enrolled in the WIOA High School Youth Program. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and related gathering restrictions, the annual award's dinner could not be held but the Workforce Development Board wants to recognize this year's recipient.

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 as a director of the board of the Madison County Chamber of Commerce 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 Development Board wanted to honor his commitment to community service as well as his memory. This commemoration was established in February 2006 with the first awards presented in June 2006. Including this year's winners, a total of 41 deserving youth have been awarded this scholarship in the Northeast Georgia region over the past 15 years.

The 2020 B.J. Smith Community Servant Award winner will receive a \$500 college scholarship. This year's winner is **Kameron Johnson**. He is a resident of **Greene County** and a 2020 graduate of Greene County High School. Kameron plans on pursuing his Diesel Mechanics Diploma at Athens Technical College. While in High School, Kameron volunteered at the Food Bank as his church, assisted with Trick or Treat Downtown Greensboro, and was active in the DECA and BETA clubs. He also was active in High School Athletics, participating in football and baseball. In addition to his school activities, he held a part time job after school while maintaining good grades.

This scholarship is presented to WIOA 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. This scholarship will be coordinated with other financial assistance the student may qualify for (i.e. Hope Grant/Scholarship).

For further information the WIOA In-school Youth Program, please contact **Rima Sullivan**, NEGRC/ WIOA Youth Program Coordinator, at 706-369-5703.



*Kameron Johnson (right) with Mrs. Targie Folds, High School Program Career Coach for ACTION, Inc.*

## NEGRC HUNGER COALITION ADDRESSING SENIORS' ACCESS TO FOOD

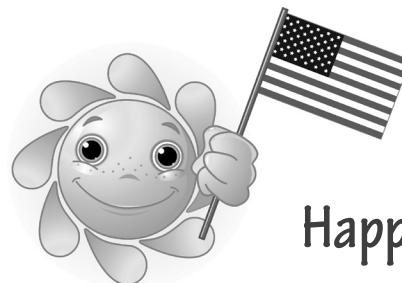
The Northeast Georgia Senior Hunger Coalition is part of the State of Georgia's efforts to address senior hunger. Each

Area Agency on Agency (AAA) has been charged with forming a coalition to address the hunger needs within its Planning Service Area. The focus areas for the coalitions are: Access to Food, Impact on Senior Hunger on Health, Food Waste and Reclamation, Today's Seniors, and Meeting the Needs of the Community.

The Northeast Georgia Senior Hunger Coalition has focused its efforts on Access to Food. The Coalition created NEGA Food Resource Guides and RAC cards with access to food locations within all 12 counties. The resources have been distributed among various locations throughout the 12 counties. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Coalition has provided 630 emergency meals to senior center clients with the greatest needs. The Coalition put a lot of efforts into Oglethorpe County as Oglethorpe is the largest county in the Planning Services Area and has the most "food deserts".

The Coalition provided \$100 Grocery Gift Cards to ten seniors who were referred as having the greatest need. This event took place on June 24, 2020. Participants met at the local Bells Grocery store and went in the store to purchase \$100 of groceries with the gift cards. Each participant was provided with NEGA Food Resource Guide and resources on healthy eating and recipes. One participant stated that the gift card was "right on time" to help meet the household needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Coalition hosted a Farmers' Market at Oglethorpe County Senior Center on June 26, 2020. The Coalition (partnered with the Garden Market) to provide 50-\$20 Vouchers to Oglethorpe County residents 60 years or older who needed access to fresh fruits and vegetables. These participants were also provided with NEGA Food Resource Guide and resources on healthy eating and recipes. Referrals were received from the Oglethorpe County Senior Center, local churches, and other community members and businesses in the community.



Have a Safe & Happy 4th of July!



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# Update

## REGIONAL MEETINGS JULY

3 <sup>rd</sup>	8:30 am – 5:00 p.m.	NEGRC Closed for holiday	
22 <sup>nd</sup>	9:00 a.m.	Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority	Location TBD

The NEGRC Council does not meet in July.

Please check the NEGRC website for the latest information concerning July's meetings or call the NEGRC at (706) 369-5650.