

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greetings Fellow Northeast Georgians and Friends of the Region,

I hope this finds you well and soaking in beautiful spring weather (along with the usual dose of pollen). I'm overjoyed to announce that renovations to the NEGRC headquarters are underway! Staff worked tirelessly through the end of 2025 and into January on what, at times, felt more like an archaeological excavation than an office cleanout. We thank the members of our Council, especially the Building Committee, for their support of the remodel project and look forward to welcoming everyone back to 305 Research Drive once complete.



*NEGRC Executive Director,  
Eva Kennedy*

Before launching into additional updates from this first quarter of 2026, I wanted to highlight some of last fiscal year's achievements from our most recent Annual Report:

- During FY25 (July 1 – June 30), the NEGRC provided a \$1 to \$21 (dues to program funds) ROI to our member governments.
- Director Michele Kelley and her team with our Area Agency on Aging (AAA) successfully delivered over \$9M to qualified residents and caregivers through programs and support services, including meal delivery, in-home and personal care, recreation and education programs, and transportation services.
- The Workforce Division (WorkSource Northeast Georgia), led by Director Amy Jones, delivered over \$3.3M on career guidance information, educator externships, and training scholarships. To give an idea of the impact of the scholarships, alone: 643 persons received training services and 209 different employers benefitted by hiring individuals who received WIOA-funded training.
- Last, but not least, Planning and Government Services (PGS) secured \$2M in state and federal funding for local government projects in the region. Director Mark Beatty and his staff also delivered nearly \$950K in programs and services through local, regional, and state-wide planning, economic and community development projects, historic preservation, and GIS.

You'll notice there are two new names on that list from last year: we are excited for the perspectives, experiences, and visions both Amy and Michele bring to their divisions. You'll find information on some of those new initiatives (and faces) in this edition.

During our temporary shift to a remote work environment, NEGRC staff have been especially excited to participate in conferences and other in-person activities. It is wonderful to see representatives from Northeast Georgia stepping into leadership roles and being recognized for their unwavering dedication to community.

We look forward to continuing the NEGRC's tradition of dedicated service to your community this year. Please let us know how we can help and happy reading!

Eva Kennedy  
Executive Director



## NEGRC WORKFORCE DIRECTOR AMY JONES CONTRIBUTES REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AT SETA SPRING CONFERENCE

The leadership behind the **Southeastern Employment & Training Association (SETA)** gathered during the 2026 Spring Conference to collaborate on strengthening workforce systems across the Southeast. Among those leaders was NEGRC Workforce Director **Amy Jones**, who serves on the SETA Board and represents Northeast Georgia in these important regional discussions.

The SETA Board brings together workforce development leaders from multiple states who are dedicated to improving employment and training systems, supporting workforce professionals, and expanding opportunities for the communities they serve. Through this collaboration, board members exchange ideas, share best practices, and help shape strategies that move the workforce system forward.

Serving on the board allows Amy to bring Northeast Georgia's perspective, innovations, and workforce initiatives into regional conversations while also bringing valuable insights and strategies back to the region. These connections help strengthen partnerships, inform program development, and ensure that the WorkSource Northeast Georgia system remains aligned with emerging trends and opportunities in workforce development.

Conferences like the SETA Spring Conference highlight the power of collaboration, bringing together leaders, stakeholders, and frontline professionals who are committed to building stronger pathways to employment and training.

Behind every conference session, partnership, and professional development opportunity is a team of dedicated leaders working year-round to advance the SETA mission and support workforce professionals across the Southeast. NEGRC is proud to contribute to this important work and to represent Northeast Georgia at the regional level.



SETA Board



*Pictured above is Vickie Scotland, NEGRC Business Services, standing in the opening session to ask a question. The NEGRC's Workforce Development staff are involved, inquisitive, and always seeking knowledge.*

## WELCOME TO THE NEGRC, SHADEKI CAIN

**Shadeki Cain** is a dedicated public servant and workforce development professional with a passion for helping individuals build pathways to stability, growth, and long-term success. She recently joined the NEGRC's Workforce Division as Youth Program Manager, where she leads youth workforce initiatives and work experience programs across the region, supporting young people as they explore careers, gain skills, and prepare for their futures.



Shadeki Cain

Shadeki's career in public service began in Arizona, where she worked in corrections and developed a strong foundation in leadership, accountability, and guidance. That early experience shaped her disciplined approach and deep commitment to serving others. After relocating to Georgia, she continued her work in corrections with the Georgia Department of Corrections, where she advanced in her career and served as a Sergeant, gaining valuable experience in leadership, operations, and working directly with diverse populations, including community-focused work at Phillips State Prison.

She later transitioned into a more community-centered role with the Georgia Department of Driver Services, where she strengthened her skills in customer service, communication, and public engagement. Shadeki continued her commitment to service at the Georgia Department of Labor, where she processed unemployment claims, served as a Service Specialist, and advanced into leadership as a Customer Service Supervisor. She most recently served as a Program Consultant, focusing on training, monitoring, and program operations, further expanding her expertise in workforce systems and compliance. Throughout her career, Shadeki has built a reputation for strong leadership, clear communication, and a genuine ability

to connect with people. Her experience across multiple state agencies gives her a well-rounded perspective on workforce development and the importance of creating systems that truly support individuals and families.

In her current role at the NEGRC, she works closely with community partners, educators, and employers to ensure youth programs are effective, supportive, and impactful. She is passionate about creating opportunities that empower young people and strengthen communities across Northeast Georgia. Shadeki is a proud wife, mother, and grandmother who cherishes time with her family and the simple joys of home life. She loves country living, backyard gatherings, festivals, and the beauty of the fall season. She especially enjoys celebrating the holidays and creating warm, meaningful moments with the people she loves.



NEGRC's Sydney Jessup



Denise Kenner-Virgil (our One Stop Operator), Marvin Nunnally, Economic Coordinator at Athens Tech

## WORKSOURCE NORTHEAST GEORGIA SUPPORTS INAUGURAL PRE-APPRENTICESHIP ELECTRICAL TRAINING PROGRAM

WorkSource Northeast Georgia, powered by the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission, had the opportunity to serve as guest presenters for the inaugural six-week *Master Pre-Apprenticeship Electrical Training* course sponsored by Athens Achieves in partnership with the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce, Blackrock Foundation via a TCSG grant, and WorkSource Northeast Georgia. The course was hosted by the Economic Development Department at Athens Technical College and facilitated under the guidance and leadership of **Marvin Nunnally**, Economic Development Coordinator.

The NEGRC team shared information about training opportunities available through WorkSource Northeast Georgia's WIOA Tuition Assistance Program, provided interview preparation guidance, conducted mock interviews, and discussed essential career readiness skills. Together, we are supporting these young adults to become skilled workers for our community.



NEGRC's Vicki Scotland with two students

## CITY OF COVINGTON AWARDED SS4A PLANNING AND DEMONSTRATION GRANT

In December, the "Covington SS4A Planning and Demonstration Grant" was recognized by the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant program in fiscal year 2025 for \$240,000 in federal funding. The SS4A grant program is designed to help communities improve their roadway safety by way of enhancing the conditions for all road users.

The Planning and Demonstration grant will assist in the effort to improve the City of Covington's road networks by creating a Safe Streets Action Plan addressing roadway safety. A component of this plan will involve developing a High-Injury Network (HIN) analysis to understand the severity of traffic induced injuries and fatalities among drivers and pedestrians. The output of the HIN aims to identify the highest injury networks within the incorporated city limits of Covington and inform planning decisions pertaining to roadway safety.

Additionally, the U.S. DOT's underserved communities tool designates most of Covington's census tracts as disadvantaged regarding transportation needs indicating the potential for improvement, which the Planning and Demonstration Grant will aim to assist. Moreover, Newton County received a Planning and Demonstration Grant in fiscal year 2023 to develop a new action plan. Among these efforts, a new Safety Action Plan for the City of Covington can close a gap in safety analyses to collectively leverage resources between the city and county.

Moving ahead, as the City of Covington serves as the contracting agency for the Planning and Demonstration Grant and contemplates implementation strategy, the NEGRC will remain available to assist the city with administration of the grant.

## 2026 DISTINGUISHED OLDER GEORGIAN

**Ms. Janice Knight** was selected as the 2026 Distinguished Older Georgian by the Georgia Council on Aging (GCOA) and was honored by the GCOA during Senior Day at the Capital on Wednesday, February 11, 2026. The Georgia Senate also passed a Resolution recognizing and commending Ms. Knight for her accomplishments, selfless acts, and longtime service to her community.



Ms. Janice Knight, of Morgan County, retired after 34 years of service to her community, having worked for five years at the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Office and 29 years at Adult Protective Services with the Georgia Department of Human Services' Division of Aging Services. She retired in 2003; she then served as a caregiver for her mother and husband. Despite the tragic loss of her son and her only child in 2008 in a motorcycle accident, Ms. Knight continues to serve her community by providing monetary donations to local charities, delivering meals to homebound seniors, providing books and a listening ear to comfort those having recently suffered a loss, and playing piano in her church and local nursing homes.

Ms. Knight serves on the Walton EMC Operation Round Up Board, the Morgan County Senior Center Advisory Council, the Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council, and in a Jail ministry, Single Again ministry, and Family Ties for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.

Ms. Knight can be found on any given day helping someone apply for benefits; advocating on their behalf with local agencies; delivering food and assistive devices to those in need; providing a safe space for caregivers to talk and participating in activities at the Morgan County Senior Center.

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission and everyone in the Area Agency on Aging Department would like to

congratulate and thank Ms. Knight for her tireless support to the caregivers, seniors, and the Northeast Georgia community.

## MARCH IS NATIONAL SENIOR NUTRITION MONTH

During National Senior Nutrition Month, the Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging is joining USAging and the Eldercare Locator, a national contact center for older adults and family caregivers, in a national consumer campaign focused on helping older Americans get the healthy, nutritious food they need to maintain their physical and cognitive health.

“Eat Well. Live Well. Age Well.” highlights the importance of nutrition in promoting healthy aging, the different kinds of meal programs and nutrition services available to older adults in their communities and how to find them.

Healthy food and good nutrition are essential for older adults to maintain health, independence and quality of life as they age. What we eat supports physical strength and brain health. Proper nutrition helps reduce the risk of chronic disease, supports immune function and maintains cognitive health.

Food nourishes more than the body—it also supports connection. Shared meals and nutrition programs bring people together, boosting mood and reducing isolation and loneliness.

The Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging (AAA) strives to make healthy eating accessible, appetizing and affordable by offering the following nutrition services:

- Meal Access**
  - Home-delivered meals
  - Congregate meals
  - Grocery delivery
- Nutrition Support**
  - Counseling, education, and risk screening
  - SNAP assistance
- Community Programs**
  - Farmers market program
  - Cooking programs
  - Chronic disease programs
- Caregiver & Other Support**
  - Caregiver training
  - Food pantry guidance

Contact the Eldercare Locator  
Voice, videophone or text: 1-800-677-1516  
Email: [elderlocator@usaaging.org](mailto:elderlocator@usaaging.org)  
Chat: [elderlocator.usaaging.org](https://elderlocator.usaaging.org)

If you need help arranging home-delivered meals, finding a meal in the community or need nutrition advice or support, the Northeast Georgia Area Agency on Aging can help! Call **706-583-2546** or visit <https://negrc.org/aging/> to learn more.

## 2026 BOUNDARY ANNEXATION SURVEY

The U.S. Census Bureau has officially launched the 2026 Boundary Annexation Survey (BAS). Each year, the BAS updates the official boundaries of cities, counties, and other local jurisdictions, which directly shapes how the US Census assigns population data to jurisdictions.

# Update

Having accurate boundaries does more than just influence maps; they guide regional planning efforts and determine how federal funding is distributed for essential services such as schools, transportation projects, public safety, and infrastructure improvements. When boundaries are outdated, communities risk missing out on resources they're entitled to.

Local governments should report any boundary changes effective on or before January 1st of 2026. You should respond to the survey even if your jurisdiction's boundary has not changed. You can respond to the BAS by visiting the US Census' website

and clicking "Respond to BAS." The deadline for responses is May 31, 2026.

If your jurisdiction has a change to report, a GIS file will be required. THE NEGRC will assist you in creating the GIS file you need at no cost. If you need assistance creating the GIS file or navigating the survey process, please contact **Phillip Jones, GIS Manager, [pjones@negrc.org](mailto:pjones@negrc.org)**.



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## REGIONAL MEETINGS

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### April

16 <sup>th</sup>	Noon	NEGRC Council	Trumps Catering
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### May

3-5 <sup>th</sup>		GARC Economic Development Conference	Lake Lanier Resort
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12 <sup>th</sup>	8:30 am	Workforce Development Board	Athens Career Center
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21 <sup>st</sup>	Noon	NEGRC Council	Trumps Catering
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27 <sup>th</sup>	10:00 am	UOBWA	Oconee County Administrative Building
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