

## STATE AGING DIRECTOR ADDRESSES NEGRC COUNCIL

**Abby Cox**, recently appointed as Director of the Division of Aging Services (DAS) at the Department of Human Services, was the keynote speaker at the August meeting of the NEGRC Council. Ms. Cox administers a statewide system of services for older adults, their families, and caregivers. She works closely with other aging organizations and agencies to effectively and efficiently respond to the needs of elderly Georgians. Ms. Cox received a Master of Social Work and Gerontology Certificate from the University of Georgia and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of the South. Prior to joining DAS, she was the Executive Director of the Georgia Gerontology Society, which is the largest state organization of multi-disciplinary professionals in the field of aging.

During her presentation, Ms. Cox indicated Georgia has the 11<sup>th</sup> fastest growing 60+ population and the 10<sup>th</sup> fastest growing 85+ population in the nation for the years 2010-2030. During that time frame, Georgia's 85+ population is expected to increase 65.8%. Ms. Cox also emphasized the importance of the Adult Protective Services (APS)/Public Guardianship Office (PGO). The APS investigates abuse, neglect, and exploitation, while PGO serves as guardian of last resort for adults whom the Probate Court has determined to lack sufficient capacity to make or communicate significant responsible decisions concerning their health and safety. She also discussed the Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC). An ADRC Counselor is often times the first "touch" an individual has with the aging network. She provided an overview of Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) which supports and assists older Georgians in staying in their homes and communities. Ms. Cox also touched on the Alzheimer's and Related Dementia State Plan before addressing questions and comments from Council members.

*Ms. Cox (right) with Michele Kelley*



## STATE REPRESENTATIVES ATTEND MEETING

**Susan Holmes** and **Chuck Williams**, members of the Georgia House of Representatives, attended the August NEGRC Council meeting and provided brief remarks concerning recent committee appointments. Representative Williams is chairing the House Study Committee on Historic Site Preservation. Members will assess existing state programs charged with aiding the cause of historic preservation, including costs and ways in which such programs might become more successful. Representative **Trey Rhodes** of our region is also a Committee member.



Representative Holmes is a member of the Joint Study Committee on High Speed Broadband Communications Access for All Georgians. The Committee will undertake a study of the conditions, needs, issues, and problems regarding broadband access, and recommend any action or legislation deemed necessary or appropriate.

Representatives Holmes and Williams welcome any comments or thoughts regarding the activities of these committees.

*Representatives Holmes and Williams with Executive Director Dove*

## NEGRC COUNCIL ELECTS PRIVATE SECTOR REPRESENTATIVES

The Bylaws of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission provide for Private Sector Representation from each of the twelve counties in the Northeast Georgia region. Nominees are chosen by the leadership of each of those counties and submitted to the Council for approval for a one-year term. Nominations were submitted by each of the twelve counties; and at the August 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, the following persons were appointed (or reappointed.)

**Tommy Jennings - Barrow County**  
**Lamar Houston - Clarke County**  
**Bill Palmer - Elbert County**  
**Valerie Duvall - Greene County**

**Jim Shaw - Jackson County**  
**David Dyer - Jasper County**  
**Roy Gandy - Madison County**  
**David Bentley - Morgan County**

**Frank Turner - Newton County**  
**Amrey Harden - Oconee County**  
**Jesse Johnson - Oglethorpe County**  
**Joyce Chambers - Walton County**



## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD ELECTS OFFICERS

The Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board elected new officers at its meeting on August 9th. **Joe Vogt**, Solvay Plant Manager serving as the Barrow County Private Sector Representative, was elected as Chair; **Chris Kubas**, Elberton Granite Association Executive Vice-President serving as the Elbert County Private Sector Representative, was elected as Vice-Chair; and **Reginald Woods**, Senior Human Resources Manager of UGA Physical Facilities representing Education, was elected to serve as the Secretary/Treasurer.

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) was replaced by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), effective July 1, 2015. As a part of this transition, the Workforce Investment Board became the Workforce Development Board, and the Northeast Georgia Workforce Development Board was recently certified as meeting WIOA Board requirements. The election of officers completed that process.

For information on the WIOA services provided in the Northeast Georgia region, please contact the NEGRC Workforce Development Division at (706) 369-5703.

### REMINDER

The next meeting of the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission Council will be held on **Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup> at Noon at the Athens Holiday Inn**. Information on the meeting will be forthcoming.

## A CITY COMES TOGETHER TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

On August 5<sup>th</sup>, the City of Social Circle held its first Back to School Bash. The highlight of the block party style event was over \$4000 in school supplies given away to any Social Circle student who showed up. The backpacks were donated by the A.P. Henderson Foundation, who gave away school supplies to 300 students last year. The school supplies and monetary donations to purchase school supplies and backpacks came from citizens, local businesses, industries and churches. Together the city was able to provide school supplies to allow over 500 students to start school with the supplies on their teacher's lists. Volunteers from local churches, the local Rotary Club, Social Circle Main Street, and the City of Social Circle, including the Mayor and Council Members, handed out supplies, while the Lions Club did vision screenings and volunteers gave haircuts and painted fingernails.

The event was held on National Night Out in conjunction with the Social Circle Police Department. The Police and Fire Departments cooked and gave away hotdogs. A local restaurant, the Blue Willow Inn, provided free drinks. The Police Department set up a dunking booth that featured police officers and the City Manager. The Fire Department set up a junior firefighter obstacle course that included carrying folded hoses, hammering boards and ended with spraying water from a firehose at a target. Other activities included MADD drunk goggles, a DJ and face painting.

The City came together in a way it has not before to help the students of Social Circle get the school year started off right. Industries held competitions among employees to see who could collect the most supplies. One neighborhood had a competition between even and odd

sides of the streets. An employee at a local store used her own money to purchase backpacks and challenged her customers to fill them both. Several local businesses offered discounts to their customers who donated school supplies to help fill their collection boxes. The police officers donated money from their own pockets as a way to thank the citizens for their support during the recent events.

Social Circle, a city of just under 5000 people, demonstrated how a worthy goal, community spirit, energetic volunteers, and a "can do" attitude can bring together every segment of a community in a way that strengthens the bond between neighbors and builds goodwill and fellowship among the citizens and those that serve them.



*Mayor Dally and Council handing out boxes*

## CELEBRATING THE OLDER AMERICANS ACT

President **Lyndon B. Johnson** signed the Older Americans Act (OAA) into law in 1965. The act was created to clarify our nation's sense of responsibility toward the well-being of all older citizens and to expand our opportunities for enriching the lives of all of the citizens in the country. In the decades since, the OAA has indeed enriched the lives of many as the foundation for a system of services and supports that helps millions of older adults continue to work, play and volunteer in their communities. The OAA underpins a promise to preserve the right to live independently, with dignity, making everyday decisions according to our individual preferences and goals across our lifespan.

In April of this year, Congress passed and the President signed a reauthorization of the OAA, reaffirming our nation's commitment to the health and well-being of older adults. This was the latest of many milestones for the law over the last 51 years.

### Some of the earlier milestones were as follows:

- *In 1972, the Congregate Meals Nutrition Program (meals in senior centers) was enacted.*
- *In 1978, the Home Delivered Nutrition Program (meals for homebound seniors) was enacted.*
- *In 1987, Disease Prevention, Health Promotion and Elder Abuse Prevention Activities were enacted.*
- *In 2000, the National Family Caregiver Support Program was enacted.*

The OAA's impact on older adults today is great. The Aging Network serves an average of 11 million people per year. Over the last five years the following services were provided around the United States.



- **Over 130 million rides to doctors' offices, grocery stores, and other essential places were provided in communities.**
- **More than 1 billion meals were served in the communities.**
- **Over 60 million hours of homemaker services were provided in older adults homes.**
- **Nearly 20 million hours of case management services were provided to older adults.**
- **Over 30 million hours of respite care were provided to help reduce caregiver stress.**
- **Almost 248 million hours of community services were provided by participants in the Senior Community Employment Program.**
- **More than 1.5 million individual consultations to Long Term Care residents and their families were provided by Long-Term Care Ombudsman Staff.**

To review the entire Older Americans Act Reauthorization of 2016, visit <http://www.acl.gov/NewsRoom/NewsInfo/2016/20160419.aspx>.

## FIREFLY TRAIL PLANNING AND PROGRESS

In the early 1830s, prominent Athens businessmen **James Camak, William Dearing**, and others required exclusively sourced heavy machinery from Great Britain to operate their textile mill. When the mule-driven wagons carrying a shipment of this equipment became stuck along the muddy route from Augusta to Athens (via Savannah's port), Camak and his partners decided to charter a railroad that would not be susceptible to the delays and other disadvantages of wagon travel. Work commenced on the line from Augusta to Union Point and Greensboro, with the Athens Branch connecting Athens to Union Point in 1841.

Having served the communities it connected as a major economic and transportation resource for nearly a century and a half, the Athens Branch was abandoned in 1984. For years, with the exception of limited demolition of former railroad structures and new private construction, the corridor mostly sat undisturbed.

In November 2004, Athens-Clarke County voters approved the SPLOST 2005 referendum that included "the establishment of an improved surface trail for non-motorized vehicles along the historic Georgia Railroad corridor between East Broad Street and Old Winterville Road" – approximately one mile. In 2007, a group of local elected officials, staff, and volunteers from three counties began meeting to discuss extending the rails-to-trails conversion beyond Athens for the full 39 miles of the historic Athens Branch. Eventually, the name "Firefly Trail" was chosen, a board of directors formed, bylaws were passed, and the organization incorporated and gained 501(c)(3) nonprofit status from the IRS.

Funded by transportation planning contracts through the Georgia Department of Transportation, the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) provides technical assistance and other services in support of the local governments wishing to develop the trail in their communities. Alongside Firefly Trail, Inc. (FTI), NEGRC staff has completed technical analyses of the corridor, worked with cities and counties to implement local plans, and envisioned the trail as a potentially connective regional undertaking.

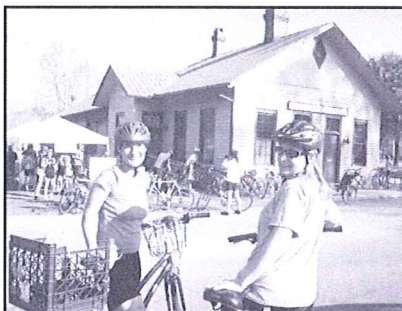
In Oglethorpe County, the City of Maxeys may become the first community to complete construction on a section of the trail. With an award of federal grant funding administered by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources and matching contributions from varied sources, Maxeys plans to begin construction soon on over a mile of a 10'-14'-wide asphalt-surface path for walking, bicycling, jogging, inline skating, and other use. Thanks to a commitment from the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association's Athens chapter, that multi-use path will feature a natural-surface (dirt) trail for mountain biking, hiking, and equestrian use with

the possibility of connecting Athens-Clarke County's Trail Creek Park bike trails to Union Point's extensive off-road trail systems at Hart Farms and Corry House. Working closely with FTI, NEGRC has provided grant-writing, planning, design, and geographic analysis services to the City of Maxeys.

If Maxeys becomes the second community to build a Firefly Trail segment, it will surely be because of Athens-Clarke County's (ACC) substantial efforts to advance the project. Funding from SPLOST, congressional earmarks, and other sources is assembled; property is acquired; plans and designs are approved; and a contractor has been recommended for construction of the corridor's first (or last, depending on perspective) mile. Adjacent to the site of the former Jittery Joe's Roaster on East Broad Street (now the under-construction "Mark" development), an existing trailhead indicates the starting point for this segment, extending through Dudley Park to Old Winterville Road. The project will include a near-500'-long elevated crossing of the North Oconee River, a direct connection to the existing North Oconee River Greenway path, and a railroad-grade bridge over Peter Street, but not an aerial crossing of Trail Creek via the historic wooden "Murmur" trestle. Conceptual plans (and limited funding) exist to construct the remaining seven miles of the Firefly Trail within Clarke County, including the Winterville city limits and a new or reconstructed trestle over Trail Creek.

In Winterville, NEGRC staff has worked closely with Mayor Ferrelle, Winterville Elementary School personnel, Athens-Clarke County staff, and others to develop a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan. This work relies heavily on realizing the potential connectivity of the Firefly Trail as the spine of a communitywide network of paths and sidewalks. With Firefly and SRTS as two centerpieces of the City's complete streets philosophy, improvements in safety, aesthetics, and placemaking are seen as catalysts for private investment, tourism, increased tax revenues, and overall community well-being. The city is pairing its trails and complete streets efforts with a retooling of its development regulations, focusing on commercial district design standards.

NEGRC staff and FTI board members are glad to discuss planning and development projects, deliver informative presentations, and meet with local officials in other Firefly Trail communities. The corridor extends from Athens and Winterville through Oglethorpe County, Arnoldsville, Crawford, and Maxeys before entering Greene County and proceeding through Woodville, with its terminus in Union Point. Please contact Senior Planner **John Devine**, AICP, at [jdevine@negrc.org](mailto:jdevine@negrc.org) for more information.



▲ Bikers in Winterville



Bikers on Oconee River Greenway ►



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*Update*

**REGIONAL MEETINGS**  
**SEPTEMBER**

13	8:30 a.m.	Workforce Development Board	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
14	12:30 p.m.	NEGA Solid Waste Authority	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
15	Noon	NEGRC Council	Athens Holiday Inn
15	3:30 p.m.	Rails to Trail Advocacy Group	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
16	10:00 a.m.	Senior Center Directors	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
20	1:00 p.m.	NEGA Emergency Medical Services	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room
28	9:30 a.m.	Upper Oconee Basin Water Authority	E.H. Culpepper Conference Room



*Sincerely & Respectfully,*