

# COGNIZANCE

November The official newsletter of the Lower Savannah Council of Governments

2020

Working together to advance our region.

Aiken | Allendale | Bamberg | Barnwell | Calhoun | Orangeburg

## Update from the Executive Director

Greetings and happy autumn,

I first want to thank the Board, the six counties of the Lower Savannah region, our municipalities and clients for their continued support of the organization during the pandemic. The LSCOG continues to review the COVID numbers in the region and shares a weekly update with the counties and our partners.



The COG staff is working 100% from our office but we still are not allowing visitors into the building. We continue to work on our regular programs – i.e., we received three CDBG projects in the recent fall funding round – Williston, Monetta and Norway. In addition, we are administering additional CARES ACT funds. Since April, our Aging division received over \$1.8m to assist seniors; the Transit services department received over \$1.5m in FTA funds (and regional transit agencies received \$400,000 for new buses); the Planning and Economic Development division received \$400,000 for a 2-year grant for regional resiliency and recently we were awarded \$1.2m in CDBG CARES Act funds through the South Carolina Department of Commerce. The responsible administration of these federal and state funds is a primary focus of the organization.

As we move into the holiday season, the Board and staff of the Lower Savannah Council of Governments wishes everyone a safe and peaceful time.

Happy holidays,

Bill Molnar

### Upcoming Committee Events

Visit [www.lscog.org/events](http://www.lscog.org/events) for details.

**Nov. 10** | Tourism Advisory Committee meeting - *Virtual*

**Nov. 12** | LSCOG Executive Committee – *Blackville*

**Dec. 1** | Workforce Development Board Meeting–*TBD*

**Dec. TBD** | Legislative Breakfast–*TBD*

**Dec. 10** | LSCOG Annual Meeting - *Aiken*

### MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT

Medicare Open Enrollment is here. October 15<sup>th</sup> through December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 is your opportunity to review your current Medicare Part D or Medicare Advantage Plan. Any changes made during this time period will be effective January 1, 2021. Please call (803) 508-7053 for assistance or you may also visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov).

# Human Services

## Long Term Care Ombudsmen return to In-Person Visits

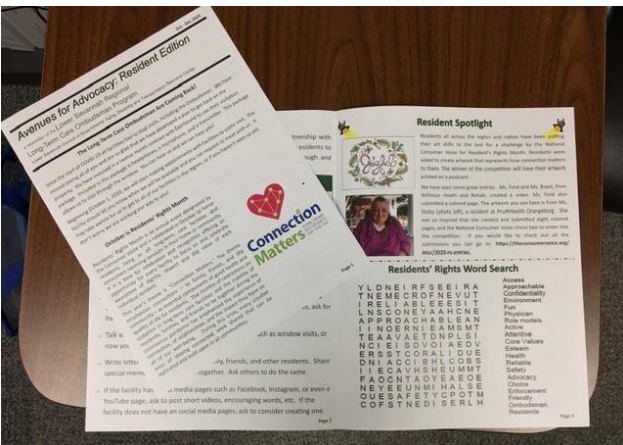
In accordance with the guidelines for resuming in-person visits by Long-Term Care Ombudsmen, Susan Garen, Regional LTC Ombudsman, and Alanna Berrie, Ombudsman Specialist, began making visits with residents on October 9, 2020. Visits are conducted either outside or via a closed window utilizing communication devices provided by the facility or the Eversound® Visitation System (see photo) being leased by Lower Savannah. Because visits require planning and coordination with staff, visits are scheduled in advance. Successful outdoor visits have been made in various homes in Aiken, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun and Orangeburg Counties. For more information, contact Susan Garen at 803-508-7056



LSCOG Ombudsman Alanna Berrie with Eversound at The Hills

## Long Term Care Ombudsmen Celebrate National Residents' Rights Month

Each year, October is declared National Residents' Rights month. The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program exists to advocate for the rights of residents in long-term care facilities that are set forth in both state and federal laws. Alanna Berrie, Ombudsman Specialist, created a special four-page Resident Edition of the LTCOP quarterly newsletter, *Avenues for Advocacy*, that highlighted this year's theme, Connection Matters! The newsletter reminds residents about their rights, is a source of encouragement during this difficult year and provides the contact information to the Ombudsman Program Staff. Using CARES Act funds, newsletters were printed and distributed to every licensed facility in the region for each



Picture of Resident Edition Newsletter

resident to receive a copy. In addition, Alanna created weekly Facebook posts that appeared on the Lower Savannah COG Facebook page each Monday in October to reach family members and friends of long-term care residents. For more information, contact Alanna Berrie at 803-508-7098.

## Additional Resources

The **SRSRA Retiree Resource Center** sponsored by the Savannah River Site Retiree Association is continuing to assist SRS retirees and their families with Medicare enrollments, SRS stipend benefits, and SRS claims for reimbursement with WageWorks, now called Health Equity. You can call the Retiree Resource Center's telephone message line and leave a message at **803.508.7065**, email them at [SRSRA@LSCOG.org](mailto:SRSRA@LSCOG.org) or drop claims materials in the document collection box in front of the LSCOG building.



### Medication Assistance Program

**The Medication Assistance Program (MAP)** is operating by phone two days per week with concentration on the current client's refills for medications. They can be reached at 803-508-7066.



## Planning, Community and Economic Development (PCED)

Second Baptist Community Development Corporation (SBCDC) is one of the newest Community Housing Development Corporation (CHDOs) members to Lower Savannah Regional Housing Consortium (LSRHC). SBCDC, located in Aiken, SC, provides affordable housing in the Aiken and surrounding communities. Currently, SBCDC has its first project with LSRHC, titled "Abbeville" which is located on the western side of Abbeville



Avenue NW in Aiken, situated between Florence and Greenville

Streets. This development consists of four vacant property lots that will be used to build affordable housing in an established neighborhood, walkable to downtown Aiken. This project will help address the lack of affordable housing in this community. The Abbeville project broke ground in early October. The timeline for completion will be 6 to 8 months.

## Workforce Development and SC Works Centers

### ORANGEBURG SCWORKS DRIVE-THRU JOB FAIR

On September 22, 2020, the LSCOG Workforce Development Division along with several SC Works partner agencies, hosted the 2nd drive-thru job fair event for the Lower Savannah Region. The drive thru concept was instituted to support workforce development activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. The job fair was held at the Orangeburg SC Works Center from 9:00am until 2:00pm and offered numerous job opportunities in the



manufacturing, construction, healthcare, and hospitality sectors. With 29 employers participating in the event and over 400 job seekers attending, the event proved to be even more successful than we could have hoped! The ingenuity and dedication were on full display in keeping with the Lower Savannah Region's goal of bringing job seekers and employers together (even in a non-conventional way).





Lessie Price- incoming Chairperson, Darainey Hudson – outgoing Chairperson, André Anderson, Workforce Development Administrator, LSCOG

## LSCOG Workforce Development Board Recognition

Darainey Hudson, Low Country Healthcare System’s Chief Compliance Officer, was recently presented with an award for service as the Chairperson of the Workforce Development Board of Directors, which serves under the Lower Savannah Council of Governments (LSCOG) and oversees workforce development activities across our 6 counties. She was honored for her outstanding leadership during the PY2018 and PY2019 terms.

## Tourism

### Thoroughbred Country Hosts Liz Mays

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, Thoroughbred Country hosted Liz Mays of [Eat Move Make](#). “All in all, “it was an incredible trip to **#thoroughbredcountrysc** and I’d recommend it to anyone, especially if you’ve been afraid to venture anywhere since March (like me). Excellent social distancing and mask protocols. It’s a fabulous region in South Carolina!” she said in her post on Facebook. Read more about her visit: <https://eatmovemake.com/tag/thoroughbred-country/>

### #TravelConfidently

We want you to feel safe whether you are traveling locally or from afar. Our new Healthy Travel Information page provides a variety of resources to help you travel confidently. Check it out: <https://www.tbredcountry.org/healthy-travel-information>



Travel writer visits the Little Red Barn Pottery & Art Gallery in Barnwell.



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