

Working together to advance our region.

Aiken | Allendale | Bamberg | Barnwell | Calhoun | Orangeburg

Update from the Executive Director

Dear partners and friends,

2020 was a year we will never forget (no matter how hard we might try). The pandemic, economic downturn, issues of social justice and a presidential election bombarded us daily. Our collective anxiety level spiked with each new day. That said, 2020 also gave us a chance to slow down and to reflect (and act) upon those things important to us. For many, 2020 was a year of gratitude. We developed a greater appreciate for family, our homes and life itself. Many of us renewed or started a new hobby, read those books we had been meaning to start, landscaped the back yard, or binge watched on Netflix.

Here at the COG we also took the time to reflect on how we serve our communities and how we operate in the virtual world. The need for rural broadband was no longer a wish but an immediate need for our children, healthcare, businesses and institutions. We witnessed the fragility of the service sector and food insecurity within our senior population. The COG responded by providing weekly regional COVID case data and worked with our communities and partners to attain and disseminate CARES Act funds. Funding programs included: senior meals; additional funding for urban and rural transit; a youth job pilot program; extending broadband access into rural and low- and moderate-income communities; and developing a resiliency plan to improve our adaptability to hazards and changing conditions such as the Coronavirus.

The pandemic altered the ways we all do business. In 2020 COG staff worked virtually with our federal, state and local counterparts. We renewed old and developed new partnerships. Staff updated and enhanced our technologies, developed new processes and skills. We strived to find balance in our home and work lives. Our Board met virtually each month and now we are all Zoom experts! And we continued to listen to our communities and found new ways to serve them through a difficult year. For that, we are all truly grateful!

For 2021 we look forward to life without masks, the comradery of training conferences and the celebration of birthdays and other events. Our goal is to incorporate the new with the old in order to make the organization and the region stronger and more resilient. Together we can bridge any issue and we can all prosper.

Best wishes for 2021,

Bill Molnar

Upcoming Committee Events

Visit www.lscog.org/events for details.

- Jan. 14** | LSCOG Executive Committee – Virtual
- Jan. 20** | Transportation TAC Meeting - Virtual
- Jan. 20** | TRC for the LSRHC
- Feb. 2** | Workforce Development Board Meeting – Virtual
- Feb. 9** | T.C. Tourism Advisory Committee – Virtual
- Feb. 16** | Powerful Tools for Caregivers class – Virtual
- Feb. 18** | Lower Savannah Regional Aging Advisory Committee – Virtual
- Feb. 23** | Powerful Tools for Caregivers class – Virtual
- Feb. 11** | LSCOG Full Board Meeting – Virtual

Human Services

Operation Spread the Joy

On December 17, 2020, the residents of Blackville Health and Rehabilitation Center were the recipients of gifts made by inmates of the Allendale Correctional Institution in the second round of giving under the program, Operation Spread the Joy. The Lower Savannah Regional LTC Ombudsman Program staff nominated the facility. Residents received a variety of gifts including tote bags, face coverings, lap blankets, stuffed animals, and paintings all created by the inmates who through their completion in various programs earn the opportunity to take part in the art or practical skills classes.



Photo: Nadean Macean, Jessica Hutto, Coach Salmond, Preston Ellison and Alanna Berrie.

Operation Spread the Joy Program of 2020 is a partnership of SC Department on Aging and SC Department of Corrections where inmates across the state make gifts for residents of long-term care facilities. Blackville Health and Rehabilitation Staff receiving the gifts on behalf of the residents were Jessica Hutto and Nadean Macean. Representatives from Allendale Correctional Institution presenting the gifts were Mr. Preston Ellison, Program Coordinator, and Coach Salmond. Susan Garen, Regional LTC Ombudsman and Alanna Berrie, Ombudsman Specialist, were present at the facility for the presentation.

Upcoming Event Spotlight

Powerful Tools for Caregivers (PTC) classes help caregivers take better care of themselves while caring for a friend or relative. This six-week class series gives the caregiver the confidence and support to better care for their loved one – and themselves. Lower Savannah Council of Governments will be hosting a class via Zoom (a video conferencing platform) each Tuesday from Feb. 16 through Mar. 30. The classes will be from 2-3:30 p.m. The classes will be led by Alanna Berrie, Ombudsman Specialist and Hannah Williams, Family Caregiver Advocate. Both are certified PTC class leaders. The last day to register for the class is Feb. 15. **Space is limited.** If you would like more information or would like to sign up for the class, you can call Alanna Berrie at 803-508-7098.

Powerful Tools
FOR Caregivers

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 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.

Workforce Development and SC Works Centers

It's no surprise that the Lower Savannah Council of Governments (LSCOG) Workforce Development has discovered a new paradigm in attracting job seekers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lower Savannah Region is excited to announce the expansion of the Drive-Thru Job Fair series. On November 5, 2020, the LSCOG Workforce Development Team and several SC Works partner agencies hosted the inaugural drive thru job fair for the Allendale and Barnwell Areas. The Job Fair was held at the Barnwell SC Works Center from 9:00 am until 2:00 pm with various employment opportunities in the industry of manufacturing, construction, healthcare, and hospitality. Members of the Lower Savannah Business Services Team coordinated over 30 participating employers, and this experience led to the attendance of over 250 job seekers. Although untraditional, Lower Savannah has been optimistic and creative in connecting employers and job seekers. The drive-thru events continue to positively impact the Lower Savannah

Region. We are also thrilled to see an increase in sponsorship support from the various employers.



Pictured left to right: Bartel Boone, Eckerd Youth Alternatives, Inc.; Sally Sharpe, LSCOG; Lonnie Hosey, SC House of Representatives; Andre Anderson, LSCOG; Wendy Mahuron, LSCOG

Planning, Community and Economic Development (PCED)

Lower Savannah Council of Governments assisted the City of Denmark with a fall 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application that was recently awarded by the SC Department of Commerce. The City will receive \$366,300 in CDBG funds to obtain a new rescue pumper fire truck for its municipal fire department. The truck will help serve the entirety of the Denmark Fire Department's fire zone that encompasses approximately 80 square miles of northwestern Bamberg County.

Additionally, planning for 2021 spring CDBG infrastructure applications is already underway with application requests due by mid-March. CDBG spring applications can assist units of government with water, sewer, road, and drainage infrastructure improvements. The grant minimum is \$50,000 dollars, and the grant maximum is \$750,000 dollar (with waivers possible for up to \$1 million dollars in funding). Units of local government are responsible for a 10 percent match for any potential project.

Lastly, community needs assessments for all six counties will be held in February and March 2021. Community needs assessments will be virtual using a conference call system due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Dates will be forthcoming and advertised in each county. Please contact Nathaniel Foutch (nfoutch@lscog.org) for further information regarding either CDBG project funding or the 2021 community needs assessments.

Tourism

Be sure to stay updated on the region's happenings as Thoroughbred Country is active on social media.

Like us on Facebook – [Thoroughbred Country South Carolina](#)

Follow us on Instagram – [@tbredcountrysc](#)

Subscribe to our YouTube – [TbredCountrySC](#)

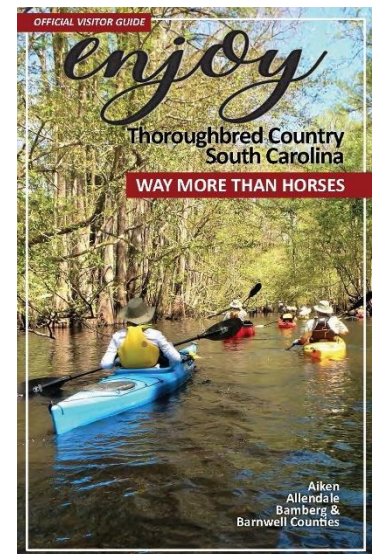
Also, remember, our website calendar is one of the best sources for events. If you have an upcoming 2021 event which you would like listed, please submit it online.

Note, the submit button is at the bottom of the calendar.

View our calendar of events – www.TBredCountry.org/Calendar

Thoroughbred Country Advertising

Watch for the 2021 Thoroughbred Country ads in these favorite magazines: AAA Go, AAA Living, American Road, Garden & Gun and Southern Living.



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