

COGNIZANCE

The official newsletter of the Lower Savannah Council of Governments

May 2022

Working together to advance our region

Aiken | Allendale | Bamberg | Barnwell | Calhoun | Orangeburg

Update from the Executive Director

Happy Spring 2022,

After two years of the Coronavirus pandemic, I'm glad to see that everyone is getting out and enjoying the events and activities that the Lower Savannah Region has to offer. Farmers' markets are bustling, live music can be found throughout the region from Fairfax to North Augusta, and our regional state parks and historic sites have scheduled upcoming history and nature programs. Hunting and fishing has been plentiful and golfers are enjoying the links.

Last month, the Rose Festival in Orangeburg was a resounding success after a two-year hiatus and Calhoun County brought back a wonderful family event, the Purple Martin Festival and parade. Along the Edisto River, canoe and kayak trips started up in Bamberg County; and in Barnwell County, the Fish Rodeo took place for outdoors' enthusiasts. In Aiken, the equestrian season and the Triple Crown were well attended, families are flocking to Eudora Wildlife Safari Park in Salley, and friends are enjoying SRP Park and a night out with the Green Jackets. For others, local community theatres are back staging productions and the Monetta Drive-in (the Big MO) opened for the season.

Tourism is a vital part of our economy and adds to our quality of life. The Council is proud to have the Thoroughbred Country Regional Tourism Office (promotes tourism in Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, and Barnwell counties) as part of our cadre of programs. More information on the Thoroughbred Country Tourism and activities in the region can be found at www.tbredcountry.org. Calhoun and Orangeburg counties are part of the Santee Cooper Country Tourism Office and can be found at www.santeecoopercountry.org. There's lots to do in our region of South Carolina and I hope that you and your families are enjoying the place we call home.

Best wishes,
Bill

Upcoming Committee Events

Visit www.lscog.org/events for details.

- May 12** | WDB Youth Committee Meeting
- May 12** | LSCOG Executive Committee Meeting
- May 17** | Thoroughbred Country Advisory Committee Meeting
- May 30** | **Memorial Day**
- May 31** | WDB Disability Committee Meeting
- June 7** | Workforce Development Board Meeting
- June 9** | LSCOG Board of Directors' Meeting
- July 4** | **Independence Day**
- July 14** | WDB Youth Committee Meeting
- July 20** | Transportation TAC Committee Meeting
- July 26** | WDB SC Works Committee Meeting

Administration



**SCDEW Executive
Director Dan Ellzey**

The LSCOG Board of Directors was delighted to have two speakers at our February Board Meeting, Mr. Dan Ellzey (SCDEW Executive Director) and Dr. Walt Tobin (President of Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College).

Mr. Ellzey informed the LSCOG Board of current unemployment conditions and labor market data. The Workforce Reemployment Assistance Programming (WRAP) is the most recent program directed at early intervention and necessary training to obtain a better job or change professions, including a \$500 incentive for those that utilize this new program.

Dr. Tobin spoke to the board about workforce opportunities in our region. Partnerships with local high schools provide opportunities for students to earn some college credit. Some students can earn their Associate's degree before graduating high school. New education programs have been established for HVAC repair, pharmacy technician, and advanced EMT programs. A publication comes out twice a year from O-C Tech that highlights programs and incentives.



**Dr. Walt Tobin, President
of Orangeburg-Calhoun
Technical College**

Human Services

Senior day is Thursday, May 12, 2022. Representatives of the SC Department on Aging are visiting the Calhoun County Council on Aging to celebrate seniors where they are. Karen Bedgood, Integrated Programs Specialist, will be representing the ADTRC.

The ADTRC Staff will be participating in the upcoming Agency Fair/Health Fair outreach events:

- May 13, 2022 - Aiken Barnwell Mental Health Center Open House and Agency Fair
1135 Gregg Hwy, Aiken 29801 from 3:00-4:30 pm
- May 20, 2022 – Aiken Barnwell Mental Health Center Open House and Agency Fair
916 Reynolds Rd, Barnwell 29812 from 2:30-4:00 pm
- May 21, 2022 – Senior Commission
Lessie B. Price Senior and Youth Center
841 Edgefield Avenue NW, Aiken 29801 from 8:00 am-12:00 pm
- May 25, 2022 – Allendale Community Health Fair
USC Salkehatchie Student Atrium
465 James Brandt Boulevard, Allendale 29810 from 7:00-11:00 am

Aiken-Barnwell Mental Health Center Presents

COMMUNITY RESOURCE FAIRS

Back to Basics: Time to Reset and
Spring Forward into Mental Wellness

Friday, May 13, 2022 from 3-4:30 p.m.
at 1135 Gregg Hwy in Aiken

OR

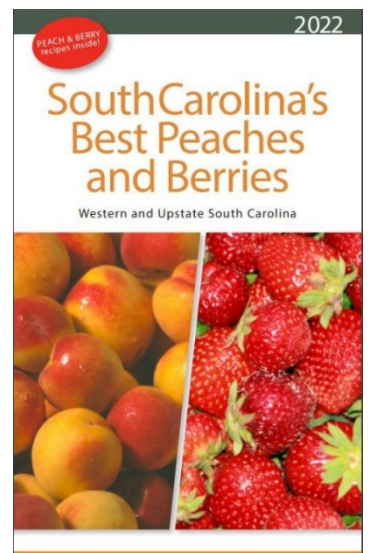
Friday, May 20, 2022 from 2:30 to 4 p.m.
at Polly Best Center, 916 Reynolds Rd in Barnwell

Tourism

2022 SC Peaches & Berries Guide

The 2022 South Carolina's Best Peaches & Berries digital guide is now available. From U-Pick to Farmers Markets, discover what's in season, where to find it and even some tasty recipes.

www.TBredCountry.org/Resources/3545.pdf



Hospitality Day at the State House

It was great to see so many legislators turn out for the annual Hospitality Day at the State House. Each April, the hospitality industry of South Carolina hosts the General Assembly for their most unique social event of the year. We appreciate their support of tourism in the Thoroughbred Country region and the state of South Carolina. Pictured is Representative Lonnie Hosey, SC General Assembly District 91; Mary Ann Keisler, Gwen Winkler, and Theresa Hipps (Thoroughbred Country staff).



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.

Medicare Part D Open Enrollment 2022

From October 15 - December 7, 2021, State Health Insurance Program staff assisted 254 clients from the Lower Savannah Region to review their coverage for 2022. The assistance provided results for significant savings to our citizens. For the new plan year 2022, the total savings for all clients who made changes could be as much as \$81,224.00.

During Annual Open Enrollment, Medicare beneficiaries can review and change their Medicare Part D or Medicare Advantage Plan coverage for the new year. Our SHIP staff are here to offer trusted, un-biased, one on one counseling and assistance so that the client can make the best decision for him or herself. If you have questions about your Medicare coverage at any time of the year, please contact the SHIP Counselor at (803) 508-7033.

Planning, Community and Economic Development (PCED)

LSCOG will be updating its Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan this year. Please take time to complete our survey by using the QR code or link below. Your response will be used to get a better understanding of the region's transportation needs.



<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/P3LVM3C>

Economic Development Administration (EDA) – Lower Savannah Region Current Initiatives

Lower Savannah COG staff has been working to update the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region. Over the past several months we have been meeting in each county with leaders and business and industry folks to gain a sense of the economic climate in our various communities. To date, we have met Allendale, Calhoun, and Bamberg counties and we will meet in Orangeburg, Barnwell, and Aiken counties over the next six weeks. We have been discussing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats as they relate to economic development. We had great feedback and see that while there are some common themes across our region, each county has unique offerings for successful economic development. We will continue to compile our data and research to produce a draft of the 2022 – 2027 Comprehensive Development Strategy for the Lower Savannah Region by the end of June 2022. To ensure that we receive as



many comments as possible, we post the draft for public comments as well as host a community input session in July, 2022.

EDA CARES Recovery Act Assistance Grant Update

LSCOG was awarded an EDA supplemental grant in 2020, EDA's CARES Recovery Act Assistance. These funds were granted to our region to support the pandemic recovery and resiliency due to the impacts of COVID-19. Our overall scope of work focused on two phases in reviewing the needs of the region. The first phase was to gauge the impacts and need. Through our extensive review, the COVID-19 Phase 1 Recover and Resiliency Plan identified that the highest impacts were associated with the labor market in the region. By identifying these impacts, LSCOG was able to contract Dr. Joey Von Nessen of the University of SC Moore School of Business to conduct a labor market analysis of the region. With Phase II coming to an end, Dr. Von Nessen will give a brief presentation of his findings at the LSCOG full board meeting on June 10th, 2022. After the meeting, LSCOG will work to distribute "Lower Savannah Council of Governments: Post COVID Assessment of Six-County LSCOG



Region". This assessment will cover the economic impacts of COVID-19 to the region as well as identify future opportunities for the region.

For more information on these initiatives, please contact Emory Langston, PCED Administrator, at 803-508-7046 or elangston@lscog.org.

Workforce Development and SC Works Centers

Success Story – Diamond Deloach

Ms. Diamond Deloach entered the WIOA in May 2021 as an Out-of-School Youth and SNAP recipient. She is a graduate of Allendale-Fairfax High School and attended Claflin University for two years before becoming a single parent.

She participated in a Work Experience at The Barnwell SC Works Center as an Administrative Assistant. WIOA and DEW staff assisted with her resume and mock interviewing techniques to prepare her. Later, she was interviewed by DSS in Allendale and was hired on February 2, 2022, as an Eligibility Specialist.

Ms. Deloach stated that she enjoys her position and plans to continue advancing forward into a position with more responsibilities.



Ms. Diamond Deloach

Lower Savannah SC Works Job Fair Tour

The Lower Savannah SC Works Job Fair Tour continues throughout the region with its most recent stop in Orangeburg County. The job fair was held on April 7, 2022, at Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College from 10:00am-2:00pm. There were 51 employers present and 109 job seekers in attendance. Upcoming stops on the tour include Allendale County on May 5th at the Brandt Building in Allendale and Barnwell County on June 2nd at Barnwell High School. The time for both events is 10:00am until 2:00pm. For more information on how you or your organization can participate in future job fairs, please contact Wendy Mahuron at wmahuron@lscog.org.



Power Up Your Future

Lower Savannah Council of Governments' Workforce Development held two "Power Up Your Future" events for high school students in the Lower Savannah Region and Edgefield County.

The first event was held at USC-Aiken for Aiken, Barnwell, and Edgefield County high school students on March 15, 2022, 465 students and parents attending. The focus was to provide students with



information regarding their opportunities following graduation. Seventy-nine businesses and community services agencies attended and 21 colleges, post-secondary training providers, and all branches of the military were in attendance. The BE PRO BE PROUD double expandable 18-wheeler mobile workshop was on site and includes eight simulators which aims to get high school students' interest and help them realize various career opportunities in trade fields. Sponsors donated \$3,500 for scholarship drawings and approximately 40 door prizes. The event was held in partnership with the SC Department of Commerce, Aiken County Public Schools and the University of South Carolina – Aiken.



The second event was held on April 28, 2022, at South Carolina State University for high school students from Allendale, Bamberg, Calhoun, and Orangeburg Counties. The 561 students attended and started out with guest speaker, Brooks Harper, and finished with opportunities to speak with over 53 business representatives and 28 universities, colleges and post-secondary training providers, along with military representatives from all branches. Approximately \$2,000 in scholarships were awarded



and over 50 door prizes were given out. Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College was on-site and provided eight simulation opportunities for the students. The event was held in partnership with South Carolina Department of Commerce and Orangeburg County School District.

Meet the Staff

This is a new addition to our newsletter, meet the LSCOG staff that keeps everything running smoothly. This time we meet our Workforce Development team.



From left to right: Jerome Wallace (SC Works Mobile Operator), Andre Anderson (WD Administrator), Megan Helmig (WD Finance Manager), Wendy Mahuron (WD Business Service Lead), and Sally Sharpe (WD Procurement/Contracting/SC Works System Supervisor & EOO Officer)



Mr. Jerome Wallace is our new SC Works Mobile Operator.



Ms. **Theresa Hipps** recently joined the LSCOG staff as our new Tourism Assistant.



Council of Governments

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