July Is National Blueberry Month!

Did you know that blueberries are one of Georgia’s biggest crops? And that they’re related to azaleas and mountain laurel?

We all know how delicious they are, so check out The Blueberry Council website for recipes and Georgia’s Department of Agriculture’s Georgia Grown website for places to find fresh, local GEORGIA blueberries!

NEWS AND EVENTS

The Appalachian Regional Commission, Team Georgia Managers, and the American Chestnut Tree

The American Chestnut once flourished across the east coast; comprising about 20% of the forests from Mississippi east to Florida, north through Maine into Canada. In 1904 an Asian blight from a Chinese variety of the chestnut arrived in the United States, and over the next forty years, destroyed virtually all American chestnut trees in North America. Since the 1980s, The American Chestnut Foundation has been working to breed blight resistance into American Chestnuts and restore them as part of the North American forests.

In 2007, the Georgia Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) program provided funding to the Georgia Chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation for a program at Berry College in Rome. Dr. Martin Cipollini established the first American Chestnut breeding orchard in Georgia to develop blight resistant chestnut trees. In the spring of 2012, several DCA staff helped transfer seeds from the Berry Orchard to the Byron Herbert Reece Heritage Farm (another ARC funded program) in Union County to establish an orchard in the northeast Georgia mountains, helping to spread the tree across its original territory. In a logistics feat that would have made Fed Ex proud, Leamon Scott and Kathy Papa, Team Georgia Managers for Regions One and Two (respectively) transported the seeds packed in sandwich bags full of peat moss and loaded into coolers to be kept cold so they wouldn't sprout. Leaving Berry College in these coolers, the seeds traveled with Leamon to a meeting in Calhoun, where he passed them off to James Thompson, Executive Director for the Georgia Appalachian Regional Commission. James left that meeting for an event at the Appalachian Studies Center in Dahlonega where he handed them off to Kathy. Kathy stored them in her home refrigerator overnight before delivering them the next day to the
The board of the Georgia Commission for Service and Volunteerism approved funding of the 2012-2013 AmeriCorps*State Formula grants. Sixteen organizations in Georgia will receive more than $3,000,000. These grants will support more than 400 AmeriCorps members who will provide tutoring and mentoring for youth, assistance to families and the elderly at health centers, and assistance to veterans and their families. The list of approved grants included three new organizations, Covenant House, WINGS for Kids and University of Georgia 4-H. For a complete list of organizations receiving funding, click HERE.

Foreclosed or Vacant Property Registry Form Now Available

Governor Nathan Deal signed House Bill 110 into law on May 1, 2012, creating a method to standardize state-wide vacant property registries. In accordance with the law, the Department of Community Affairs created a standard Foreclosed or Vacant Property Registration Form for use by all local governments that choose to maintain a foreclosed or vacant property registry in their jurisdiction. (The law does not require local governments to create registries, only to use the standardized DCA form if they choose to create a registry.) The new standard form is available in Excel and PDF format. Go to this page and find the form under the PUBLICATIONS heading. The law specifies that local governments with property registries begin using the form July 1, 2012. For assistance or additional information please contact: Jonathan Sharpe, 404-679-4996, jonathan.sharpe@dca.ga.gov or Traci Turgeon, 404-679-3118 or traci.turgeon@dca.ga.gov.

Byron Herbert Reece Center. While "seed transportation" and "assisting with reforestation" are not in the Team Georgia Managers' job descriptions for the Department, "providing a helping hand when necessary" is, and Kathy, Leamon and James are proud to be part of a nationwide effort. If you're interested in planting American Chestnuts on your property, or helping with the state and national effort, contact the Georgia Chapter of the American Chestnut Society by clicking the link. For more information about the Appalachian Regional Commission, contact James Thompson at james.thompson@dca.ga.gov.

UPCOMING EDUCATION, EVENTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND DEADLINES

Three Rivers Regional Commission Hosts HomeSafe Forum: July 26, 2012

Learn more about HomeSafe Georgia and how to assist individuals facing foreclosure due to involuntary unemployment or reduction in income due to the economy. In partnership with the Three Rivers Regional Commission, we will provide program information for leaders to share with those who may be eligible for the HomeSafe Georgia program. Please plan to attend an informational meeting Thursday, July 26, 2012 from 6:30 - 8:30 PM at the Griffin Regional Welcome Center, 100 South Hill Street, Griffin.

For more information, contact Cynthia Harrison, 404-502-6176 or cynthia.harrison@dca.ga.gov.

Georgia Academy for Economic Development Classes in Fall 2012

We are now recruiting class members for the Fall 2012 Georgia Academy for Economic Development in Regions 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, and 12. For more information, please contact the Team Georgia Manager for your region or Corinne Thornton (corinne.thornton@dca.ga.gov), Director of the Georgia Academy.

Region Contacts

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4 patrice.williams@dca.ga.gov
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The Department's **Great Promise Kids** visited the Georgia Capitol on June 7th and met Governor Nathan Deal. From left to right: Lori Heemann Bodine, GPK Director; Halima Akhtar, Arthur Simmons, Gov. Deal, Shemone Thomas, Asia Parnell, Elmer Araiza, and John Turner, GCSV Executive Director. For more information about Great Promise Kids, contact Lori Bodine at lori.bodine@dca.ga.gov.

**DCA Staff : Putting Our Knowledge to Work for Georgia**

Jennifer Fordham from the Community and Economic Development Division joins Assistant Commissioner Saralyn Stafford and Rural Development Council Executive Director Nancy Cobb as a **Certified Economic Developer (CEcD)**. Patrick Vickers, John VanBrunt, Jen Erdmann, Brock Smith and Inna Kharoujik, from the Community and Economic Development Division join several other DCA staff in completing their certifications as **Economic Development Finance Professionals**. Both of these certifications require hours of instruction, study and examination, and provide our staff with the resources and knowledge to assist Georgia's local governments with sound economic development and financing decisions. **Congratulations to all these staff members for their hard work and achievements!**

**Community Planning Institute: Planning and Zoning - August 10-11, 2012 in Helen**

It's time to register for the **Community Planning Institute** Planning and Zoning class at **Unicoi State Park**. We limit class size to allow each participant a full opportunity to learn in small groups and take part in class discussions. This class provides training for citizens, staff and elected officials involved in planning and land development in their communities. We emphasize the importance of a community vision in planning for the future, the role of the planning commissioner in helping define that vision and how to work with your community's citizens and governing body to make that vision a reality. For more information and to register, click **HERE** or contact Annette Henson at Annette.henson@dca.ga.gov or by phone at 404-679-5279.

Many CPI participants are eligible for a scholarship through the generous support of the **Georgia Planning Memorial Foundation**. Click **HERE** to see if you qualify and to apply.

**2013 Applications for Georgia Initiative for Community Housing Now Available**

The Georgia Initiative for Community Housing (GICH) is accepting applications for participation in its three year program. Applications are available **HERE**, as well as information about the partnership, participating communities and their accomplishments. Applications are due September 7, 2012, but interested parties must submit a letter of intent by July 31, 2012. The partnership will accept five communities for participation in the 2013 class, and will announce them in November.

Many local leaders have a clear vision for their communities but need assistance getting started. GICH helps communities develop a roadmap to achieve their vision by providing a platform for thinking of creative solution and networking ideas with housing professionals, elected officials, local government staff and community volunteers from around Georgia.
THINKING OF INVESTING IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT?

Consider applying for a GEDA scholarship! The Association has more than $9,000 to support participation in several exciting opportunities. They’ll be awarding up to three scholarships for the GEDA Annual Conference in Savannah, up to two scholarships for the CEcD Exam administered by IEDC, and up to two scholarships to support participation in an international trade mission (such as SEUS Japan in September 2012). Click HERE for scholarship information and an application.

Macon Revitalizes through Loft Housing Downtown

The corner of Third and Poplar in downtown Macon is getting a facelift and the citizens of Macon are getting new housing options. The Dannenberg Building has long been an underused asset in Macon, but soon it will be a revitalized historic building providing retail space downstairs and living space upstairs. “We always talk about game changers that really get the ball rolling for the next ten to fifteen years,” Mechel McKinley, program manager for Main Street Macon, said. ”The Dannenberg site ... that’s our game changer.” For the complete story from the Macon Telegraph, click HERE.

We’re Looking for Your Regional Best Practices

The Office of Planning and Environmental Management is populating its Best Practices in Regional Planning. It’s interested in

"Being a member of the housing initiative has given us the opportunity to share with others and learn from them the steps they’ve taken in their communities to improve their housing problems, and we all benefit by sharing. We all have the same problems and if someone has found a solution they can share, we all save time and energy as we move forward.”

- Mayor Kenneth Usry, City of Thomson

Contact Karen Tinsley at 706.542.4949 or klt@uga.edu for more information.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AWARDS

June 2012

Region One

City of Calhoun

- $500,000 in CDBG RD funds
- $7MM in private investment
- $2.1MM in public (non-DCA) investment
- The city will loan the funds to Calhoun Affordable Housing Development to purchase and renovate land and structure into 60 low-income housing units.

Region Two

City of Bowersville

- $128,800 OneGeorgia Equity grant
- $9.3MM private investment
- $95,500 public (non-DCA) investment
- Creates 12 jobs
- The city will construct a public water line to assist the AgStrong facility

City of Cleveland

- $500,000 OneGeorgia Equity grant
- $12.6MM private investment
- $3.4MM public (non-DCA) investment
- Creates 55 jobs
- The city will construct public sewer along US Highway 129 to benefit existing businesses.

City of Hiawassee

- $300,000 OneGeorgia Equity grant
- $16.2MM private investment
- $730,000 public (non-DCA) investment
- Creates 70 jobs
- Benefits Baptist Retirement Communities of Georgia and
Regional Commission successes and innovations that help achieve the Quality Community Objectives. Click on the logo for a nomination form, or contact Renetta Hobson at renetta.hobson@dca.ga.gov for more information.

Do you know a homeowner who is recently unemployed, and might need mortgage payment assistance?

Please let them know about HomeSafe Georgia: www.homesafegeorgia.com!
Since its inception in April of last year, the HomeSafe Georgia program has helped over 1000 homeowners facing unemployment and under-employment hardship remain in their homes. Another 1400 homeowners are involved in the application review process now, and we have over 100 banks and mortgage companies working with HomeSafe Georgia to help prevent possible foreclosures. All of the program details and eligibility requirements are on the website.

Georgia citizens need quick and easy access to affordable housing options and we can help! Whether you are searching by price, number of bedrooms, or even proximity to work, school or transportation, finding a home that meets your needs is easier with GeorgiaHousingSearch.org.

Landlords can register in a five-minute process or work with DCA staff to register large-scale listings. For more information, please contact Ron Pounds at 404-327-6864 or ron.pounds@dca.ga.gov.

GeorgiaHousingSearch.org is the key to linking the expansion of Chatuge Mountain Enterprises

Region Four

Development Authority of the City of Manchester
- $500,000 OneGeorgia Equity loan
- $2MM private investment
- $90,000 public (non-DCA) investment
- Creates 30 jobs
- Loan to finance the purchase of a building for a scrap metal converting company

Meriwether County
- $134,000 OneGeorgia Equity grant
- $33,600 public (non-DCA) investment
- Broadband connectivity feasibility study

Region Five

Oconee County Industrial Development Authority/Development Authority of Athens Clark County
- $18MM OneGeorgia EDGE grant
- $160MM private investment
- $18MM public (non-DCA) investment
- Creates 1,300 jobs
- Location of the Caterpillar assembly facility

Newton County Industrial Development Authority
- $175,000 OneGeorgia EDGE grant
- $25.9MM in private investment
- Creates 140 jobs
- Location of the Vestar Technologies manufacturing facility

Region Nine

City of Dublin and Laurens County Development Authority
- $400,000 OneGeorgia EDGE grant
- $38.6MM private investment
- $4.6MM public (non-DCA) investment
- Creates 100 jobs
- Location of the Erdrich Umformtechnik manufacturing facility

Evans County Industrial Development Authority
- $197,000 OneGeorgia Equity grant
- $14MM private investment
- $15,000 public (non-DCA) investment
- Creates 100 jobs
- Construct a sidewalk to provide safe walking access to Claxton Poultry and facilitate the company’s expansion.

City of Dublin and Laurens County Development Authority
- $150,000 OneGeorgia EDGE grant
- $10MM private investment
- $535,000 public (non-DCA) investment
- Creates 250 jobs
- Location of Dinex Emissions manufacturing facility

Region Eleven

Brooks County Development Authority
tenants with landlords. We offer FREE property posting, bilingual assistance, and a toll-free number (877-428-8844) available to those without internet access.

- $500,000 OneGeorgia Equity grant
- $5MM private investment
- $192,500 public (non-DCA) investment
- Creates 44 jobs
- Roadway improvements to benefit Rayonier Southeast Wood Procurement's hardwood chip mill

For previous issues of The Partner Connection, click on our logo or HERE.