



## Communities of Opportunity: Rural Spaces and Places

Volume 1 ∞ March 2010

### DEAR RESIDENT, FRIEND, LEADER AND INVESTOR IN RURAL GEORGIA:



I am pleased to share, on behalf of the Georgia Rural Development Council, this newsletter, or more accurately, a few brief highlights regarding rural developments, activities, actions and/or policy that may be of interest to you. The Council mission is to advocate for rural Georgia, champion new development opportunities and to partner with other public and private initiatives to strengthen rural communities. While on the verge of full passage of the first decade of this new millennium, it is more important than ever to recognize the growth and development potential found in rural spaces and places of our great State. Rural Georgia can and must continue to position itself to remain, along with metro areas, an integral part of the State's ongoing as well as future success in community and economic development. Please join the Rural Council in these efforts. Highlights are provided herein, but your ideas and feedback are welcomed as well.

Roy Campbell, Vice-Chairman  
Georgia Rural Development Council

### WARREN COUNTY: A COMMUNITY OF OPPORTUNITY

The Communities of Opportunity process has been a positive experience for Warren County. Through a grassroots effort of several town hall meetings, the county determined that the elimination of drug abuse should be a high priority for our rural community. Alcohol and drug abuse are prevalent all across the nation, and Warren County citizens decided that they did not want to tolerate it any longer in "our backyard". The community now places much emphasis on Red Ribbon Week in the schools through activities surrounding drug awareness and being drug free. Through the Quality of Life Association and Family Connection, people volunteer and work in educating the youth with regular drug awareness programs and promoting a "drug free" positive image.



Through the County Extension office, Leadership Warren is focusing on Youth Leadership, and holds classes at Warren County Middle & High School to further develop the leadership skills and good citizenship qualities of students. The Chamber of Commerce encourages local companies to become Drug Free Workplaces and adopt the Drugs Don't Work Program in their businesses. Newsletters from the Council on Alcohol and Drugs are readily available to these member businesses through the Chamber of Commerce. Chuck Wade, the CEO of the Council on Alcohol and Drugs, will be a keynote speaker at a high-profile community event during March of this year. As the process of eliminating drug abuse in our county continues, we hope to have more organizations and businesses join in the fight. With continuing to place the focus on being "drug free", Warren County will always strive to be a community that holds much opportunity for its young people. For more information on the Communities of Opportunity, visit [www.dca.ga.gov](http://www.dca.ga.gov).

**CENSUS DAY IS QUICKLY APPROACHING – APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup>**

For more information on the 2010 Census, visit <http://census.georgia.gov/02/gov/census/home/0,2814,151943882,00.html>

## HART COUNTY SCHOOLS WORK READY TESTIMONIAL:

Only two years ago, the high school graduation rate for Hart County Schools was hovering at 60 percent. But thanks to a new superintendent, an engaged board, strong community support and a unique partnership with Georgia's Work Ready initiative, graduation rates are now approaching 80 percent.

"A lot of times people don't see the linkage, but schools are so important to industry and to the economic vitality of the community," said Superintendent David Hicks. "Industry looks at your graduation rate and your SAT scores and we've increased our Advanced Placement offerings as well."



Dr. Hicks meets every other week with the Certified Work Ready Community team, which includes representatives from local government, the chamber of commerce, the industrial building authority, local economic development groups and Athens Technical College. "We are very involved with one another in developing strategies for graduation and for being more 'Work Ready' when it comes to our private and public sectors," Hicks said. "We want our kids to graduate with the skills needed to be successful and the skills businesses want."

The school system deployed a unique marketing campaign in 2007-08 complete with "Grad Dog," a mascot based on the Hart County Bulldogs, and the slogan "Finish what you start." The partnership has resulted in a 10-point jump in graduation rates in just one year, from a system-wide rate of 67 percent in 2007 to a 79.4 percent rate for the high school and a 77.6 percent rate for the alternative school in 2008 and marked the first time Hart County passed the state average. For more information on how your company can participate in Work Ready, visit [www.gaworkready.org](http://www.gaworkready.org).

## INTRODUCING NEW USDA GEORGIA STATE DIRECTOR: SHIRLEY SHERROD



Shirley Sherrod was named state director of USDA Rural Development of Georgia on July 30, 2009, by President Barack Obama.

"These individuals will be important advocates on behalf of rural communities in states throughout the country and help administer the valuable programs and services provided by the USDA that can enhance their economic success," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Since 1985, Sherrod has served as Director of the Georgia Field Office for the Federation of Southern Cooperative/Land Assistance Fund. She has also served as Georgia State Lead for the Southern Rural Black Women's Initiative for Economic and Social Justice. From 1999-2000, Sherrod served as Executive Director for Community Alliances of Interdependent Agriculture, Inc., in Albany, Ga. Sherrod has more than 15 years experience working with agriculture focused organizations. Sherrod received a B.A. in Sociology from Albany State

University in Albany, Ga., and a M.A. in Community Development from Antioch University in Yellow Springs, Ohio.

Rural Development administers and manages over 40 housing, business, and community infrastructure and facility programs as laid out by Congress through a network of 6,100 employees located in 500 national, state and local offices. These programs are designed to improve the economic stability of rural communities, businesses, residents, farmers and ranchers and improve the quality of life in rural America. Rural Development has an existing portfolio of over \$114 billion in loans and loan guarantees. More information on Rural Development programs in Georgia is available at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ga>.

Sherrod is especially concerned about reaching Georgia's persistent poverty counties and individuals who may not have applied for services in the past. Special outreach meetings have already been conducted in Thomasville, Washington, Marshallville and Waycross.



"I encourage people to access the information online or contact their nearest Rural Development office," Sherrod said. "We also welcome the opportunity to partner with the state, non-profits, businesses and other organizations trying to bring services to areas with a strong need."

The USDA provides leadership on food, agriculture and natural resources and touches the life of every American. Reflecting President Obama's commitment to expanding economic opportunities in rural America, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and the USDA are working to enhance availability of broadband, promote the development of renewable energy, to conserve, maintain and improve our natural resources and environment, and promote a sustainable, safe, sufficient and nutritious food supply.

## THE YOUTH ADULT PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE SUPPORTS LOCAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The Youth Adult Partnership Initiative (YAPI) is designed to Support the Co-Op mission of strengthening communities by supporting local youth leadership programs. Coordinated by the UGA College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, Cooperative Extension, Georgia 4-H, YAPI focuses on developing leadership skills, creating awareness of local issues and providing youth with opportunities to identify issues and lead projects that address local issues.

Since its inception, 74 youth and adults from 35 counties and 7 Service Delivery Regions have been trained and provided the opportunity to receive YAPI Grant funding.



In February, The Cochran/Bleckley Community Collaborative, which consists of Communities In Schools and Family Connection, in collaboration with Bleckley County Extension and Bleckley County High School received a \$1500 YAPI Grant to support their Youth Leadership Team. Participants will receive leadership training and apply what they learn through school-wide, youth-driven initiatives focusing on healthy lifestyles and bullying prevention. Moultrie YMCA, Colquitt County Family Connection, the Colquitt County Arts Center and the county school system received a YAPI Grant to provide youth driven enrichment activities at the local alternative school. These activities are aligned with Georgia Performance Standards for and will provide youth with opportunities to explore their interests, set goals and work together as a team to share their interests and talents with the community. For information on how you can receive YAPI funding, contact 4-H Specialist, **Jeff Buckley** at 706-542-4H4H, [jbuckley@uga.edu](mailto:jbuckley@uga.edu) or [www.georgia4h.org/yapi/](http://www.georgia4h.org/yapi/).

### *Georgia Rural Development Council*

#### *Mission*

The Georgia Rural Development Council (GRDC) *advocates* for rural Georgia, *champions* new development opportunities, and *partners* with public and private initiatives to strengthen rural communities.

#### *Guiding Principles*

The following principles guide the Rural Development Council in its deliberations. The principles are used to test the appropriateness of proposals and recommendations. The principles are also public statements of what the Council stands for and what it hopes to promote and achieve.