

**Top of Alabama  
Regional Council of  
Governments**

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COG Connections is published quarterly by the  
Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments.

COG Connections is funded in part by  
the Appalachian Regional Commission,  
the Economic Development Administration, and  
the Alabama Department of Senior Services.



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**COG CONNECTIONS**

Volume 26, Issue 4 • Winter 2017-2018

**Regional Planning Efforts Underway at TARCOG**

**CEDS, FY 2018-2022**

Over the past few months TARCOG began the process for updating our region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy also known as the "CEDS". The CEDS is a five-year planning document required by the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) to allow our organization to continue as an Economic Development District. The CEDS is a tool to help us capitalize on our strengths and work to overcome weaknesses, creating a more viable and prosperous region; it also serves as a means to engage community leaders, leverage the involvement of the private sector, and establish a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration.

This document also presents opportunities to request grants to assist with planning activities and infrastructure. The TARCOG CEDS for 2018 – 2022 received input from well over 200 sources from our area and should be formally adopted during our September Board meeting.

**Area Plan on Aging, FY 2018-2021**

The Older Americans Act mandates that an Area Agency on Aging must develop a plan to carry out supportive services, nutrition services and the establishment of senior centers. Every four years, this Area Plan on Aging must be reviewed and modified to address changes in aging demographics and the subsequent adjustments to the many varied needs of older adults.

TARCOG AAA has completed the process of developing the Area Plan for Fiscal Years 2018 – 2021 which focuses on its mission: "to carry out a comprehensive, coordinated service delivery system to address the needs of people over 60, and help them maintain their independence." Three key services are identified to serve the elderly population living in the TARCOG region:

- To serve as an advocate on behalf of all older persons in the region;
- To identify the needs of the elderly and to develop plans for meeting those needs; and
- To effectively administer coordinated services through the responsible utilization of resources provided to the agency

**From the Director's Desk**

This summer has been a season of change in the state, as Alabama seated a new Governor in Montgomery. Governor Kay Ivey has already met with Alabama's Regional Councils in June, and described her priorities of education, job creation, and the state's infrastructure. She said she would keep up the tradition of meeting with AARC on a quarterly basis, with the next meeting scheduled for September. These meetings are helpful in communicating activities taking place in the regions to the Governor, and also communicating about areas of need.



We are also working with a new ADECA Director - Kenneth Boswell, previously Mayor of Enterprise. Government leaders in the TARCOG region had an opportunity to meet Director Boswell when he came to the area for two days in early August. He wanted to meet local public officials and community leaders, see some of the projects that TARCOG has been working on, and to learn about where program assistance is needed. He was the speaker at a luncheon at TARCOG on August 8, emphasizing the importance of the upcoming census and rural initiatives. While here, he was taken to each of the TARCOG Counties to see various projects and meet with more local leadership.



ADSS has a new Commissioner as well, as Todd Cotton has been named to the position on an interim basis. Todd has worked with ADSS for several years as the Finance Director, and has been very helpful to TARCOG.

The AARC Annual Conference this year will have a special track for City and County leadership, including workshops on the upcoming US Census, retail strategies, and infrastructure needs. The event will be held in Point Clear October 22-25. Registration information will be forthcoming.

TARCOG's own Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 26, so please make plans to attend! This year's keynote speaker will be Greg Lein, Director of the Alabama State Parks System. I hope to see you here.

**Congratulations to the following employees for their dedicated years of service!**

**September 2017:**

Gerald Carter – 7 years  
Amesha Jones – 3 years  
Bill Chandler – 3 years

**October 2017:**

LaTanya Rhines – 18 years  
Lisa Allen – 12 years  
Alicia Thomas – 11 years  
Scott Griess – 8 years  
Heather Whiteside – 5 years  
Melissa Burgess – 5 years  
Tena Wallace – 3 years  
Rosa Sanchez – 2 years  
Sheila Bush – 1 year  
Kanisha Mixon – 1 year  
Rhonda Stewart – 1 year

**November 2017:**

Del Schafer – 42 years  
Brittany Henry – 3 years  
Stacey Peoples – 3 years

*Thank you for all that you do for the people of the TARCOG region.*

**Calendar of Events**

September 26	TARCOG Board (Annual Membership) Meeting, 6:00 p.m., Redstone Federal Credit Union, 'The Atrium'
October 11	Advisory Council Meeting
October 15-Dec 7	Open Enrollment Dates for Medicare Part D
October 24	TARCOG Board Meeting, 6:00 p.m., TARCOG Conference Room
October 22-Oct 25	AARC Conference
December 5	TARCOG Board Meeting, 6:00 p.m., TARCOG Conference Room

## FORT PAYNE – THE COOLEST PLACE IN ALABAMA!

Nestled at the bottom of Lookout Mountain, Fort Payne is actually considered by weathermen to be the “coolest place in Alabama”, but there in the City they also promote all the cool activities taking place. With DeSoto State Park and the Little River Canyon Center located within the city limits, local officials make the most of what nature has provided. This draws many visitors to the area, including fans of the band Alabama, whose members claim Fort Payne as home. The statues of the members in City Park draw people in to pose for pictures beside the “boys”, and to go through the Fan Club building. The historical Trail of Tears encampment site brings others.



Fort Payne used to be known as the Sock Capital of the World, with over 100 hosiery mills employing 5000 people. After the crushing blow to that industry with the outsourcing of the textile industry in 2007, the local economy is rebounding as it has diversified its businesses. Carol Beddingfield, Chamber of Commerce Director and TARCOG Board member, says that large companies like Ferguson Enterprises, Heil Environmental, Playcore, Seimens Energy Service, Vulcraft, and The Children's Place have turned unemployment figures around from 18% in 2006 to only 6.3% today.

The county seat, Fort Payne has been named one of the 100 Best Small Towns in America. It is the largest municipality in DeKalb County, with 14,125 residents. Just about every type of transportation is available and helps the economy thrive – interstate and state highways, the Norfolk Southern Railroad, and a fairly busy airport.

The Chamber of Commerce and downtown Fort Payne host some unique events each year to bring people in to the city, including the Boom Days event in the fall, the Third Saturday Cruise Ins (for antique car enthusiasts), the Halloween Block Party for trick-or-treaters, and the long-standing Farmers Market. It is also on the route of the World's Longest Yard Sale! The City was designated as a Main Street Community in 2015, and is working on additional improvements.

Education is a priority in Fort Payne, working to help all children get the tools they need for future success. While 65% of schoolchildren participate in the free/reduced lunch program, they see a graduation rate of 98%! A lifelong resident himself, Mayor Larry Chesser enjoys the safe community, the 50+ churches, and the low cost of living. He says “It's as good a place to live as I could ever find.”



## Caregiver College

The PEACE coalition held its annual Caregiver College at Redstone Federal Credit Union on June 16, 2017. This event was sponsored by TARCOG Area Agency on Aging, Dementia Friendly Alabama, The Better Business Bureau and Redstone Federal Credit Union with over 130 caregivers and professionals attending. Twenty-one exhibitors offered resources to caregivers. The Alabama Cares Program awarded over 320 hours in caregiver respite. CEU's for Social Work, Nursing, Assisted Living and Nursing Home Administrators were sponsored by Home Instead.

The college was divided into 3 separate tracks regarding care for an elderly or disabled loved one with a track focused on different programs within Medicaid, Medicaid, a track on dementia and health related issues, and one that focused on the Financial and Benefit Aspect of Caring for an Elderly or Disabled Individual.

Over 80 attendees attended Second Wind Dreams, Virtual Dementia Tour sponsored by Dementia Friendly Alabama. Jason Parks from Refuge Church served as the luncheon speaker. This was the largest Caregiver College to date.

## Spotlight On ...

### Pam Simpson, Board Member, TARCOG Board of Directors

Pam Simpson is DeKalb County's Circuit Clerk. She was elected in 2006 after 30 years being employed as a Court Clerk for the county. She worked at the clerk's office while attending Northeast Alabama State Community College then transferred to the University of Alabama where she received her Bachelor Degree in Business Management in 1986.

As the Circuit Clerk, she is responsible for managing thousands of cases through the courts in DeKalb County and is responsible for millions of dollars in public funds. She is also the absentee election manager, a member of the Canvassing Board, responsible for juror management, Chief Magistrate for the County and appointed by the Department of State as the Passport Acceptance Agent for DeKalb County.

Pam has been a member of the TARCOG board since 2015. She has enjoyed serving as a board member and feels it is an honor to continue her public service with others who have like minds and a willingness to serve others in the area. She is also a member of Green's Chapel Church, DeKalb CASA, United Givers Fund and Associate Member of Fraternal Order of Police.

Pam and her husband Clay own a cattle farm near Bucks Pocket in DeKalb where she enjoys the outdoor as a cattle farmer in her spare time. She is blessed with two children and one granddaughter.

## Success Story!

Alice Durham enrolled onto the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) on August 29, 2014. She was immediately assigned to the DeKalb County Technology Center in Rainsville, AL, as a receptionist/office assistant in the front office. Her duties included keeping attendance, making copies, sending faxes, emailing school correspondences and helping maintain and manage the inventory of the student break store. She was grateful to get on the program, because she felt that her age would keep employers from hiring her. Was she wrong!



Jo Poole, Alice's supervisor, said, “We at the school noticed early on that Alice had potential and a good work ethic. When the budget allowed it, we sought to bring her on board as an employee.” And that happened on August 1, 2017, just shy of her three year start date onto the program. She got a 16% increase in pay and started accruing sick and personal leave, state retirement and health care benefits. Those will come in handy, as Alice and her husband, Ron, help to raise a grandchild.

This is a success story for SCSEP! “Just think of all the benefits, not only for Alice and her family, but to the school, the community of Rainsville and the State of Alabama. Getting willing-to-work seniors back into the workforce is a plus for everyone,” said John Sanders, SCSEP Project Director.

### Lydia Weeks, Alabama Cares Coordinator

Ms. Lydia Weeks began employment with TARCOG in 2012, initially as a Medicaid Waiver Case Manager. She has worked as a Case Manager II, Medicaid Waiver Supervisor and currently serves as the Alabama Cares Caregiver Support Program Coordinator as well as the Dementia Friendly Communities Area Coordinator. As the Alabama Cares Coordinator, Lydia provides support to family caregivers through respite, education/-counseling, access assistance, supplemental and information. She continues to strive to create a Dementia Friendly Community in the TARCOG region by training and educating individuals on dementia.

Ms. Weeks has worked with Programs to help seniors and disabled individuals for over 12 years. She has served on several special committees for the Alabama Department of Senior Services advocating for caregivers in the TARCOG region. She is a member of the P.E.A.C.E Coalition and Sharing the Care, Huntsville. She is a certified REST trainer, Virtual Dementia Tour facilitator and Elder Sensitivity trainer. She has served on the nominating committee for the Alabama Gerontology Association. Ms. Weeks has a Master's Degree in Human Development & Family Studies from Alabama A & M University.

In her spare time, Lydia enjoys the company of family and friends, long walks in the park and finds solace in a good book.

## ADECA DIRECTOR KENNETH BOSWELL VISITS TARCOG

ADECA Director Kenneth Boswell spent August 8-9 visiting several communities in the TARCOG region, getting to see rural parts of the area, as well as getting to know some of the local government leaders and elected officials. TARCOG coordinated the visit, taking Mr. Boswell out to see different projects that we are involved in across the region.

A highlight of his visit was a “meet and greet” luncheon at the TARCOG office, which was attended by many of our mayors, county commissioners, and state legislators, and even representatives of congressional offices. Director Boswell explained that Governor Ivey had given him a directive to “Talk with leaders in local communities. Try to figure out a way we can say “Yes”, not a way to say “No”. He explained different departments of ADECA, and responded to some questions from those attending.



*ADECA Director Kenneth Boswell met in Valley Head with local leaders in DeKalb County, including Senator Steve Livingston, Valley Head Mayor Lamar Bray and some of the City Council, and Fyffe Mayor Paul Cagle*



*Triana Mayor Mary Caudle with Kenneth Boswell and Lucas Blankenship*

So “talk with leaders” he did, going with TARCOG staff to all five counties in the region.

He had the chance to see potential projects that are needed or that have applications pending, and to see some places where ADECA program improvements have been implemented.

He heard from mayors about drainage problems, road problems, planning needs, and other community basics, and offered suggestions where appropriate.



*Mayor David Dyar explained ideas for a multi-purpose park in Boaz to ADECA Director Kenneth Boswell, Representative Kerry Rich, and others*



*Mayor Billy Shannon, ADECA Director Kenneth Boswell, and Lucas Blankenship at the Ardmore Town Hall*

*Continued on other side*

### ADECA Director Kenneth Boswell Visits TARCOG *(Continued)*

Meeting with people, talking about potential, and seeing unique areas in the region gave Director Boswell a real flavor for northeast Alabama.

He left having made many friends, and with a promise to return to our area soon.



*Scottsboro Mayor Robin Shelton talked over some community projects with Kenneth Boswell*

### TARCOG Region ACE Winners



*Boaz was just selected as one of the communities to participate in the 2017 class for the Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE). The class of 6 communities began the process this summer. Mayor David Dyar, 4th from left.*

The Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) is comprised of partners working together to provide Alabama communities with the community development programs and tools needed to ensure their long term success. ACE provides technical assistance to select communities in order to strengthen their long-term economic success.

ACE's comprehensive three-phase approach targets communities with populations ranging from 2,000 to 18,000. Using a competitive application process, communities are selected based on the level of local commitment to the ACE program and the community's capacity to support the ACE program. ACE Communities in the TARCOG region are Guntersville, Rainsville, and Arab, with Boaz currently going through the process.

*Congratulations to Mayor Bob Joslin, recently named as Outstanding ACE Mayor at the Annual Community Reunion in Birmingham in July!*



## Medicare Open Enrollment is Just around the Corner

**Medicare Open Enrollment**  
**October 15 - December 7**



Last year, the TARCOG State Health Insurance Program (SHIP) provided over 4000 seniors with education and information regarding their Medicare Benefits. This year from October 15 to December 7, Medicare beneficiaries have an opportunity once again to review their Medicare Part D prescription drug plan or Medicare Advantage Plan and make changes if necessary. For 2018, there are twenty four Part D plans and new Medicare Advantage plans and we expect changes to include higher

premiums, higher deductibles, and new formularies for the drug plans.

SHIP is a federally funded program, and is not affiliated with the insurance industry and is the only confidential, one-on-one Medicare beneficiary counseling service in Alabama. TARCOG's SHIP coordinator can provide a free comparison of the Medicare Advantage plans that are available in our area, and do a comparison of drug plans that are specific for each individual and in many instances savings will result. Medicare beneficiaries are encouraged to contact their SHIP coordinator at 256-830-0818 for assistance. Checking your plan could save you money in 2018; but remember, you only have until December 7th to change.

## Congratulations, Mr. Jesse Johnson!

Congratulations go to Mr. Jesse Johnson, who has been inducted into the Alabama Senior Citizens Hall of Fame.

For many years, Jesse has invested much of his time and energy advocating for senior citizens in Madison County. As an active participant at the Huntsville-Madison Senior Center, he encourages many others to take part in various opportunities such as Studio 60, a fitness program at the center. He has also taken on leadership roles through being on various committees at the center and serving as the Huntsville-Madison Senior Board President for two terms. Over the last several years, Jesse has broadened his leadership beyond Madison County by serving on TARCOG's Advisory Board. He is also an elected representative for the Silver Haired Legislature and currently serves as the Chairman for the TARCOG region.

Jesse Johnson serves as an excellent example of positive aging. He is an inspiration to others who desire to remain active and work to meet the needs of senior citizens.

## Scottsboro Senior Center: A Fun and Happening Place in Jackson County!



The Scottsboro Senior Center in Jackson County has been exploring new ways to attract more participants. The seniors are motivated to participate in some form of activity such as Family Feud, Bingo, Dominoes, and Billiards or they invent new exercise games such as "Pass the Fruit" and Kickball. "Pass the Fruit" is played like musical chairs but without leaving your seat. A fruit basket is passed around the circle and when the music stops, the person holding the fruit basket gets to pick out a piece of the fruit to enjoy. Kickball is played by putting chairs into a big circle and kicking a beach ball to each other. As our younger seniors are looking for something to do that is more than playing cards or bingo, Scottsboro Senior Center is also looking at different options for these potential members. The center manager has just become certified in a new exercise class called Pound, which uses drum sticks and exercise to help the seniors stretch, all while

enjoying the beat of the music. The center is also looking at starting cake/cookie decorating classes, dance classes, painting classes, and computer classes. For the fishing enthusiasts, there may be a class to learn how to make fishing lures.

With so many activities at the Scottsboro Senior Center going on, the center is sure to be a place that any senior would enjoy because there is something for everyone. So come and check it out, you never know what you will learn!

### Ardmore TAP Funding

The Town of Ardmore was notified by the Alabama Department of Transportation that it had been awarded \$398,866.00 in “Transportation Alternatives Program” funding to provide for downtown streetscape improvements. The total anticipated project cost for this project is estimated at \$498,582.00 with the Town providing \$99,716.00 in match funding. The Top of Alabama Regional Council of Governments assisted the Town of Ardmore in project development of this application and we look forward to assisting Ardmore throughout the implementation process in an effort to improve the quality of their downtown commercial district.



### GE Aviation

TARCOG was pleased to assist the Limestone County Water and Sewer Board in the development of a proposal recently submitted to the Economic Development Administration for \$1,215,000.00. This funding, matched by \$1,215,000.00. in local funding, will assist in providing the new G.E. Aviation site in southern Limestone County with water infrastructure services sufficient to accommodate its projected demands. GE Aviation plans to invest \$221 million in the development of this new manufacturing facility, site infrastructure and equipment near the I-565 and Greenbrier Road intersection. The manufacturing facility will consist of a 250,000 square feet site and employ approximately 204 people averaging a \$24.50 per hour salary with the initial phase of construction. The continued economic success of Limestone County depends on the provision adequate public infrastructure such as this. GE Aviation’s new manufacturing facility will provide a huge economic boost to our area and the entire north Alabama region.



### Welcome New Employees to our TARCOG Family!



*Medicaid Waiver Case Managers  
Sharmalita Hines and Breanna Carlisle*