



Southeast Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission

REGIONAL NEWS

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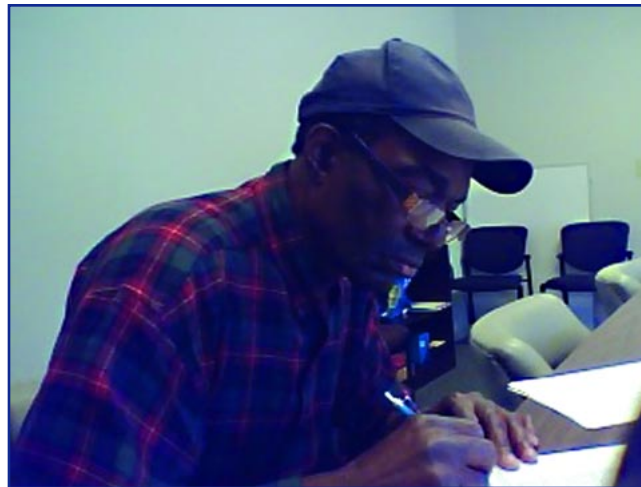
SEARP&DC ENROLLS FIRST PARTICIPANT UNDER STIMULUS GRANT

Abraham Mallard, the first older worker enrolled under the Senior Employment Program via *American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009* funding, states he is eagerly looking forward to interacting with the children at the Head Start Center in Eufaula. Although Mr. Mallard states he has never held a position working directly with small children, he enjoys being involved with the young people in his church and community. His assignment will allow him to accomplish one of his principal goals in life – making a difference in the lives of others, especially disadvantaged youth. Center Director Dorothy Kinsey feels Mr. Mallard will be a wonderful role model for the children, many of whom are from single parent homes.

At age 69, Mr. Mallard declares he has never seen the employment situation as bleak as it is now. “I’ve been applying everywhere but everyone is saying the same thing – they’re not hiring,” but he is quick to add, “I haven’t given up.” Project Director Barbara

have been laid off from their jobs; others are simply finding with the increased cost of living that their bills far exceed their income.”

Like most seniors, Mr. Mallard’s immediate priority is to secure employment which will enable him to meet financial obligations, however, he has already



Mr. Abraham Mallard

begun planning for priority #2 which is to begin classes to earn his GED. “This is definitely a step in the right direction. Older workers making the decision to return to the work force find themselves competing with thousands of younger workers

for the same positions. They (older workers) are realizing in order to remain competitive, they must be willing to sacrifice the time and effort to update their skills and that is where we come in.” states Mrs. Knight. Through the Senior Employment Program, enrollees are not only afforded on-the-job training through placement in community service assignments, but receive assistance with resume writing, interviewing and job seeking and keeping skills. Enrollees may also receive assistance with fees and related costs for training.

The funds received under the *American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009* will allow the agency to provide services to an additional 19 seniors throughout the seven county region. Although a separate grant, the guidelines and eligibility requirements are the same as those for the regular grant. Applicants must be age 55 or older and have income which does not exceed Federal Poverty income guidelines.

The Senior Employment Program is funded through the Alabama Department of Senior Services and Senior Service America, Inc. For more information call Barbara Knight at (334) 794-4093 ext. 1422 or 1-800-489-7606, exAA/EOE.

**“HIRE AN OLDER WORKER AND DISCOVER THAT AGE IS AN ASSET,
EXPERIENCE... A BENEFIT.”**

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Tom Solomon

“Weathering Tough Economic Times”

Regionally, Southeast Alabama like other areas in the Southeast U.S. is feeling the pain of the current economic downturn as jobs disappear with no ready supply of new ones to take their place. People are suffering throughout the country but we seem to be more fortunate than many regions in the U.S. because economically when times are good, we may not grow as fast, but also when times are bad, we do not fall as fast either. We are hopeful that new funding through the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* will quickly spur improvement in the overall domestic economy.

In the meantime, what can our regional communities do during current tough economic times? For one thing, communities should continue to market and sell themselves. Tough economic times are no time to stick your head in the sand. Potential customers and businesses must know who you are and where you are, what product you have to market or it is unlikely they can be successfully attracted to your community. We are fortunate in our region to have a number of active chambers of commerce and county economic development organizations. These organizations are primarily involved in recruiting new industry and supporting existing businesses that bring capital investment and jobs to our region. During tough economic times regional communities must make sure that their available products and assets are listed in the regional industrial recruitment databases of these regional organizations as well as with similar organizations at the State level. This is especially true for smaller rural regional communities who should be acting and thinking regionally with other counties and communities in their geographic area in order to effectively compete for scarce development opportunities. By acting regionally, cooperation among communities can promote development initiatives that can enhance the chances of success resulting in new regional investment and jobs. This approach can be even more productive for several communities or counties when resources are pooled to enhance their ability to market and promote regionally rather than going it alone.

It has been said that *“Tough Times Don’t Last, but Tough People Do.”* I believe our regional community has dedicated leadership and a knowledgeable and effective economic development team working diligently to sell and market Southeast Alabama. This team includes people from local chambers, county and regional economic development organizations and with support from our staff here at the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission.

The current economic cycle will eventually right itself and growth will return. We must create new jobs and investment every single day, not just for economic growth, but to remain strong as we move forward into the future. Regionally, we have to continue to work successfully together to aggressively seek to add new jobs and investment all the time in order for the region to remain economically healthy.

For the past 40 years, the Commission has had a strong commitment to this calling and we are ready to continue our work for the economic betterment of the Southeast Alabama region and its citizens.

Best Wishes

SEARP&DC WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Mayor Rebecca Beasley
Town of Clayton



Commissioner Al Britt
Coffee County Commission



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Covington County Commission



Councilman Jason Jewell
City of Andalusia



Mayor Billy Blackwell
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Reynolds
Henry County Commission



Ms. Karen Scott (ALT)
Henry County



Mr. Don McCleod, CPA
Houston County

The Commission is pleased to welcome these members to the Board. We look forward to many years of service together. Thank you for your commitment to Regional Service.

Mr. William Blocker - Loan Administration Board

The SEARP&DC Loan Administration Board welcomes a new member. Mr. William Blocker of Andalusia recently joined the Board to represent Covington County. Mr. Blocker is a graduate of Troy University and he also earned a Masters Degree in Business Administration from Webster University based in St. Louis, Missouri. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the USAF through Air Force ROTC at Troy University and served on active duty for over 26 years before retiring with the rank of Colonel in 2003. His community activities include the Covington Historical Society, where he has served as president for the last two years, and the civitan club where he is currently vice-president. He serves as chairman of the Covington County Republican Party and is active in Harmony Baptist Church where he serves in various leadership positions. Mr. Blocker has been married to Dianne Lindsey Blocker for 31 years and has two children and one grandchild. SEARP&DC enthusiastically welcomes Mr. Blocker to the Loan Board.



“Economic Development Grant assists Eufaula Company with Expansion”

The City of Eufaula was awarded \$230,800 in Economic Development Infrastructure grant funds from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs to extend public sanitary sewer to Benny Whitehead Trucking, Inc. (BWI), a family owned and operated business. The company is constructing a new terminal and office facility on Barbour County Road 34, with a total investment of over \$1,000,000. The total project cost to extend sewer was \$288,500, with the Eufaula Water Works and Sewer Board and BWI providing the local matching funds. BWI has already created over 50 jobs to date bringing total employment to 190.



The company has been in business since 1978 in Eufaula and is a long distance trucking firm operating over 75 trucks and 100 trailers. BWI transports dry freight (50%) and fresh produce (50%). Mayor Jay Jaxon stated, “During these economic times, we are really excited to have a company expanding and creating new jobs for our community. I am glad the city was able to participate in bringing this expansion to fruition.”

In addition, the city appreciates the efforts of the SEARP&DC Staff in preparing and administering the grant. SEARP&DC provided administration services in the development and implementation of the project. Barrett-Simpson, Inc. provided engineering services for the project.



Emily Waters, Economic Development Director
Emily can be reached at 334-794-4093 ext. 1414 or ewaters@searpc.org



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SEARP&DC'S Revolving

Loan Fund and Microloan Funds are seeking qualified new and expanding businesses for the loan programs. If you are a Business person, lending institution, or know someone with interest in these programs, please contact Emily Waters or Rachel Armstrong at 334-794-4093. For more information, or to download our application, visit www.searpc.org.

Agency Directory 334-794-4093

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Scott Farmer, Community Development Director, Ext. 1412
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LWCF Grants – Produce BIG Results

Prior to 2001 there was not a soccer field in the City of Ozark. Ozark youths found themselves constantly traveling to Fort Rucker or the surrounding area to play soccer if they were fortunate enough to have access to a soccer field. The sport of soccer had become an unbelievably popular sport for boys and girls of all ages. Ozark youths were at a disadvantage with such limited access to use of soccer fields. In 2002, thanks to a Land and Water Conservation Fund \$100,000 grant from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), and the foresight of city officials like past Mayor Bob Bunting, Mickey Snell, past Director of Parks and Recreation, and Keef Pettis past Planning Director; two soccer fields were constructed at the Police Memorial Park. These fields are located in the southwestern portion of the City of Ozark adjacent to Ben Street and East Gate Middle School.

Over the years since the soccer fields were established, many players have run up and down the fields. The popular spring and fall leagues of all ages have taught valuable skills and provided enjoyment to players, families, and many community members. Coaches and parents note valuable skills learned on these fields have helped youths find the determination to finish their education when hardships hit and soccer becomes the key reason to stay in school. Ozark High School coach Bill Brooks commented that “almost all the players except about 3 or 4 on his current high school varsity team come from playing on these fields.” Coach Brooks also stated, “These fields have been a great addition to Ozark



and helped give many players a chance at soccer scholarships.”

Keef Pettis, now Eufaula’s Recreation Director, stated that when he coached on the fields and his youngest son played there, it meant a great deal to a lot of players from all around the area. According to Mr. Pettis, “Many people waited many years for the fields.” The fields get additional usage during the day by East Gate Middle School children. The investment made by ADECA funds and the City of Ozark have been leveraged into a wide range of youth opportunities that everyone concerned with this project deserve to take great pride and be applauded. Mayor Billy Blackwell enthusiastically states that “the soccer fields have been a tremendous asset for Ozark. Over 200 players per season use the fields. Previously they used football and baseball fields when they could get scheduled time which was difficult.”



Penny Rotolo
Human Resources
Manager

Penny can be reached at
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Census 2010 Information

A census of population is mandated by the United States Constitution in order to count everyone residing in the United States every ten years. The first Census was held in 1790 and has been conducted every decennial since. The U.S. Census Bureau has been working toward implementing the 2010 Census over the past several years. The 2010 Census will differ from the 2000 Census by only having a ten question short form, instead of both a short form and a long form. The

long form that was formerly used in decennial censuses is now part of the American Community Survey, which is an annual survey program administered by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The primary intent of the Census is to allocate the 435 congressional districts through the United States. The 2010 Census will determine the distribution of the seats in each state in time for the 2012 Congressional elections. In addition to the constitutionally defined role of the Census, demo-

graphics derived from the Census are also used in a multitude of functions, many of which affect possible funding for counties and municipalities. Population data is used to allocate certain portions of education funding, transportation funding, funding for elderly programs, and is used by the private sector in site location studies.

Many local communities have participated in programs to assist the Census Bureau updating their Master Address File (MAF) that is used

Continued on Back Page



This has been an extremely busy and challenging time for the transit system. Much of our time has been spent dealing with the *American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009* and in gauging its impact on the transit system. We should receive a combined sum of approximately \$1.3 million for both the rural and urban components of our transit system. With this funding we hope to:

- Procure approximately 12 new busses
- Upgrade our scheduling software and place data terminals and GPSs on all of our busses
- Upgrade our information technology capability and enhance our mapping capability
- Finish furnishing the Depot
- Apply any remaining funds to our preventative maintenance account

We (Wiregrass Transit) were not the only beneficiaries of stimulus funding. Eufaula/Barbour County should receive approximately \$157,027. Covington County should receive approximately \$203,494. These transit systems have been advised by ALDOT of this funding and we are all awaiting the final implementing instructions from ALDOT before we can spend

these funds. These funds may be spent on any approved capital item, to include preventative maintenance, and require no local match.

We are currently in the process of making application to the Alabama Department of Senior Services for an FY2010 grant for both the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) program and New Freedoms funding. This will continue the program that we currently have in place and with which we have had tremendous success.

Tom Solomon and Mr.

On Saturday, March 14, 2009, Wiregrass Transit Authority hosted the state bus Roadeo in Dothan. This has become an annual event for us to host and has evolved into a very good training opportunity for all of our drivers.

Like everyone, we are concerned about the current economic situation. While we have been able to continue operations without significant impact we are concerned about the future. Should this trend continue, we are very concerned about the availability of



Sorrell, on behalf of the Southeast Alabama Regional Planning & Development Commission and the Wiregrass Transit Authority, received the 2009 Heritage Award from the Board of Directors of Landmark Park for our efforts to preserve and restore the Dixie Rail Depot.

Mr. Sorrell continues to serve on the Federal Transit Administration's Transit Bus Safety and Security Program Working Group. He has also been active with other transit providers in the state in working to form a viable and representative State Transit Association for all of the transit providers of the State of Alabama.

local matching funds from our supporting local governments. Without matching funds, we cannot leverage all of our federal dollars. If this occurs, we may have to scale back service. If we scale back we may have to release some of our personnel. We just do not know what the future holds and that is both troubling and a little bit frightening. As this situation develops, we will keep everyone informed.



John Sorrell
WTA Manager

John can be reached at 334-794-4093 ext. 1431 or transit@sanman.net.

Head Start Faces the Future With Optimism

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has announced that Head Start and Early Head Start programs will receive new funding and be eligible to apply for \$ 2.1 billion under the *American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009* (ARRA). Head Start and Early Head Start programs will also benefit from a separate increase of \$235 million for the fiscal year 2009. Further examination of these increases indicate that Head Start employees will receive a much needed pay increase and funds to meet other program needs. No less significant is the fact the majority of the funding increase is targeted for Early Head Start program expansion. This is a continuation of a trend that has favored Early Head Start for funding increases and a future trend toward providing services to children from birth to 3 years of age.

The SEARP&DC Head Start Program presently does not provide Early Head Start services. However, based on our *Community Assessment* of our Headland Head Start Center service area, there is a need for these services and an additional Head Start class. As we continue to study the possibilities of opening our first Early Head Start class, we are confronted with the realities and challenges this program expansion will present to our Head Start Program. Those challenges underscore the cost and complexity of Early Head Start.

As always, cost and availability of funds must be considered first. The cost per child of Early Head Start is twice that of a regular Head Start child.

Although considerable funding is being offered to support the cost. It is expected that we will partner for financial



assistance to provide extended day care and full year program services. Therefore costs not covered by the Early Head Start grant must be covered by a child care subsidy grant or partnerships. Also, there is a lower child-to-instructor ratio for infants and toddlers, and higher staff educational qualifications. While it is easy to conclude there are formidable barriers to providing Early Head Start Services, it is apparent that there is a great need for these services and that the future of our Head Start program may be linked to providing services to infants and toddlers. With this in mind, we are examining the feasibility of adding Early Head Start to the SEARP&DC Head Start Program.

Early Head Start provides comprehensive, year-round, child and family development services to low-income families with children from prenatal to 3 years old. Family services begin before birth with a focus on prenatal support to ensure the health of the mother and baby. Early Head Start provides activities that foster child development, increase family literacy, promote healthy parent-child relationships, and provide parenting support and education. Early

Head Start provides special support for single parent teen age mothers during their struggle to balance their employment and financial needs with their parental responsibilities.

The first three years of a child's life are critically important for language and cognitive development. Studies reveal that children's early language development sets the stage for later literacy and school success. Yet, children from low-income families often lag behind. Studies have shown that children from low-income families are exposed to less language in

their homes and as a consequence they enter school with a vocabulary that is one-fourth the size of vocabularies of children from higher-income families. Current research indicates that Early Head Start in transition with regular pre-K Head Start provides significant improvement in language and cognitive development. Such research has identified critical early language and literacy experiences that make a difference in children's development. Therefore, both Head Start and Early Head Start in recent years have moved toward research based program curriculum.

Based on current research, the addition of Early Head Start will be a high priority for our Head Start program. The addition of Early Head Start will facilitate the development and transition of children to our regular Head Start program. Based on research data, the future of child development must include Early Head Start. It is time for the SEARP&DC Head Start Program to meet the future.



**Ron Holliman,
Head Start Program
Director**

Ron can be reached at
334-794-4093 ext.1404

2010 Census - Continued

for the 2010 Census. The Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program is a voluntary program developed to increase the accuracy of the MAF through allowing local governments to review, add, and edit Census information regarding each jurisdiction's addresses. The LUCA program, conducted in 2007-2008, had 29% of jurisdictions sign up that covered 92% of housing units in the United States. Currently, the Census Bureau is canvassing the addresses listed on their MAF and will send the feedback to local governments that participated in the LUCA process late in 2009.

The Boundary and Annexation Survey (BAS) program is another important program that is used to

increase the accuracy of Census data for local governments. Annually, the Census Bureau sends the boundary information they have in their database to local governments for review and editing. If the Census Bureau does not receive updated annexation information from local governments, they might not know to update a municipality's borders. It could cause housing units to not be attributed correctly to the appropriate municipality.

It is very important for our counties and municipalities in Southeast Alabama to participate in Census programs in order to achieve the most accurate population counts possible. Communities can challenge population estimates between decennial censuses, as Eufaula successfully achieved in 2008 to increase their

2007 population estimate. However, communities will not be able to challenge the 2010 Census, and much of the potential federal funding over the next decade will be affected by the 2010 count.

SEARP&DC is an affiliate agency of the Alabama State Data Center. Therefore, if any community has questions regarding 2010 Census or other Census Bureau programs, please contact Scott Farmer at (334) 794-4093 x.1412 or e-mail at sfarmer@searpc.org.



**Scott Farmer,
Community
Development Director**

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334-794-4093 ext. 1412
or
sfarmer@searpc.org

SAVE THE DATE!

SEPTEMBER 24, 2009

Daleville Convention Center

SEARP&DC Regional Annual Meeting

Mr. Bill Johnson, Director of Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs will be the guest speaker.

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