

■ CHAMBER UPDATES

Albany Area Chamber

Catherine Glover, President/CEO

Strive2Thrive, Albany's vision to empower families to overcome poverty and become productive and inclusive community members, graduated 13 new families. These families enrolled in Strive2Thrive in August 2011, and in December all 13 families graduated from Getting Ahead. They will be matched with Allies and their progress tracked and reported beginning in January 2012.

More than 75 community and business leaders joined Toby Carr, transportation advisor to Gov. Deal, Heath Garrett of Georgia360, political fundraiser Diana Kincaid and political strategist Chris Carpenter to better understand how important a "YES" vote for TSPLOST will be for our region. The group emphasized all the "pennies" raised in our region will stay in our region and go directly to road projects that will keep southwest Georgia competitive with all parts of our state. The Transportation Special-Purpose Local Option Sales Tax will appear on the November 2012 ballot.



Americus-Sumter County Chamber

Angela Westra, President

The Chamber's Young Ambassadors were given the distinct honor of heralding the arrival of Santa Claus at the Holiday Open House in beautiful downtown Americus in November. There was a nip in the air as the Young Ambassadors, wearing Santa hats and ringing jingle bells, ran down Jackson Street ahead of Santa and his sleigh, pulled by reindeer. These outstanding students volunteered for the remainder of the evening by operating the carnival rides for the children and in the photo area, where children and their families were lined up to get pictures with Santa!

Augusta Metro Chamber

Sue Parr, President/CEO

The Chamber hosted the annual Pre Session Legislative Breakfast in December at the Augusta Marriot. The featured speaker was University System of Georgia Chancellor Hank Huckaby and local delegation members. Before the Legislative Session begins each year, members of the Chamber gather to focus on the activity of state government and its impact on the business environment. This event focused on an exchange between the local delegation of Georgia lawmakers and members interested in a straight forward discussion on Georgia public policy. Chancellor Huckaby revealed the economic forecast for Georgia remains sobering and recent data indicates that the state may not see a true recovery until 2018 or 2020. He also spoke regarding the University system's budget request, which is expected to win favor with Gov. Deal, and reported he is seeking funding for a \$55 million Education Commons building for Georgia Health Sciences University located in Augusta.

Catoosa County Chamber

Martha Eaker, President & CEO

In the past several months many businesses located in Ringgold, GA have celebrated a Grand Re-Opening after sustaining severe damage from a tornado in late April. In an effort to spread the word that Ringgold has recovered and is back in business, U.S. Representative Tom Graves (R-GA-09) recently visited several businesses that have been repaired and are now reopened!



Cobb Chamber

David Connell, President & CEO

Exciting changes are coming to the Chamber! At the January First Monday Breakfast, the Chamber will launch its new logo and brand concept, improving the look and feel of all marketing and communication materials. The new brand reflects the vision and goals of the Chamber and will propel our membership and programs into the new year. New design and collateral pieces will begin appearing across all programs and events, improving our marketing presence and keeping our Chamber current.

Formerly known as ACES, the Chamber's young professionals networking group has been improved for 2012, now known as Cobb Young Professionals. Cobb Young Professionals targets young professionals in their 20s and 30s from companies across Cobb to establish and cultivate talented young professionals to lead Cobb's next generation of economic, social and civic growth. Every other month Cobb Young Professionals will meet at Dave & Buster's in Marietta to hear from a speaker on a topic relevant to young professionals within Cobb County. On the other months, the group will travel around to different venues to showcase Cobb County's many assets for a purely networking social.

Twenty-six community and business leaders recently were selected to participate in the Chamber's 2012 Honorary Commanders Association. The civilians are paired with officers assigned to Dobbins Air Reserve Base (ARB), the General Lucius D. Clay National Guard Center, Army, Navy and Marine Corps. The yearlong program is designed to give the civilians an opportunity to learn more about local military activities as well as various aspects of the national defense system. The association meets monthly for activities

GACCE exists to provide exceptional services to its members in the areas of professional development, information, and networking opportunities, and to advocate the local chamber's role in economic and community development.

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Cobb Chamber (continued)

including tours and special on- and off-base events. The program fosters community support for the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Air National Guard, Army Guard and Coast Guard. The association also educates the local business community about the role of the guard and reserve in national defense and encourages employers to support employees who are members of the guard and reserve.

Dublin-Laurens County Chamber

Willie Paulk, GCCE, President

The Annual Farm Appreciation Luncheon was held in November with Gary Black, State Agriculture Commissioner, as guest speaker. This luncheon is sponsored by the Laurens County Farm Bureau, County Extension Office, and the Chamber.

The Chamber joined with a local organization called The Helping Hand of Laurens County to help with its annual Christmas Basket Fund Drive providing Christmas baskets for local needy families and the elderly. Blankets, food, toys, and money were collected to help 800 families.

Gilmer County Chamber

Paige Green, President

The Chamber's Annual Dinner will take place January 19 at the First Baptist Church.

Greater Hall Chamber

Kit Dunlap, President & CEO

The Annual Eggs & Issues Breakfast brought over 400 together to hear a message from Lt Gov Casey Cagle and hear about legislative issues from the Hall County delegation. A former State Representative reminded us that we had been having this event since 1982! Jackson EMC sponsored the breakfast with Lowe's donating some 120 poinsettias for all elected officials.

Small Business Success Seminar for December featured Jeff Smith, ActionCOACH, Atlanta who helps company executives grow their businesses and improve profitability through a set of strategic plans and systems. One of our small businesses referred him for the program. His quote, "I have been coached and my business has really improved...it works." There were many take away points that businesses could use.

The Annual Downtown Gainesville Jingle Mingle sponsored by the Chamber and MainStreet Gainesville featured Santa, kids photos, a train ride, choirs singing, treats and drinks served by businesses and restaurants on the downtown square. All shops were open, decorated, and had specials for the Christmas Season.

Henry County Chamber

Kay Pippin, President

Henry County held its first-ever Holiday Party in December compliments of the Holiday Inn & Suites in Stockbridge with over 375 members participating. The hotel featured its new "On the Roxx" Restaurant, providing delicious food and drinks as members enjoyed performances by The Henry Players, a cellist and an acoustic guitarist. Santa himself was there to deliver over 60 "presents" ranging in value from \$20 - \$400 and including flat screen TVs and weekend getaway packages donated by member businesses. Feedback was immediate and very positive - with requests to make this an annual event!

A resolution was adopted by the Chamber's Board of Directors during its December meeting commending retiring mayor, Lorene Lindsey, for her twelve years of service to the City of Locust Grove. In 1999 Mayor Lindsey became the first female mayor of Locust Grove and has since served three consecutive terms. She was instrumental in redeveloping the historic downtown and the city's infrastructure while also serving as an active volunteer for a number of civic organizations. Mayor Lindsey's last day in office was December 31, 2011.



Jackson County Area Chamber

Shane Short, President & CEO

During the month of December the Chamber announced that Bed, Bath and Beyond will be locating a new e-fulfillment center in Jackson County creating around 900 jobs and investing \$50 million in new investment. In addition, Toyota Automotive announced a \$70 million dollar expansion creating 35 jobs, and Kubota announced that it will build a new tractor facility creating 200 new jobs and investing \$73 million. All total there were 1,135 new jobs announced with a total of \$193 million in new investment into the community. Shane Short, president/CEO stated that he "is proud of the hard work of the economic development team," especially Courtney Bernardi, the Chamber's Director of Economic Development. "Courtney has done an outstanding job for our community. We contribute our success to our local economic development team and the Georgia's Department of Economic Development who went above and beyond to help make these deals," said Short.

■ CHAMBER UPDATES

Liberty County Chamber

Leah Poole, Executive Director

The Chamber recently hosted the “15th Annual Illuminated Christmas Parade” in Hinesville, GA.



Paulding Chamber

Carolyn Delamont, President

Despite difficult economic times, in fewer than eight months the Chamber has met its funding commitment for the first year of Paulding County Economic Development Inc. (PCED) operations. Through business pledges and in-kind support, the Chamber already has contributed \$107,000, exceeding its commitment to raise \$100,000 annually each of PCED’s first three years. Paulding County is investing \$200,000 annually and the cities of Dallas and Hiram \$50,000 each as PCED begins its efforts to generate new jobs and expand the local tax base. The Chamber began its fund-raising effort around April, coinciding with the hiring of Jamie Gilbert as executive director of PCED.

Robins Regional Chamber

The Chamber hosted the 54th Annual Robins Regional Chamber Christmas Parade. The Chamber’s Christmas Parade is one of Georgia’s largest Christmas holiday events and provides a great opportunity for area organizations and businesses to gain valuable exposure and show off their community spirit. While the parade is attended by thousands of community members, many others, including business owners, educational organizations and recreational entities participate with floats, marching units and other entries in efforts to kick-off the holiday season! Winners from this year’s parade are as follows: Best Religious Float- Lighthouse Baptist Church; Best Business Float- Happy Hour Recycling Center; Best Miscellaneous Float- International Social Club; and Best Marching Unit- Northside High School Blue Wind Band. Maj. Gen. Bob McMahon and his wife Hope also participated in the parade, along with several representatives from Robins Air Force Base.



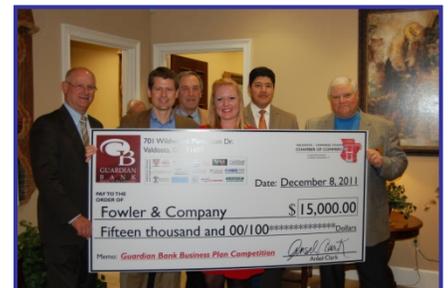
The Chamber hosted the final Business After Hours for 2011, sponsored by The Hilton Garden Inn. Established members, new members and the general public were invited to celebrate the season by attending the December Business After Hours. It was a great opportunity for networking and fun as the Hilton Garden Inn unveiled its festive holiday theme, plenty of food, music and great door prizes!

Mayor Chuck Shaheen, along with members of the Warner Robins City Council, discussed issues of city-wide concern at the December Eggs & Issues Breakfast of the Chamber. Sponsored by Flint Energies, the December event highlighted a progress report of the city’s current programs and offered a preview of plans for the city’s growth.

Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber

Myrna Ballard, President

The Chamber announced the sixth winner of the annual Guardian Bank Business Plan Competition in December. Fowler and Company received a check for \$15,000 from Guardian Bank and an assortment of other donated services valued at more than \$20,000 to enhance and expand the company. The prize package was presented at a Business After Hours hosted by Guardian Bank. The Guardian Bank Business Plan Competition is an initiative of the Chamber to cultivate new business development in Lowndes County. It is an eight month process that requires businesses to be located in Lowndes County and have the potential to employ technical college and/or university graduates. Competitors are offered educational workshops to assist in developing their business plans. Guardian Bank has donated \$100,000 of start-up capital to winners of the competition throughout the past six years, helping to create 23 new jobs in Valdosta-Lowndes County.



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To see the full list of GACCE Board Members, please see the GACCE web site at www.gacce.org.