Update from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of the LSCOG,

The last few months have been trying for all of us. During this time, the Lower Savannah COG staff has continued to work from the office (essential services) and from home. The COG staff has demonstrated great flexibility and dedication to the mission of the organization by continuing to provide quality services to our communities, clients and partners. I thank them for all their hard work during the COVID–19 pandemic. Like other organizations, the COG staff quickly adapted to the virtual world and daily Zoom meetings are the norm.

During this time, we have obtained PPEs for the office, the six workforce centers, the six councils on aging, and the Aiken transit system (Best Friend Express). We developed reopening protocols based upon CDC, DHEC and Accelerate SC guidelines. Each week I receive a report on the number of COVID cases in the region with trend lines. At this time, the number of COVID cases in the Lower Savannah region has plateaued but not decreased over any 14-day period.

That said we are using Accelerate SC’s “Re-entry Plan for State Employees” guidelines as a base for our re-entry plan. As of June 1st, the LSCOG will move into Phase 1 of the re-entry plan. COG staff will rotate working in the office and from home. No more that 50% of the staff will be in the building at any one time; no visitors are allowed in the office; virtual meetings will continue and social distancing and cleaning protocol have been instituted. We will move to the next Phase when DHEC moves to Phase 2 and the COVID regional numbers have decrease over a 14-day period.

Please note that we take the health and welfare of our staff, partners and especially our elderly clients very seriously. We will continue to provide quality services and maintain flexibility during this stressful time. Thank you for your continued support and God bless you, your families, and our communities.

Best wishes,

William Molnar, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Regional SC COGs Distribute Protective Equipment

The Lower Savannah Council of Governments recently collaborated with other SC COGs to purchase Personal Protected Equipment (PPE) in bulk for each COG. The Santee-Lynches COG coordinated the PPE purchases as the SC Regional COG’s begin planning for staff returning to the offices after working remotely through the COVID-19 pandemic. Items purchased included personal protective equipment, thermometers and hand sanitizer. These items have either been on back order or expensive and the COGs were able to obtain them quickly and at a good price for all 10 COGs in South Carolina. They distributed them the last week of May in preparation for staff returning to the offices on June 1st.

“Operation Spread the Joy” and Creativity Keep LTC Ombudsman and Residents Connected

A unique collaboration between the SC Department of Corrections and the SC Department on Aging called “Operation Spread the Joy”, resulted in over 2,000 handmade items being donated to various long term care facilities across the state. Carlyle Senior Care of Aiken, SC, a small 86 bed skilled nursing facility was selected by Susan Garen, Regional LTC Ombudsman, to receive the face masks made by five residents of Trenton Correctional Institution in nearby Edgefield, SC. On Thursday, May 7, at 2:00pm, Warden Evonne Willingham and members of her staff presented Tim Armstrong, Administrator of Carlyle Senior Care, with beautiful, handmade face masks. At the same time across the state, other correctional institution staff also presented donated items that were made and included blankets, knitted footies and caps, handmade greeting cards and other gifts to many other homes in South Carolina.

Susan Garen and Alanna Berrie, Ombudsman Specialist, have mailed personal cards to a few residents across the region, enlisted the help from staff inside the homes to post flyers reminding residents the ombudsmen are still available and are using technology to connect by FaceTime and Google Duo. Most recently, 2,650 large size post cards were printed and distributed to every resident in the region.

Staff of the Lower Savannah Regional LTC Ombudsman Program are staying in touch with the residents of the region’s fifty-six long term care facilities. Mandated by the Federal Older Americans’ Act to advocate for residents rights, make routine visits to facilities to ensure residents have timely access to the ombudsman, and investigates and helps resolve complaints filed about care, the nationwide ban on entering facilities has meant meeting the mandates in creative ways.

The Medication Assistance Program (MAP) is operating by phone two days per week with concentration on the current client’s refills for medications. They can be reached at 803-508-7066.

The Savannah River Site Retiree Association (SRSRA) will be operating remotely for volunteers to assist retirees by phone. They can be reached at 803-508-7065.
Drive-Thru Meals for Seniors

The Lower Savannah Area Agency on Aging home delivered meal contractors have been working non-stop to ensure seniors in need receive meals. Each county is now providing “drive thru” meals. Seniors who are currently not receive home delivered meals are eligible no matter their income. To receive “drive thru” meals you must be 60 years or older and a resident of the county where you are receiving meals. Food is on a first-come first serve basis. The schedule by county is below:

**Aiken County**
**Mondays at 2:00pm**
1310 East Pine Log Road
*(old Boots, Bridle and Bitchens building)*
Aiken, SC

**Allendale County**
**Fridays at 10am**
246 Hampton Avenue North
*(old Davita building)*
Fairfax, SC

**Calhoun County**
**Wednesday at 10:30am**
706 New Bethan Road
*(Fort Motte Community Center)*
Fort Motte, SC

**Aiken County**
**Wednesday at 1:30pm**
1577 Old State Road
*(Beulah United Methodist Church parking lot)*
Gaston, SC

**Orangeburg County**
**Mondays at 10am**
2570 St. Matthews Road
*(Orangeburg County Council on Aging)*
Orangeburg, SC
Reservations are required.
Please call 803-531-4663 to reserve a meal.

**Thursday at 10am**
220 Park Street
*(Neeses Senior Center)*
Neeses, SC
Reservations are required.
Please call 803-531-4663 to reserve a meal.

**Barnwell County**
**Mondays at 10:30am**
10588 Dunbarton Blvd
*(Bilo parking lot)*
Barnwell, SC

**Tuesday at 10:30**
12255 E. Main Street
*(Williston School District office)*
Williston, SC

**Tuesday at 2pm**
19464 Solomon Blatt Avenue
*(Blackville Community Center)*
Blackville, SC

**Upcoming Committee Events**
Visit [www.lscog.org/events](http://www.lscog.org/events) for details.

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Please remind your communities to go online and complete their Census Form: [www.2020census.gov](http://www.2020census.gov)
Planning, Community and Economic Development (PCED)

Over the past couple of months, in addition to working on our current projects, the Planning, Community and Economic Development staff has participated in an immense amount of webinars, Zoom meetings, and conference calls. Topics run the gamut as well as the way information has been presented. A few things have become clear during this time. 1) We have entered a time when distance communication and virtual platforms are necessary and part of our new normal, like it or not. 2) Not every person, organization or governmental entity has the same technological capabilities or access. 3) Local governments, all over the nation, are taking a look at what their priority needs and projects are and will be going forward in the “new normal”.

With this in mind and looking to what the future might bring, we want to find out how our partners are tackling communication issues, public meetings, and priority project needs. We are developing a survey to for you to fill out so that we can best assist you with communication and projects in the months to come. Please be on the lookout for this information in the coming weeks through mail and on the LSCOG website. In the meantime, if you have any questions or need assistance from the planning, community and economic development division, please feel free to let us know.

2020 Visitor Guide Digital Launch

The 2020 official Thoroughbred Country Visitor Guide is now available for viewing and/or downloading online. This is a great resource for planning where you’ll go and what you’ll do when the time is right. Thoroughbred Country South Carolina will be ready whenever you are. We hope you’ll enjoy our region soon.

Thoroughbred Country Hosts Quarterly Advisory Committee Virtually

Thoroughbred Country staff hosted the quarterly Advisory Committee meeting a bit differently this quarter. As we continue to adjust to new safety/health precautions, the meeting scheduled to be in Allendale County on May 12, was held virtually via Zoom conferencing. Committee members from each of our four counties were in attendance and updates were given from all.

SCPRT Update

South Carolina Parks, Recreation & Tourism (SCPRT) launched a tourism recovery campaign on May 1 to maintain its presence in the consumer marketplace and position itself for growth when travel returns to normal. The first phase, “Dream Now, Discover Later”, runs through the month of May. The campaign will transition into phase two in June, inviting visitors to make their reservations. Click to watch the phase one video, here: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=667699390748664 and be sure to check out phase two after June 1 on https://discoversouthcarolina.com.