

UPTOWN

The check is in the mail

The federal government sent a very important letter to South Carolina municipalities in July. While it may not be an actual check, it could represent thousands of dollars (and adequate state and federal representation) for a municipality throughout the next decade.

The U.S. Census Bureau sent all mayors invitations to join the Local Update of Census Addresses program. The LUCA program enables local officials to use their knowledge of their communities to ensure addresses on the Census' Master Address File are correct.

For the Census Bureau to count individuals during the 2010 Census, it has to know where the individuals reside. Local officials can improve the accuracy of the Census by making sure the address list accounts for the municipality's growth due to factors such as annexation and new construction.

Many local officials believe the Census is a federal responsibility not a local concern. That opinion could not be further from the truth according to Bobby Bowers, research director for the State Budget and Control Board. "If the count is not accurate, the federal government doesn't suffer ... cities and counties suffer."

Bowers cautioned local officials that the Bureau, unlike in previous years, will not allow appeals after the Census is conducted. The appeals must be done on the front-end during the LUCA program.

The invitation offered municipalities three participation options. Officials should choose their LUCA participation option based on the type of addressing within their community, access to an address list, willingness to sign a confidentiality agreement and level of resources for conducting the review.

The Census Bureau advises if a complete review is not possible, local officials should focus their review on areas where addresses are more likely to be missed or incorrect (including annexed areas, new mobile home parks, and areas of new construction).

Option 1 allows participating government entities to comment on the city-style addresses on the census address list and provide any city-style addresses that are missing from the list. (City-style addresses are those used for mailing or E-911 in a house number and street name format.) After the Census Bureau validates the changes, the municipality will receive feedback and have the opportunity to appeal the results.

Option 2 allows a government with city-style addresses to submit its list of city-style addresses assigned to census blocks. Under this option, the

THE CHECK continued on page 3

Priority Investment Act aims to improve communication, plan for growth

State and local officials hope a new law, signed by Governor Mark Sanford in May, will help local governments communicate with each other and promote better plans for growth.

The Priority Investment Act is an amendment to the 1994 Comprehensive Planning Act. It calls for all local governments with zoning to coordinate with nearby jurisdictions to establish priority investment areas. Roads, schools, water, sewer systems and other capital improvements in these designated areas would receive priority over projects outside these areas.

PRIORITY INVESTMENT continued on page 2

August 2007

Inside This Issue

Outstanding achievements recognized

page 4

Something's fishy

page 17

Main Street SC training focuses on business recruitment

page 19

Priority investment continued from cover

South Carolina's population has been booming, and the trend is expected to continue over the next few decades. That growth will require billions of dollars in new infrastructure, and the burden to create it will fall to local governments. The Priority Investment Act provides a tool for local governments to respond to those challenges, said state Rep. Ben Hagood, R-Mount Pleasant and chief sponsor of the bill.

"We need adequate resources to keep people out of traffic jams, put kids in good schools, and provide clean water and proper sewage systems," Hagood said. "It's vitally important for towns, cities, counties, school districts, utilities, the state department of transportation and other infrastructure agencies to work together."

The law provides that a local comprehensive plan must include certain elements. The Priority Investment Act amends housing element requirements to call for an analysis of market-based incentives that may be available to encourage the development of affordable housing or traditional neighborhood design. It also calls for a review of unnecessary regulatory burdens that may prevent these types of developments, Hagood said.

The act also requires comprehensive plans to include a transportation element that considers transportation facilities, including major road improvements, new road construction, transit projects and pedestrian and bicycle projects.

In addition, the act calls for the comprehensive plan to include a priority investment element. This would analyze the likely federal, state and local funds available for public infrastructure and facilities over the course of a decade and recommend projects most worthy of those funds, such as water, sewer, roads and schools. The recommendation of those projects must be in coordination with other local jurisdictions.

"The cost of infrastructure – roads, water, public schools – gets more expensive every day," Hagood said. "The better coordinated the local governments are in addressing the needs of local citizens, the better bang we get for our buck."

By coordinating and prioritizing regional needs, local governments can get in "planning mode, rather than battle mode, for annexations and zoning disputes," Hagood added.

PIAs can help as a means of coordinating infrastructure development to achieve more efficiency and better planning, said Richland County Councilwoman Kit Smith.

"Local governments need to work together because with very restrictive annexation laws, counties have become, essentially, urban governments and are delivering urban services — policing through more intensive use of sheriff's deputies, urban planning, garbage, traffic signalization, sidewalks, neighborhood parks, water and sewer," Smith said.

Smith said Richland County already has begun discussion about priority investment areas and hopes the new law will spark more interest to move toward adoption.

Current law provides a tool called the "official map" to help local governments with planning. The official map serves to reserve future locations for growth and development, and regulate structures and changes, said MASC Executive Director Howard Duvall.

The map is a tool that goes hand-in-hand with the Priority Investment Act, Duvall said. Some municipalities, such as the Town of Mount Pleasant, already use the map to plan for growth.

The town considers all the needs of residents when approving residential development, said Mayor Harry Hallman.

"We just want to make sure we get school sites and recreational facilities each time we approve a development," Hallman said.

Mount Pleasant has been growing at a rapid rate, and town leaders have worked with the school district to handle the growth, said Town Administrator Mac Burdette.

For example, the town and the district hired the same demographer. The demographer will certify growth rates and determine the kind of growth – looking at factors such as age and wealth, Burdette said.

"We could have gotten our own demographer, and the numbers probably would not match up," Burdette said. "Then we'd each be planning for different growth."

Cities, counties and other entities have been reluctant to share information because of concerns of competition for economic development. While that remains an important issue, there still is room for cooperation, Burdette said.

"Hopefully, as we've done with the schools in Mount Pleasant, other cities and counties will arrive at the position where they see how it can be mutually beneficial to share resources and information," he said.

And while Hagood acknowledged it's hard to legislate cooperation, "towns and other agencies can serve constituents well by striving for an even greater level of coordination," he said.

For more information about the Priority Investment Act, contact Howard Duvall at 803.933.1202 or hduvall@masc.sc.

Representative Ben Hagood will speak about the Priority Investment Act at the SC Community Development Association's Winter Meeting on October 1. Visit www.masc.sc/affiliates/scda/description.htm for more information.

The check continued from cover

municipality receives the census address list and maps as a reference but can not comment on them. After the Census Bureau validates the list, the municipality will receive feedback and have the opportunity to appeal the results.

Because options 1 and 2 enable local officials to review census materials, anyone with access to the materials must sign a confidentiality agreement.

Option 3 is available to municipalities that have city-style addresses but do not want to comment on the address list, do not want to sign the confidentiality agreement or cannot meet the Census Bureau's security guidelines. The municipality can submit its city-style addresses coded to the census block. Under option 3, the city gives up its right to appeal the results.

Municipalities must register between July and January 2008 for the LUCA program. The city will have 120 days after receiving the LUCA review materials to return its comments to the Bureau. Bowers urged officials to not register for LUCA until they have plans in place to do the review and can meet the 120-day deadline.

All municipalities should participate in LUCA. "If we don't get our share, guess who will?" Bowers said. "Someone else will."

For more information, visit www.census.gov/geo/www/luca2010/luca.html or call Melissa Carter, Municipal Association of SC's research analyst, at 803.933.1251 or mcarter@masc.sc.

Suggested Local Address Sources

- New housing construction or building permits
- E-911 address files
- Housing inspection records
- Planning and zoning records
- Local utility records
- Annexation records
- Assessment or taxation files
- School enrollment records
- Driver's license files
- Voter registration files

News Briefs



■ MASC has filled two vacant positions on staff. Lynn Miller will provide accounts payable and credit card program support to the finance department. Cindy Martellini will oversee the claims administration functions for both SC Municipal Insurance Trust and SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund, as well as serve as a member liaison on claims-related matters.

■ The Municipal Association received a Healthy Richland Worksite Award. The Award recognizes Richland County employers who demonstrate a commitment to employee health by incorporating comprehensive worksite health promotion and wellness programs.

■ Governor Mark Sanford awarded Tuck McConnell, city manager for Walterboro, the Order of the Palmetto, South Carolina's "highest civilian honor for extraordinary lifetime achievement and service to the state and nation."

■ In June, the National Main Street Center named Main Street SC Manager Beppie LeGrand to its National Main Street Coordinators Executive Board.

■ Sam Bennett, city manager for North Augusta, was named president of the SC City-County Managers Association.

■ According to a CNN Money study, Irmo is one of the 25 most affordable cities in America. The study says "the Columbia suburb's great schools and beautiful scenery, like Lake Murray, make Irmo a place where real estate prices should soar. But so far, costs remain reasonable."



Other Retirement Benefits Investment Trust

The first to enter into SC ORBIT

In May, the City of Charleston became the first member of the South Carolina Other Retirement Benefits Investment Trust. Open to all political subdivisions, SC ORBIT is an irrevocable trust established by the Municipal Association of SC as a cost-effective way for cities to comply with GASB Statement 45.

GASB 45 requires state and local governments to report other post employment benefits similar to the way they report pensions on annual financial statements.

For more information, visit www.masc.sc/SCORBIT/description.htm or contact Heather Ricard at hricard@masc.sc or 803.933.1258.

Outstanding achievements recognized

Each year, MASC honors outstanding local government projects in South Carolina. In 2007, 35 municipalities entered the Municipal Achievement Awards program. The following are descriptions of winning projects and other entries.

Population Category 1,001 - 5,000: Folly Beach

The City of Folly Beach is working hard to change its image from party place to a residential area with a focus on family.

City officials created a riverfront park with a fishing dock and pavilion. They rewrote zoning laws to encourage year-round homes. They improved their only existing recreational park by resurfacing the tennis and basketball courts. Yet despite all this work, there still was no place for young children to play.

As a first step, the city created a Parks and Recreation Committee and solicited residents' ideas on amenities they wanted and where to locate them. Based on the input from the committee and residents, officials decided to create a handicapped accessible children's park that would showcase Folly Beach's history.

Officials chose to build the park on public property near the Public Works field office. The site had become a dumping ground for old cable dishes, concrete slabs, bales of wire and other debris. Volunteers from the community and from Comcast Cable, the site's pre-

vious occupant, helped clear the area.

Throughout the project, the city made the most of citizen participation and corporate sponsorships. Officials canvassed the community for ideas, which helped to publicize the project and create a sense of personal involvement. That helped encourage people to take part. City officials actively involved local organizations, recruited volunteers and solicited labor and donations from local companies.

Several members of the Folly Beach Arts Guild volunteered to paint a large mural depicting the pirates who once camped on Folly Beach. A local company donated the design of sliding and climbing equipment shaped like a shrimp boat and lighthouse. A local landscaper helped install plants and donated its services to maintain the park. More community volunteers stepped forward to clean, build and paint.

Contact Toni Connor-Rooks at 843.588.2447 or tconnor@cityoffollybeach.com.



City of Hartsville: Police Youth Academy

that for many students in the Hartsville area, problems began after the eighth grade. Officials decided to create a prevention program for these students before they reached high school.

A committee comprised of eighth grade students, faculty of the junior high school and the Hartsville Police Department established the Police Youth Academy in 1997. The Academy was created to teach youth how the criminal justice system works; strengthen relationships between students and police; stress the importance of responsibility; and reduce school violence and discipline problems.

Using student input to create the curriculum, the four-week academy addresses issues such as the judicial system, investigation procedures and reasons for the use of force. County jail inmates talked to students in their classroom about the impact of committing crimes. Students also visited local museums, city agencies, nature preserves and historical sites for hands-on learning opportunities.

While delinquent students were the initial targets of the Police Youth Academy, the program has shifted focus to include a range of teens. Officers work



City of Folly Beach: Children's Playground

Population Category 5,001 - 10,000: Hartsville

With juvenile crime rates increasing, City of Hartsville officials knew they needed to act to help at-risk youths.

An analysis of data on juvenile crime and dropout rates revealed

with school guidance counselors to select students with problems such as delinquency, poor socialization skills, lack of respect and low grades.

Success in the program is determined by whether the students complete the course. If students fail to follow the program or have continued behavior problems, they can be punished with physical tasks – for the individual or their entire “squad.”

The Police Department provided staff time for the Academy. Also, local residents, attorneys, school officials, court officers and members of the Hartsville Downtown Development Association donated their time.

Building on the success of the first year, the Police Department received a grant of \$50,000 for five years to expand and improve the program. Due to the low cost of supplies, Hartsville was able to spread the money over a 10-year period. The program has grown to include two summer classes: one four-week class for boys and a separate one for girls.

Through this program, the city, school system and many volunteers have pulled together to help make a difference in the lives of the youth who will become tomorrow’s leaders.

Contact Chief Tim Kemp at 843.383.3000 or tim.kemp@hartsville.org.

Population Category 10,001 - 20,000: Simpsonville

In a true collaborative effort, residents and city officials have worked together to create a unique, family-oriented park in Simpsonville.

Over the past decade, Simpsonville has ranked consistently among the state’s fastest growing municipalities. Participation in the city’s youth baseball program increased 80 percent between 1998 and 2006. City leaders decided to create the family-friendly park to serve local baseball and softball tournaments and strengthen the local economy by

hosting regional tournament play.

Heritage Park’s design won the 2005 President’s Award from the South Carolina Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The 90-acre park design used as many existing trees and plants as possible. It employs “green” technology – including UV reflective windows in its building, native stone throughout, and passive heating/cooling materials and techniques.

Heritage Park doubled the number of available recreational baseball/softball fields in the city. The complex includes two score towers, two miles of paved and lighted walking trails, bike paths, picnic shelters, three football/soccer fields, two playgrounds and a fully operational miniature replica steam engine train for rides. Also, there is an activity center called the CentrePlex featuring an arcade, food services, eating areas, restrooms, offices and a police substation.

The park also has a practice facility, with six batting cages, 10 soft-toss nets and a full-size infield. The practice facility was built with funds donated to the Simpsonville Parks and Recreation Department by the family of 9-year-old Nicholas Camerato, who died while attempting to save a drowning friend. Nicholas participated in Little League baseball in Simpsonville, and he’s memorialized by the practice facility that bears his name.

Heritage Park was planned as a facility to define the community and provide quality experiences for children and families. It was built with funds from the hospitality and accommodations tax.



City of Simpsonville: Heritage Park

Nearby businesses have benefited from the park. Weekend hotel room occupancy in Simpsonville has more than doubled since Heritage Park opened. In 2005, its first year, Heritage Park hosted regional baseball and softball tournaments on 25 of 34 operating weekends. In 2006, it hosted more than 30 weekends of tournaments, including the National Baseball Congress 12-under World Series. These events have brought hundreds of out-of-state families to local restaurants and hotels.

The park will continue to grow with the addition of a 16,000-seat amphitheater, three football/soccer fields, playground, additional walking trails and picnic shelters.

Contact Russell Hawes at 864.967.9526 or rhawes@simpsonville.com.

Communications: Turbeville

Even with a population of 720, the Turbeville mayor and town council recognized the need to open as many lines of communication with residents as possible. With 51 percent of its population considered low- to moderate-income, town leaders knew they had to communicate in a way that would not cost residents.

Outstanding achievements continued from page 5

Officials first decided to create a simple newsletter and include it in monthly water/sewer bills. The mayor began writing and editing the newsletter, which initially included a synopsis of the council meeting. The newsletter has expanded to showcase the town's new businesses and upcoming events.

The newsletter then was e-mailed to people who requested it. Interest in the electronic version of the newsletter has grown to 72 subscribers from the initial five.

Town officials also decided to create a Web site showcasing Turbeville. The site includes a calendar of events, a recreation page highlighting seasonal sports, a brief town history, contact information and a newcomers' page. In its early stages, the site averaged about 50 hits. Today it averages 780 hits a month.

Perhaps most importantly, officials needed a way to alert residents of emergencies – of interest given the town's proximity to the Turbeville Correctional Institute. Before the facility was built, residents had expressed fears about the possibility of an incident at the prison or an inmate escaping.

Councilmembers responded to these concerns by adding a "phone tree" operating system to the town's computer system. The phone system enables the town to place automated calls to residents, relaying important information. Turbeville officials also use it to remind residents of events, such as elections or special programs. Turbeville voter turnout more than doubled in its last election – from 30 to 67 percent — after sending a pre-election reminder phone call to residents.

Officials expanded the phone system to better care for their growing elderly population. The system calls senior citizens with a short programmed message. If the senior does not answer the call, the system alerts officials who check on that person.

The cost of improving communications with residents has been minimal – the initial purchase of the phone tree system, the Web site's domain name and monthly maintenance for the Web site, and printing costs for the newsletter. Town officials said the payoff has been great as Turbeville citizens are being kept informed and feeling an increased sense of ownership in their town.

Contact Pat Goodwin at 843.659.2781 or pgoodwin2@fic-i.net.

Economic Development: Columbia

Columbia leaders have a long-term goal of achieving social, economic and political



City of Columbia: Technology Incubator

success through the use of and investments in technology.

The city adopted a Regional Technology Strategic Plan in 1999. As part of the plan, the city made a commitment to build and support a coalition among local government, businesses and educational institutions to help transition Columbia into the new knowledge-based economy.

The plan sought to aid business creation and growth to provide increasing numbers of higher paying jobs in Columbia and the surrounding areas, and create additional economic activity for the region through increased taxes and fees.

City Council knew traditional economic development activities would not be enough to meet its goals. So the city's Office of Economic Development began working with the University of South Carolina and its Research Foundation. The initial strategy: focus on a new business incubator at the University's College of Engineering.

TOWN OF TURBEVILLE

June Newsletter

The Town Hall will be **closed** Monday, May 28, 2007, in observance of Memorial Day.

ATTENTION SENIOR CITIZENS! Do you ever feel lonely? Do you have days when you wished someone would call and check on you just to make sure you are alright? The Town of Turbeville is launching a new **FREE** program called "OPERATION SENIOR". Brochures on the program are available at Town Hall. This program is a telephone calling program to keep in touch with our senior citizens and make sure they are alright. **HOW IT WORKS:** Seniors sign up for the **FREE** program at Town Hall, then each weekday morning the town's automated telephone system will call the seniors with a brief message or devotional. At 9:30 AM the telephone system will send a report of those seniors who did not answer the phone and volunteers will go and check on those seniors to make sure they are not in need of emergency services.

The drawing for the quilt from the Swamp Fox Mural Society took place on Saturday, April 28, 2007, during the Striped Bass Festival. The winner of this beautiful quilt was Donald Hardy.

CONGRATULATIONS to Dr. Kate E Smith! Dr. Kate has been named the recipient of the 2007 South Carolina Pioneer Award. This award is given by the South Carolina Rural Health Association for contributing significantly to the delivery of primary health care in a rural environment.

The month of May has been proclaimed **Mental Health Month** in the Town of Turbeville by the action of Town Council. Mental Health Month raises the awareness of mental health issues and reduces the stigma of mental illness.

We welcome Robin Chavis as the new owner of **Community Pharmacy**. Hours will be Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM and Thursday and Saturday from 9:00 AM to 12:00 noon. The telephone number remains 659-2204. Continue to support our hometown pharmacy!

A **Public Hearing** will be held at Town Hall at 6:00 PM on Monday, May 21, 2007, concerning rezoning of property on Atkinson St. Questions may be addressed to Town Hall at 659-2781.

Congratulations to the East Clarendon Baseball Team, the Softball Team and the Golf Team. All Teams won the Region VII-A championships and advanced to the playoffs. We're proud of all these young people!

The **GOLD CITY BENEFIT GOSPEL CONCERT** for the Free Will Baptist Home for Children will be held at 7:00 PM on Saturday, June 2, 2007, at Patriot Hall in Sumter. Tickets are \$10.00 each and may be purchased at the Children's Home. For additional information, call Rev. Roach at 659-2880.

Attention Town Citizens: The Town is in the process of updating records and is asking for each water service customer to provide a current telephone number for contact purposes. This information will be

In partnership with the city, USC hired an executive director, created a business plan and established a budget. The first incubator, outside the USC campus, was located downtown in Columbia's City Center. After one year, the incubator had raised \$160,000 in local support for operations, occupied 5,000 square feet of office space and was home to six new entrepreneurial companies that employed 115 people in high-paying jobs.

By 2004, the incubator had grown to 23 new companies and had graduated 12, for a total of 35. These companies had created 302 new jobs, and \$18.5 million in new operating capital had been raised through venture capital firms, angel investment groups and individual investors.

With the facility full, the City Council approved a plan to make available city space for a new incubator. Today, the 40,000 square foot office building is home to the USC/Columbia Technology Incubator.

To date, 17 companies have graduated from the incubator program. Those companies have created 334 new high-paying jobs in the Columbia market with average salaries exceeding \$60,000. Currently 28 companies are in the incubator program, providing 471 jobs.

The project continues to grow. It eventually will be located in Innovista, USC's new 500-acre Technology Research Campus. The USC/Columbia Technology Incubator project is an example of how both public and private entities can work together to make a big impact in the local economy.

Contact Jim Gambrell at 803.545.3000 or jgambrell@columbiasc.net.

Public Safety: West Columbia

The West Columbia Police Department has beefed up its training, manpower and technology in an effort to crack down on domestic violence cases.

In 2004, the West Columbia Police Department was faced with an overwhelming number of family violence cases. To make matters worse, the department had no investigators with the specialized training needed to deal with these cases.



City of West Columbia: Family Violence Intervention Program

Police obtained grant money to fund a dedicated family violence investigator. This officer received specialized training in the dynamics of family violence and was able to devote time and attention to these sensitive cases.

The department's efforts paid off. In the first year of the grant, arrest rates for criminal domestic violence jumped 46 percent. Arrests for child abuse and neglect increased from five to 86 in the grant's first year and elder abuse and neglect arrests increased from zero to three.

It soon became apparent one investigator was not enough. West Columbia hired a second in the second year of the grant. These investigators also took on sexual assault cases. Additionally, the specially trained investigators began sharing their knowledge by developing training for other officers within the department.

The department also applied technology to combat family violence. The city equipped patrol division officers with kits that include digital and video cameras, digital recorders, evidence bags and crime scene tape. In addition, the department purchased emergency supplies for victims, including clothing, underwear, shoes and toiletry items. These items have been used for children who were moved into emergency protective custody and for sexual assault victims whose clothing was needed for evidence.

West Columbia then took the unique step of providing electronic voice translators and wearable video cameras to officers in the field. The translators help officers interact with citizens from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and languages. Officers can say

common phrases that are integral to the investigation of domestic violence and other crimes against women. The device then verbally translates the phrase to the victim or suspect in their native language.

The wearable audio/video devices are worn discreetly by patrol officers to videotape family violence scenes from the time an officer arrives until the perpetrator is taken to jail. This enables a judge or jury to see what happened at a scene and can make a more powerful impact than an officer's testimony alone.

Contact Jackie Brothers at 803.939.3182 or jbrothers@westcolumbiasc.gov.

Outstanding achievements continued from page 7

Public Service: Spartanburg

Numbers don't lie. The City of Spartanburg was growing and changing, but residents still believed it was a sleepy town with not much to do.

Spartanburg officials made a strategic decision to begin marketing to its own community. They recruited local, young, creative writers and artists to raise awareness among residents and visitors – especially those between the ages of 18 and 28 - about entertainment options in Spartanburg.

The city placed the program in the hands of the Hub City Writers Project, a grassroots literary movement formed in Spartanburg years ago. The city provided \$50,000 for the start-up phase, including funding of a part-time employee, then launched Hub-Bub.com, a Web site created to reach the young, media savvy target audience. With city permission, artists spray-painted graffiti images of the Web site's name around town to publicize the program.

Early programs featured music, fine arts, movies, dance, literature, readings, slam poetry and food. Events were held in vacant lots and parking lots. The program's reputation began to build.

Before long, the Hub-Bub team wanted to expand its vision. The group wanted to convert an old shoe warehouse on the edge of downtown into a restaurant, showroom and studio space for four artists-in-residence. The city approved the plan, provided \$475,000 in funding to be spread over four fiscal years and worked with the building owners to facilitate the project. Local residents funded the artists-in-residence program, and a restaurant plans to open in the summer of '07.

The showroom consists of a gallery and performance hall, bookstore and office space. In less than nine months, more than 10,000 visitors have attended 30 concerts, 42 films, 15 art exhibits, 12 literary programs and a variety of alternative programming such as poetry slams, open-mike soapbox sessions and conferences for green builders.



City of Spartanburg: Hub-bub.com

The new downtown master plan calls for the downtown area – anchored by the Hub-Bub building – to be designated as a future arts district. City officials hope this new area will encourage more investment, more tourism and more interest among young people.

Contact Susan Schneider at 864.596.2724 or sschneider@cityofspartanburg.org.

Other entries

Aiken

The City of Aiken created its Healthy Lifestyles program in July 2003 as a way to promote overall health and combat the rising cost of health insurance.



City of Aiken: Employee Wellness Program

The program began by planning a simple health fair where employees could learn about issues affecting their health. The city partnered with Aiken Regional Medical Centers to host events such as cardiac screenings and lunch and learn sessions. This partnership provided city employees with access to the medical community and to medical screenings.

The city also promoted healthy eating and regular exercise. A gym reimbursement program was started to assist those employees who workout an average of three times a week. A six-month

fitness and nutrition program allowed employees the chance to work individually with a nutritionist and fitness counselor.

Aiken's wellness program has grown from an annual health fair into a fully evolved program that tries to reach every employee and make a meaningful difference in his or her life.

Contact Al Cothran at 803.642.7785 or acothran@aiken.net.

Anderson

The Anderson Police Department implemented a proactive tool to help reduce, prevent and solve crimes while strengthening lines of communication between the business community and law enforcement.

Anderson began its Business Watch program in May 2006. City leaders recognized business owners and merchants often are the eyes and ears of the community. Each day, the city sends out a listserv e-mail about crime activity to those citizens who may be able to help solve, prevent or reduce scams, burglaries, robberies, shoplifting, wanted persons, or property damage.

The city created the program with four existing police department staff members and \$350 for software. The Business Watch coordinator handles daily data entry and distributes e-mails with timely information to the citizens.

During the first weeks of operation, 38 downtown businesses enrolled in the program. Currently, all city businesses participate in the Business Watch.

Contact Linda McConnell at 864.231.2474 or lmcconnell@cityofandersonsc.com.

Batesburg-Leesville

The Town of Batesburg-Leesville is unique: it is the only consolidated town in South Carolina. Prior to 1993, the town existed as two separate entities, the Town of Batesburg and the Town of Leesville. Each had its own downtown district, town hall and fire department. Just prior to the consolidation, the Town of Leesville built a new fire station, and Batesburg relocated its equipment to outside the central business district. In 2001, Batesburg-Leesville's ISO rating slipped from a Class 6 to a Class 4. Fire officials determined they could raise the rating if the fire stations were better distributed within the Town.

In 2006, the town voted to move forward on renovating a vacant bank building in the Batesburg Business District. Fire department members donated their time and expertise to demolish and remodel the existing

building. The labor involved included everything from removing the bank's drive-through window and overhang to make way for the truck bay, to wallpapering and laying floor tiles.

The fire station opened for service in February 2007. The result is a new and much-improved fire station for the town not to mention the renovation of a vacant eyesore into a vital community building.

Contact Jason Hendrix at 803.532.4601 or jbtaylor@batesburg-leesville.org.

Belton

The City of Belton decided to get aggressive about cleaning up vacant and dilapidated properties. The properties were problematic because they often housed vagrants and promoted illegal drug activity. Belton was not large enough to employ a full-time building



City of Belton: Property Clean Up

inspector, making it difficult to enforce or initiate a clean-up program.

Belton officials worked with the county to come up with a plan to remove these buildings. Anderson County handled the inspection and codes enforcement for the projects, and the city adopted an ordinance and system for removing the buildings.

Property owners were notified about the problems and asked to attend a hearing. They were given time to

either repair or remove the structures. If no action was taken, the city stepped in.

Leading by example, the city tore down a vacant building it owned on the main artery. City officials then made a sweep through the city and identified 16 properties needing substantial repair or demolishing.

City officials appropriated \$10,000 in the budget to remove buildings not torn down by property owners. The city also received grant money to help in the effort.

Residents have reported decreased drug activity in some neighborhoods and have renewed pride in their community.

Contact David Watson at 864.338.7773 or djwatson@cityofbeltonsc.com.

Bennettsville

The City of Bennettsville Visitor Center is an example of how valuable and historic structures can be adapted and reused.

The Visitor Center is located in a two-story brick Victorian home built in the late 1800s. The home features a corner turret, an expansive wrap-around porch, original marble mantels and stained-glass windows. It's listed in the Bennettsville National Register Historic District as a "key structure contributing to the character of the Bennettsville Historic District."

The building houses the Visitor Center and the Chamber of Commerce. Both agencies have directors on duty during normal business hours and part-time individuals keep the center open on weekends and after-hours. The city partners with the Bennettsville Downtown Development Association, the Bennettsville Recreation Department, the Garden Club Council and others as needed.

OTHER ENTRIES continued on page 10

Other entries continued from page 9

A computer with public Internet access is available to visitors, and a retail shop with Bennettsville memorabilia is open during operating hours. A conference room also is available for public meetings.

Through saving an historic building, officials also created a place where visitors can learn the history and heritage of Bennettsville.

Contact Ken Harmon at 843.479.3869 or bdda99@yahoo.com.

Charleston

Faced with rising health care costs, the City of Charleston started a review of its health care plan. City officials decided to make a bold change and implement a comprehensive health and wellness program.

The first goal was to introduce three consumer-driven health care plans with an emphasis on promoting preventative care and disease management. While the preventive care and disease management have no cost for the employees, the remaining benefits in the health plans are based on cost sharing rather than co-payments.

Next, Charleston introduced several wellness programs, including a gym reimbursement program, a city-sponsored Weight Watchers at Lunch program, the Ten City Diabetes Challenge program and a smoking cessation program.

The rationale was that if city employees became more personally invested in their own health, their quality of life would improve and both the city and the employees would save money in the long term. The changes appear to be paying off: the city's overall health care budget has decreased in 2007.

Contact Joleen Deames at 843.724.7427 or deamesj@ci.charleston.sc.us.

Cheraw and Chesterfield

The towns of Cheraw and Chesterfield have proven when two municipalities work together, an entire region can benefit.

The South Carolina Department of Commerce told officials from both towns they needed to address key issues before they could seriously be considered as sites for prospective businesses and industries. Each town had specific industrial sites, but none that would meet the needs of companies in the 21st century.

The leadership of both communities began discussing the creation of a joint industrial park between the two towns. While sites and plans for such a potential development were being debated, the communities were awarded large tobacco settlement grants by the state Department of Commerce. These funds were eligible to provide infrastructure to specific project sites.

The towns worked together to develop the Carolinas Centre Industrial Park located in the geographic center of the two Carolinas. Working with local county and state agencies and utility companies, Cheraw and Chesterfield were able to create an attractive, inviting and efficient industrial park that will serve as a beacon for economic growth and development in rural Chesterfield County. It is the only industrial park in South Carolina jointly owned by two municipalities.

Contact Bill Taylor at 843.537.8400 or townofcherawbill@bellsouth.net.



City of Florence: Community Newsletter

Florence

Studies showed the City of Florence's traditional groundwater resources could not handle the city's future needs. The nearby Pee Dee River provided the most cost-effective source for additional water. Transitioning the city's water source from groundwater to surface water would be a monumental task, and potentially controversial. City officials had to figure out a way to let residents know about the need for the upcoming change and assure consumers the river water would meet their quality expectations.

Staff determined a newsletter would be the best way to communicate the changes and the project's progress. Funded through the Public Works and Utilities' budget, Florence Fountain, named for the city's welcoming fountain near Interstate 20, debuted in November 2001.

Over the next year, the newsletter informed residents about the new water system with articles and photos. The newsletter was so effective the city continued to produce it even after the water project was completed. The Florence Fountain now includes information on everything statistical from financial data to events such as the local Pecan Festival.

City staff handles most of the work for the 28,000-copy newsletter, while an

outside agency handles publishing and printing. Sanitation workers deliver the newsletters while emptying roll carts, and meter readers distribute the newsletters to water customers who live outside the city limits. Also copies are placed in city office lobbies and can be downloaded from the city's Web site.

Contact Tom Shearin at 843.665.3113 or tshearin@cityofflorence.com.

Forest Acres

Over the past few years, it became clear that the City of Forest Acres police units typically arrive before Richland County EMS ambulances to the scene of calls for medical assistance. These calls often involve people suffering a heart attack or cardiac arrest. When CPR or cardiac defibrillation is provided quickly, it can often save a life.



City of Forest Acres: AED Responder Project

The City of Forest Acres took the step of equipping its police patrol cars with Automatic External Defibrillators. The city also trained personnel on how to use the equipment and certified them in CPR.

The project called for enough AEDs so that all on-duty patrol units could be equipped and prepared for prompt response to calls from restaurants, shop-

ping centers, schools and homes. The Forest Acres Restaurant Association became a partner in the project and supported City Council's decision to fund the purchase and training of the equipment with Hospitality Tax Funds.

In July 2006, the city authorized the state contract purchase of 23 AEDs for \$46,200, up to \$7,500 for training and 28 supplementary equipment kits totaling about \$5,000. A total of 36 city personnel successfully received AED and CPR certification, 31 alone in the city's police department.

At any time, depending on police shift scheduling, there are at least five AEDs mobile in the community and available to save a life.

Contact Mark Williams at 803.782.9475 or mwilliams@forest-acres-sc.gov.

Gaffney

When Gaffney officials decided to build a new city hall in 2003, they wanted to include a bit of local history in the design.

Council chose to vacate three existing buildings, which housed the Community Development Department, the Police Department, the Finance Department, Personnel, Court and

Administration. Council members decided to construct one building to house all of these previously separated services.

First, they voted to keep the new city hall on its existing property, land deeded to the City of Gaffney by the heirs of Michael Gaffney, the city's founding father. Keeping the building downtown also was important to downtown revitalization efforts.

The new building was designed with many similarities to the original city hall, which was built in the late 1800s. The design also reflects much of Gaffney's past by including several features of the old Gaffney Manufacturing Plant, as well as the Carnegie Library building located across the street from the city hall.

The design was accented with a clock tower that would hold the 100-year-old bell from the original structure's clock tower.

Gaffney's new city hall is a proud reflection of the city's history and its future.

Contact LeighAnn K. Turner at 864.487.8507 or cityclerk@cityofgaffney.sc.gov.

Greenville

Greenville prides itself on the high quality of life it offers residents and visitors alike. To complement its efforts, Greenville City Council enacted a smoke free ordinance after talking with citizens, visitors and health care professionals about the dangers of smoking.

City staff worked with business owners and members of the medical community to create an overall marketing campaign called "Breathe Easy. You're in the City." The campaign's goal was to evoke a positive feeling for the quality of life in Greenville in general and the smoking ordinance specifically. Members of the medical community provided health information to help shape the central message of the campaign and lend credence to its significance.

The campaign involved the creation and distribution of buttons, stickers, decals, pole banners and public service announcements.

The "Breathe Easy" initiative was a collaborative effort among City Council, city staff, restaurant owners, medical professionals, the general public and the media. It delivers a smoke-free message

Other entries continued from page 11

while emphasizing the “Greenville experience.”

Contact Wanda Stokes at 864.467.4470 or stokesw@greenergreenville.com.

Greenwood

In 2003, the City of Greenwood embarked on a downtown redevelopment planning process.

Local citizens had expressed concerns the city needed a clearly defined center and outdoor gathering space. Also, residents felt the downtown was oversaturated with professional office space, and some key downtown cultural assets, such as the community theatre and museum, were in serious decline.

The city’s redevelopment report identified the need to establish a cultural center as an economic catalyst for new development.

Work focused on The Emerald Triangle, a nine-acre triangular shaped area in the heart of downtown. In the three years since the master plan’s adoption, more than \$7.5 million have been invested or committed to public projects within The Emerald Triangle.

In April 2006, the restored Greenwood Federal Building opened as the Arts Center, a 25,000-square foot facility with an art gallery and reception hall. In February 2007, the renovated Greenwood Community Theatre opened,



City of Greenwood: The Emerald Triangle

creating a 300-seat performance venue.

Further downtown renovations in 2007 include the museum, streetscape improvements and the restoration of the facades for 26 buildings within The Emerald Triangle. Also in 2007, the first private investments are being made in downtown, demonstrating that an entrepreneurial spirit is developing in Greenwood.

Contact Charlie Barrineau at 864.942.8411 or charlie.barrineau@cityofgreenwoodsc.com.

Greer

The City of Greer Fire Department and the Pelham-Batesville Fire Department banded together to save money for their communities and provide citizens with better service.

There had long been a need for a substation on the outer portions of Greer’s coverage area. Yet the cost of adding one, staffed with personnel and apparatus, was not feasible for Greer alone.

The two fire stations made a joint agreement to share facilities, resources, personnel and equipment. Both entities have benefited from the agreement. It eliminates the duplication of services where boundaries overlap and credits both departments’ Insurance Service Office (ISO) ratings, which means a decrease in insurance premiums for citizens.

The arrangement means extra personnel responding to calls and



City of Hardeeville: Hometown Television Channel

faster response times. It is the first-ever joint agreement between two fire districts in the state.

Contact Christopher Harvey at 864.848.2165 or charvey@cityofgreer.org.

Hardeeville

When residents of Hardeeville want to find out what’s happening in their community, the answer is as close as their television remote. They simply tune into the Hardeeville Television Network.

Hardeeville received its own cable channel and \$7,500 for equipment as part of its franchise renewal with the Hargray cable company in 2003. The local programming channel was launched in 2004.

HTVN airs a ‘round the clock, broadcasting Hardeeville City Council meetings, as well as county council and planning commission meetings. The channel also televises city and community events such as the Celebrate Hardeeville Festival and the National Night Out on Crime. A popular program is “This Week in Hardeeville,” which gives a weekly wrap-up of local events.

When none of those programs are airing, HTVN televises a rotation of local and national public service announcements, a calendar of upcoming events and contact information for city officials.

The television channel also is a valuable resource when an urgent advisory is issued about a missing child or severe weather. The hometown channel informs and entertains residents, and city leaders pledge it will grow as Hardeeville continues to grow.

Contact Paul Floeckher at 843.784.2231 or pfloeckher@cityofhardeeville.com.

Hilton Head Island

Tourism is the lifeblood of Hilton Head Island, and battling beach erosion is a constant for town officials. The town cannot afford to sit back and let nature take its course. It has to aggressively undertake costly, and sometimes disruptive, beach re-nourishment projects. When the Town of Hilton Head Island was faced with a daunting \$16.5 million beach renourishment project, town leaders partnered with the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce to develop a communications strategy to educate and inform residents, businesses and visitors about the project.

Officials wanted residents to recognize beach renourishment was important for quality of life and for the island's economy. It was necessary to provide up-to-date and accurate information about the project's timing and how it might affect beach access. Town leaders also needed to keep owners of accommodation businesses aware of the progress so they could develop strategies to lessen inconveniences for their guests.

The town used television, newsletters, brochures, videos, Web content, public and private meetings, newspapers and GPS technology to spread the word about the project. In the end, more than eight miles of beach were re-nourished by 100 crewmembers on land and sea in about six months.

As a result of the comprehensive communications strategy, residents, the business community and visitors stayed well informed. Business disruption was minimal. Residents and accommodations

businesses not only learned the value of the project but also were able to easily access information and plan accordingly.

Contact Greg Deloach at 843.341.4600 or gregd@hiltonheadislandsc.gov.

Irmo

The Town of Irmo planted more than 1,100 trees as part of its effort to promote the health and well being of its citizens.

Trees offer health, environmental and beautification benefits. Research has shown that in a 12-month period, 100 trees remove 1,000 pounds of pollutants, 400 pounds of ozone and 300 pounds of particulate from the air. They also catch about 100,000 gallons of rainwater per year, resulting in reduced stormwater control costs.

With all of these factors in mind, Irmo officials decided in 1999 to embrace a clean air program. Irmo's Ozone Clean Air Program is designed to meet the U.S. Environmental Agency's ozone clean air standards.

The town planted more than 1,000 trees of different varieties over the past seven years. A combination of federal, state and local funds and private donations funded the \$1.8 million endeavor.

Future plans involve the planting of additional trees and several landscaping projects through the town. Officials created an ambitious five-year plan to add another 1,000 trees and plants in the community. The long-range goal is to establish a pure, ozone-free environment where children and families can live, work and grow.

Contact Robert Brown at 803.781.7050 or rbrown@townofirmosc.com.

Jackson

The Town of Jackson's Community Center has been a landmark in the community for almost a century, hosting numerous community activities. However, after the Jackson Agricultural Club left the facility in the 1990s, the

building fell into disrepair. Once the focus of the Jackson community, the Community Center was an eyesore because of years of neglect.

The Jackson Town Council made restoring the building back to its dignified state a priority. The town spent nearly \$200,000 to upgrade the heating and air conditioning, repaint, resurface wood floors, install ADA-required restrooms, install a commercial-grade kitchen, install quality windows and rewire the electrical system.

The building now serves as a Senior Citizen Congregate meal and activity site, a community center and home of a future museum. It also serves as a meeting site for Westinghouse SRS subcontractors and employees. In addition, the town is negotiating with the YWCA to host year-round educational and recreational youth programs at the facility.

Contact Kevin Etheredge at 803.471.2221 or tojclerk@aikenelectric.net.

Lexington

To build upon relationships with local neighborhoods, the Town of Lexington created the Neighborhood Enhancement Action Team (NEAT) program in April 2006.

Each month, the team visits a selected neighborhood and brings Town Hall to the residents. The Neighborhood of the Month receives a variety of services on NEAT day, including a meet and greet with the mayor and Town Council; an information tent where residents can ask questions and voice concerns; illegal sign and unlicensed construction checks; bicycle and voluntary child safety seat inspections from the police department; abandoned vehicle and town maintained right-of-way checks; storm drain cleaning; street sweeping and litter patrol.

Residents are encouraged to complete surveys and offer feedback on town services, important issues and the NEAT program. Survey results are shared with Town Council and staff for follow-up.

OTHER ENTRIES continued on page 14

Other entries continued from page 13

To date, the team has visited 13 neighborhoods and made an impact on approximately 1,800 households. Town officials have addressed and resolved numerous neighborhood issues as a result of the program.

This year, the NEAT program plans to expand to help establish neighborhood associations where they currently do not exist and to bring representatives of local neighborhood associations together to form a local Council of Neighborhoods.

Contact *Laura McMickens* at 803.356.8238 or lmcmickens@lexsc.com.

Liberty

Randy, Paula and Simon may not be there, but Liberty's own version of "American Idol" brought out hundreds of people from around the region.

Liberty Idol is a karaoke contest with cash awards to the top five contestants. The singing competition began as the brainchild of Liberty resident Roy Costner. Through a partnership between the city and local chamber, the first Liberty Idol was held in the gazebo on the city's square June 24, 2006. It ran every Saturday night for 13 weeks. Contestants competed down to the top five, with winners each week selected by audience votes.

About 500 people participated the first night. That grew to 2,000 by the time of the finale. Visitors came from Liberty, Pickens, Easley and Central, and even from Upstate cities like Greenville, Anderson and Clemson. Many visitors spent time shopping and eating in Liberty. Beginning as a form of entertainment for its community, Liberty Idol brought an economic boost to the city.

Contact *Virginia Sue Woods* at 864.843.3177 or svwoods@libertysc.com.

Myrtle Beach

The Historic Myrtle Beach Colored School Museum and Education Center was created as a faithful re-creation

of the city's first school for African-Americans.

Segregation had forced area black students to be educated in churches, but that all changed when the four-room, wood-frame schoolhouse opened in 1932. The Myrtle Beach Colored School, as it was known, served the community until 1953, when Carver Training Academy opened. The Colored School Building became private property and was used for storage.

In 2001, a road-widening project put the building in danger. The City of Myrtle Beach formed a committee of former students and others to devise a plan to save the old school. The building was too deteriorated to move, but it was dismantled and stored so that pieces could be reused. Efforts turned to recreating the school on a nearby site.

The city, former students, neighbors, the property owners, the school district and a large, national homebuilder worked together on the project. The group generated cash and in-kind contributions totaling \$715,000.

Pieces of the old structure were included in the new one. The students were adamant that its name and purpose continue, so the Myrtle Beach Colored School lives on as a museum to the past and an education center for the future.

Contact *Mark Kruea* at 843.918.1014 or MKruea@cityofmyrtlebeach.com.

North Charleston

Following in the footsteps of the national State of the Union address and the State of the State, many local officials take the opportunity to provide their residents with a State of the City report. Often, these State of the City addresses are dry events, filled only with facts and figures. While important to communicate the State of the City, the addresses are not necessarily exciting.

Rather than stand at a lectern and deliver a speech, North Charleston Mayor Keith Summey turned to

technology to add a little punch to his annual address. The mayor delivered his speech in a 17-minute video highlighting some of the positive developments in North Charleston, including residential and commercial growth. Filmed in numerous locations around the city, the video let viewers do more than just hear about the developments. They could experience them. A complete fact package accompanied the video. The cost of the production was about \$2,500 and a day's effort by the mayor.

The video set a positive tone for the annual event and has been well received by viewers. The city has reproduced the video numerous times in response to citizen requests. North Charleston officials see the video as an evolution in the way to communicate with their citizens.

Contact *Raymond Anderson* at 843.740.2504 or randerson@northcharleston.org.

North Myrtle Beach

The City of North Myrtle Beach Department of Public Safety has a new way to reach out to residents. The



City of North Myrtle Beach: Community Action Response Team

Community Action Response Team (CART) officers visit neighborhoods throughout the city. CART officers speak with residents about public safety issues affecting their quality of life. This community-based effort brings public safety officers into the neighborhoods and encourages interaction between officers and residents.

Officers set up in a mobile command post in one community then move to other neighborhoods after a week. Officers spend that time listening to the concerns of residents in the community. From there, the officers work on strategies for improving quality of life in these neighborhoods. Community members have praised the program and thanked officers for making a difference in their neighborhoods.

Contact William Bailey at 843.280.5555 or whbailey@nmb.us.

Orangeburg

In 2002, Orangeburg faced the dilemma of having to expand its water treatment facility in the Edisto Memorial Gardens. Studies indicated the facility needed to increase production by 10 million gallons a day.

The immediate concern was the impact of an expansion on the gardens, an attraction for scores of visitors who come to see the award-winning roses, azaleas and other flowers. Each April, the site hosts the South Carolina Festival of Roses to celebrate the blooming of the city's roses. After studying the alternatives, the city determined relocating the facility was not an option because of the cost.

Through careful planning and coordination between Orangeburg's Department of Public Utilities and the Parks and Recreation Department, this project was completed without disrupting the gardens. By expanding the facility, DPU was able to increase its reliability and quality of service at a fraction of the cost of relocating.

DPU has increased its capacity from 19 million to 30 million gallons a day. The utility also laid the groundwork for future capacity storage by installing preliminary piping for an Aquifer Storage and Recovery System.

Contact Randy Etters at 803.268.4000 or retters@orbudpri.com.

Port Royal

For decades, the Town of Port Royal had been saddled with an under-performing, under-used port that had become a nuisance. Not only did it not perform economically but it also regularly covered the town in dust and operated noisily at all hours of the day and night.

In July 2003, the town had had enough. Officials wrote the governor suggesting the state would be better served by closing this facility and using the funds from its sale to improve existing facilities or improve the sagging state budget. The governor agreed.

What resulted was a long process of negotiation, involving the state Legislature, the South Carolina State Ports Authority, the governor's office and the Town of Port Royal. As indicated by the governor, the impact of the sale would have extensive ramifications on the disposal of other state property. The final outcome of the negotiations is the largest economic development project in the history of Port Royal and an effort to address the town's suffering shrimping industry.

Through an extensive planning process, officials created a plan to reunite its inaccessible waterfront with the existing town, while creating economic development and opportunity in what has historically been a low to moderate income community in Beaufort County.

Contact Van Willis at 843.986.2205 or vwillis@portroyal.org.

Prosperity

With the Town of Prosperity's administrative offices and fire department running out of space, town officials decided to renovate the abandoned Prosperity High School to give them room to grow.

The 80-year-old structure has found new life as the home of the town administrative offices, the police department and mayor's office. It also houses an auditorium, gymnasium and public training room.

Meanwhile, town officials turned the site of the old Town Hall into a new, state-of-the-art fire station. The old fire station became the new home for the rescue squad.

The new auditorium and gymnasium are the ideal location for school and community plays, shows, pageants, industrial courses and rallies. Without the renovation, the town would have been forced to rent facilities to host these events at a cost to the taxpayers.

The former school building is located on a partially developed 25-acre tract, which has a lighted, regulation-size Dixie Youth baseball field, concession stand and restrooms. There also is a basketball court, multipurpose field, covered picnic shelter and fully equipped playground on the property.

The town secured funding for the renovation through grants, fundraisers and donations. Officials did not raise taxes or utility rates to support the project.

Contact Karen Livingston at 803.364.2622 or klivingston@backroads.net.

Rock Hill

The urban core of Rock Hill had struggled with deteriorating homes and rising crime rates. Because city leaders recognized these problems would affect the entire community, they decided to take steps to address the inner city problems.

Other entries continued from page 15

In 2005, Rock Hill officials organized the Department of Housing and Neighborhood Services (HNS) to address the decline of urban core neighborhoods. The department's mission was to create partnerships among residents, area businesses and local government to create a safer community.

HNS's 22-person staff offers numerous services designed to empower and improve urban core neighborhoods. The Weed and Seed program, launched with the police department; land acquisition; new home construction; rehabbing; first-time home buyers program; credit counseling; and proactive code enforcement all empower residents to become responsible, engaged homebuyers. HNS's Inside Rock Hill is a 10-week civics course that educates citizens on city operation and services and underscores the fact that one involved citizen can bring positive change in a neighborhood.

By placing previously independent services and staff under one umbrella, HNS has successfully maximized resources, minimized costs and changed the lives of some Rock Hill citizens.

Contact Lyn Garris at 803.329.7009 or lgarris@ci.rock-hill.sc.us.

Sumter

Officials with the City of Sumter recognize communicating with citizens is not just a one-time special project. Because communications is seen as an important part of daily operations, Sumter hired a full-time staff person in 2002 to coordinate the city's communication effort. The communications director is charged with evaluating and creating avenues for communicating with citizens as well as providing an outlet for them to voice their opinions and concerns.

The director uses a wide array of tools to accomplish the city's communication goals, from television and radio to the Internet and special events. In recent



City of Sumter: Public Information Director Position

years, Sumter launched an e-newsletter and a new Web site with a feature that enables citizens to directly communicate with each city department.

The Tourism Department also falls under the communications director's responsibilities. The city's revamped marketing program focuses not only on tourism recruitment but also on educating the local community about what Sumter has to offer.

The city also reached out to the public by opening the historic Sumter Opera House for Citizens' Night. On these nights, the mayor and Council invite the public to voice their opinions and watch a presentation on the state of the city produced by the communications director.

Keys to Sumter's success are the partnerships and relationships created through the communication director's position. The director is the city liaison to numerous committees, community groups and non-profit organizations.

Contact Susan Wild at 803.436.2586 or swild@sumter-sc.com.

Travelers Rest

As part of its community relations effort, the Travelers Rest Fire Department acquired a Mobile Fire Safety Trailer. This trailer is used by trained staff to teach children how to react in emergency situations such as a house fire or severe weather conditions.

Recent tragic storms, such as the one in Alabama, vividly showed severe weather can strike at any time. The more aware residents are of how to respond, the greater their chances of survival.

The Fire Safety Trailer provides a realistic simulation of actual fire and weather-related conditions. It is a state-of-the-art unit featuring the latest in fire education props as well as a Severe Weather Training Simulator.

This public safety community outreach is being used by schools, civic organizations, church groups and businesses to reach as many children as possible. Several residents have praised the unit for being highly effective and educational.

Contact Dianna Gracely at 864.834.8740 or dianna@travelersrestsc.com.

Something's fishy

By Amy Geier Edgar

What do Anderson's fish, Orangeburg's roses and Aiken's horses have in common? They're all examples of public art on display across South Carolina.

Public art doesn't have to be stuffy museum pieces, said Linda McConnell, assistant manager for the City of Anderson. Many cities are displaying whimsical pieces that manage to attract public attention and illustrate a message about the town.

The Anderson Arts Center approached city officials about sponsoring its "Fish out of Water, Hooked on the Arts" project. The city decided it would be a good project to bring the community together and revitalize the downtown.

The plan called for proceeds of the project to be used toward renovating the Arts Center Warehouse, an old structure located in the downtown National Register Historic District. The building would be converted for use by the arts center and for public space, McConnell said.

The city invested \$50,000 in hospitality fees to be the title sponsor of the project. Artists were selected to decorate about 30 largemouth bass replicas. Each fish was 6-feet long and decorated uniquely.

The fish design was selected because it represents Lake Hartwell, which



attracts fishermen from all over with its 1,000 miles of shoreline and scores of largemouth bass, McConnell said.

Officials intended to have the fish on display for about six months, but several remain after three years, McConnell said.

"They're immensely popular," McConnell said. "They've been the subject of scavenger hunts; people have their pictures taken in front of them. They've become a little part of Anderson's brand."

Orangeburg also has used public art to help better establish itself as "The Rose City." Orangeburg is home to Edisto Memorial Gardens, which is filled with more than 50 beds of roses on more than 150 acres of land.

Tourists visit the gardens to see, and smell, the All-America Rose Selection's award-winning roses and azaleas. Orangeburg also hosts the South Carolina Festival of Roses each April.

It was a natural fit for the city to capitalize on its garden status, said

Bernice Tribble, executive director for the Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization Association. The association selected artists to decorate 35 steel-framed roses that were displayed around the city. Each rose had a sponsor, ranging from businesses, schools, churches and the city, Tribble said. The \$5,000 raised from the project went to a capital fund, she said.

"It was a great project that put the emphasis on downtown," Tribble said.

Across the state, tourists flock to Aiken for the horses. The city has a rich equine history, with thoroughbreds raised and raced there. Polo also is very popular in the city.

A group that called itself the Horseplay Committee bought more than 30 fiberglass horse molds. They found sponsors and selected artists to decorate each horse, said committee chairman Bill Reynolds. The horses were displayed for six months around town and then were auctioned off at a black-tie ball and gala, Reynolds said. About \$250,000 was raised for programs and scholarships to the Aiken Center for the Arts, he said.

"A number of people said it was one of the best events in terms of getting all



SOMETHING'S FISHY continued on page 18



Hometown Happenings

September

Each month, municipal officials have the opportunity to download materials that will help them share the value of cities and towns with the community and more specifically their key influencers. Through each suggested activity and corresponding materials, municipal leadership can form partnerships with the local business community, the media, local non-profit organizations and policy makers.

September *Hometown Happenings* information as noted below will be posted to the MASC Web site in early August. Let MASC know if you participate in a *Hometown Happening*. Call Casey Fields at 803.933.1256.

Visit the MASC Web site to download *Hometown Happenings* materials in early July.

- **Labor Day - September means the official end of summer, the beginning of college football season and celebrating the important holiday of Labor Day. Take this opportunity to highlight the importance and contribution of municipal employees. Collect basic facts about your municipal employees to share with your residents and media. Share the services your employees contribute to such as electricity, garbage pick-up and water and sewer services, especially basic services like police, fire and rescue.**
- **Hispanic Heritage Month - Spotlight Hispanic residents of your city — past and present — who have made a difference in your community. Many local organizations have events planned to recognize Hispanic Heritage Month. Partner with those organizations to spotlight Hispanic individuals who have dedicated themselves to the prosperity of your city or town.**

Something's fishy continued from page 17

the people in the community involved – artists, businesses, horse people,” Reynolds said.

“It was a tremendous thing for Aiken,” agreed Anne Campbell, honorary chairwoman of the Horseplay Committee. “The tourists that it drew were a tremendous boost to the economy. It created quite a stir in Aiken.”

The city now owns five of the horses. The rest are in private hands around the city or around the country, said City Manager Roger LeDuc.

“It was a great fundraiser and created a lasting legacy,” LeDuc said. The city formed an arts commission about a year ago, based on the success of the horses, to determine what direction to take public art.

It takes a real partnership of public and private sources for public art to be successful, LeDuc said.

“Citizens can play a real part in the direction your city will take as far as public art,” he said.

Other cities also are looking to continue with public arts projects.

“It passed a real litmus test for us, in terms of downtown and downtown revitalization,” McConnell said of Anderson’s fish project. “It provides a good connection between how public and private sectors can pool their resources and create something the public can touch, see and laugh about. It really adds to the quality of life.”

This article is reprinted from SC Magazine which features a story on unique elements of South Carolina hometowns in every issue.



Classifieds

■ **Marion County is accepting resumes for a county administrator. This position will remain open until filled. Submit resume to: Tina Lewis, Marion County Personnel Director, PO Box 744, Marion, SC 29571. EOE**

■ **Hilton Head Island is accepting resumes for an emergency management coordinator. Submit resume by e-mail to jobs@hiltonheadisland.sc.gov, or fax to 843.341.3974 or mail to Human Resources, One Town Center Court, Hilton Head Island, SC 29928. Visit www.hiltonheadislandsc.gov for more information. Deadline is August 17.**

Main Street SC training focuses on business recruitment

Access to national trainers is an important benefit for Main Street South Carolina members. Past training programs have included sessions on historic preservation and fundraising. In August, members learned how to recruit businesses and gained insight on leadership styles. The session focused on how to organize, finance and execute a business recruitment program.

Hilary Greenberg, of the planning firm Greenberg Development Services, discussed business recruitment in an interactive session.

“Our focus was to get project managers to understand the process of business recruitment and give them techniques to make the process easier,” Greenberg said.

For a downtown program to be successful, it must find its own market niche to stand out in a crowded commercial marketplace, according to Greenberg. Downtown programs also must attract the right mix of new uses while working to re-motivate or retain existing businesses, she said.

Business recruitment is something all towns are interested in, Greenberg said. Each city has its own unique set of circumstances – some are tourist draws, others are dealing with dying economies. Greenberg gave tips to help officials evaluate their downtown’s strengths and weaknesses and offer shortcuts to identify emerging market opportunities and articulate a vision for their downtown.

When recruiting businesses, it’s important to first determine what the market is for a downtown area, Greenberg said. Officials can look at incomes, lifestyles and what kind of competition exists for businesses, she said. They then can identify businesses that are appropriate for the market base. Members received guidelines for business placement, and learned how to

determine the right mix of anchor, specialty and chain stores for their downtown.

Once officials have a sense of the businesses that would fit in their downtown, they should study what other towns are doing to attract businesses, Greenberg said. She discussed marketing tools and incentives that attract prospects and offered lessons on business recruitment learned from other communities.

Larry Biddle, a businessman, educator and corporate board member, gave leadership insights in a session on board development.

Board members need to change their thinking, Biddle said. Rather than simply assigning projects to an often overworked executive director, the board needs to work with the executive director to set goals and to achieve them, he said.

Effective leadership requires giving motivation and inspiration to employees, Biddle said.

“If you don’t grow your people, you can’t continue to grow your organization,” he said.

Main Street SC has two upcoming training sessions for its Main Street SC members. Chains on Main with trainer Josh Bloom of the Community Land Use and Economics Group will be held September 14 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Municipal Association of SC office in Columbia. Transforming White Elephant Buildings with trainer Matt Wagner of Nitro Development, LLC, will be held November 2 at the Chamber of Commerce in Orangeburg, SC.

For more information about these training sessions, visit www.masc.sc/affiliates/Main%20Street/msdescription.htm or contact Beppie LeGrand at blegrand@masc.sc or 803.933.1231.



Main Street SC, which is endorsed by the National Main Street program, provides training to help members revitalize and maintain well-designed, retail-driven downtowns. Currently, 12 municipalities participate in the program, and applications are being accepted for two additional spots for 2008. The deadline for this competitive process is October 1. Visit www.masc.sc/affiliates/Main%20Street/msdescription.htm or contact Beppie LeGrand at blegrand@masc.sc or 803.933.1231.



Educational Opportunities

Municipal Technology Association of SC

■ **August 17**, will hold a meeting at the SC Hospital Association in Columbia. Topics include "Preparing an IT Strategic Planning Document" and "What IT Means to Your City."

Municipal Court Administration Association of SC

■ **August 21-24**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Sheraton in Myrtle Beach. Topics include calculating fees and assessments, building solid working relationships with municipal judges and fundamentals for processing orders and appeals.

Main Street South Carolina

■ **September 4**, will conduct a training session "Chains on Main" at MASC's office at 1411 Gervais Street in Columbia from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute

■ **September 12-14**, will hold its fall training session at the Clarion Townhouse Hotel in Columbia. Among topics: "Top 10 Financial Warning Signs" and "Clerk's Roles and Responsibilities: A Global Perspective."

Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **September 20**, will offer the course "Benefits and Pitfalls of Economic Development/Forms of Government" from 6 - 9 p.m. via satellite to the 10 regional councils of governments.

SC Association of Stormwater Managers

■ **September 21**, will hold its third quarterly meeting at the SC Hospital Association in Columbia.

Managers' Meeting

■ **October 5**, the Municipal Association will hold its quarterly managers' meeting at the Clarion Townhouse Hotel in Columbia.

Municipal Technology Association of SC

■ **November 30**, will hold a meeting at the SC Hospital Association in Columbia. Topics include ethical hacking, implementing an IT strategic plan and legal issues surrounding data retention.

For more information about these meetings or other MASC meetings not listed, please call 803.799.9574, or visit our Web site at www.masc.sc.



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