



Southwestern Commission

News In The Region

Our mission is to improve the quality of life and the environment in our seven county service area.

Third Quarter 2004

Senior Friendly Communities is Focus of New Four Year Plan Prepared by the Area Agency on Aging

The Region A Area Agency on Aging has just completed a regional four year plan for the period July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2008. The plan contained two sections. One covers the standard program assurances, demographics and other required elements. The other section is the actual work plan for the Area Agency on Aging.

One of the new areas and a major element of the plan is a Senior Friendly Community Assessment. A Senior Friendly Assessment tool has been developed by the NC Division of Aging and Adult Services. The AAA staff

has completed a basic assessment of each county. The Home and Community Block Grant Committee in each county will be asked to complete a more thorough assessment over the next year.

Today, nearly every community in North Carolina is seeing greater numbers of seniors. We must strive to make our communities senior-friendly. A Senior-Friendly Community

- offers a wide range of social and economic opportunities and supports for all citizens, including seniors
 - values seniors' contributions to the community
 - promotes positive intergenerational relations
 - considers the needs and interests of seniors in physical and community planning;
 - respects and supports seniors' desire and efforts to live independently
- acknowledging the primary role that families, friends, and neighbors

play in the lives of older adults, enhances their capacity for caring.

Demography

We stand only two years away from 2006 when the oldest baby boomers become eligible for services under the Older Americans Act. We are less than eight years from the time when they start drawing full Social Security benefits at age 66, because of the phased increase in age of eligibility. Among the top twenty most populous states, North Carolina has the highest percentage of seniors living in rural areas, including rural Western North Carolina.

Some of Region A's counties have had as much as 22% growth in the over age 60 population since 1998.

Building Senior Friendly Communities

There are many dimensions to developing a community that promotes quality of life in senior years. At the same time, it is hard to imagine any aspect of society that is

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Graham County JobLink Open House

The Graham County JobLink Center opened to an excited crowd on August 5, 2004. Mayor Bobby Cagle, Jr.; Chip Wood, ESC Manager; Becky Viar, Southwestern



Commission Workforce Development Specialist; and Gene Farley, Workforce Development Board Chair cut the ribbon to officially open the Center. Gene and Becky are very excited about the new facility opening in their home county. About 75 people visited the Center during the two hour open house. Media representation included the Graham Sentinel and the local radio station.



Gene Farley, WDB Chair; Bobby Cagle, Jr., Mayor of Robbinsville; Becky Viar, Workforce Development Specialist; and Chip Wood, JobLink Manager, participate in the Graham County JobLink ribbon cutting.

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not affected by our demographic shift. What are the components of a Senior Friendly Community and what kind of questions should communities be considering in evaluating their readiness for an aging population? Some of the components in a Senior Friendly Assessment include

- **Physical Environment**
- **Health, Economy**
- **Technology**
- **Safety and Security**
- **Social and Cultural Involvement**
- **Services and Support, Resource Planning and Stewardship.**

Within each of these components, a variety of topics is evaluated in terms of Existence, Adequacy, Accessibility, Efficiency and

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Duplication, Equity and Effectiveness or Quality.

Each component looks at a wide range of topics. For example, the **Physical Environment** includes such areas as Transportation, Air and Water Quality, Housing

and Utilities, Land Use, Neighborhood Organizations, Noise Control, Road Safety, Recreational Facilities, Shopping, and Zoning. For a complete list of the topics to be addressed in each component and sample questions to be answered, please contact Mary Barker at 828-488-9211, extension 3024.

We are only a few years away from a significant demographic transition as the baby boomers approach retirement age in the latter part of this decade. The time to chart an effective course for Senior-Friendly Communities is **NOW**.

Community Development in Southwestern North Carolina

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is a grant-funded housing program that strives to decrease the number of blighted areas and dilapidated homes in local communities. Because it is a federal HUD program, the administration of the CDBG requires constant contractual paperwork, completion of government forms, frequent audits and reports, careful financial management and a host of other procedures that require some fluency in "governmentese". For some North Carolina counties, it's easier not to request the money than to devote the staff time to such an immense and complicated project. At first glance, it may not seem worth the effort to assist only a small number of households over the three-year period of the grant.

But if you look at the human side of the CDBG program, a different view emerges. For Mrs. Miller (not her real name), assistance through the CDBG program is a dream come true. Mrs. Miller is a widow in her seventies who had lived alone in her 55 year-old four-room

house since the death of her husband some fifteen years ago. Her house had dilapidated beyond repair. Snakes came and went through her walls looking for a meal in the rats that infested her house. Her septic tank was leaking into her yard, and she had to use a neighbor's well for water. She was afraid to go to sleep at night. Living on \$700 a month from Social Security, she hardly had enough to build or buy a new home for herself.

Through the CDBG program, Mrs. Miller has a new mobile home with all new appliances, a well and new septic tank – at no cost to her. She's able to stay in her own home until she decides to do otherwise. Her quality of life is substantially improved.

For the community, there is an instilled sense of pride that our civic leaders are able to address the needs of our older citizens. And, in a very real way, it improves the appearance and safety of housing in North Carolina communities. Mrs. Miller would be quick to say that the benefit to our communities is worth the effort involved.



CDBG QUICK FACTS

The Southwestern Commission administers CDBG projects in Cherokee, Graham, and Swain Counties and provides technical assistance to Clay and Jackson Counties.

Some homes are rehabilitated provided that they can be brought up to code for a reasonable amount (set by HUD standards). Many times it's more cost effective to replace the dilapidated home with a mobile home.

CDBG monies are awarded on rotating three-year cycles to N.C. counties who satisfy application requirements.

The priority for assisting recipients is the elderly and/or disabled who are identified as low-income homeowners.

Southwestern RPO Gets Traffic Counters

Would you like to know how much traffic the new 500 home subdivision being built in your community will generate? Want a way to quantify the effects a new shopping center has on the surrounding roads? The Southwestern Commission Rural Planning Organization (SWRPO) is purchasing two Nu-Metric traffic counters. The traffic counters will be used by SWRPO to obtain traffic counts on highways, secondary roads, and municipal streets within the SWRPO planning area. Traffic count information is intended to supplement existing, ongoing traffic data collection conducted by NCDOT. The traffic counts will be obtained for use by the SWRPO in conducting project prioritization, long-range

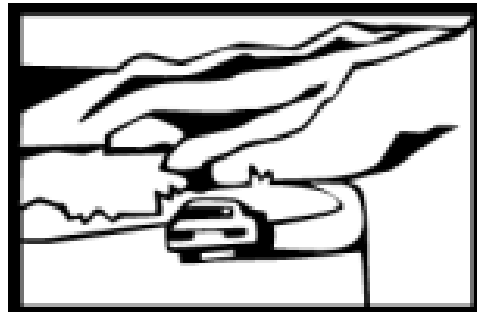
planning, and site-specific facility planning.

Additionally, the traffic counters will be available for use by member local governments of the SWRPO in obtaining traffic counts on municipal streets, parking lots, or private roads. If traffic counts are desired on private property, written permission from the property owner must be obtained prior to installation of the counters.

Traffic count information is very useful in determining whether a road is

exceeding or well below design capacity. Peak traffic can be separated from average daily traffic counts to monitor the effect work and school have on local traffic. Traffic count data can be used to study the effects of tourism traffic from season to season.

Is this data useful for your community and would it assist in your planning efforts? If so, contact Matt Roark at (828) 488-9211 ext 3035 or matt@regiona.org.



Upcoming Events on Aging Issues

Tartan Hall at the First Presbyterian Church in Franklin, NC, will be the location for a series of Elder Care workshops during the month of September, 2004. On September 14, the topic covered will be dealing with legal issues as we age; the September 21 workshop will cover elder abuse and caregiver issues; and the topic

on September 28 will be memory loss and dementia/mental health issues. There is no charge for these workshops.

On September 24, at the Youth Center Auditorium at Lake Junaluska, a free workshop "Accepting The Challenge; Providing the Best Care for People with Dementia," will be held. The presenter, Teepa

Snow with the Eastern Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, will help caregivers and professionals learn better ways to care for people with Dementia.

For more information about any of these workshops, call Sara Melton at 488-9211 ext 3032.

Whittier Sewer Project Should Get 2004 Start

Reprinted from the Smoky Times

Written by Pete Lawson, Senior Editor

Funding is in place to begin construction this year of a \$3.529 million sewer system to serve the Whittier and Gateway area of Swain and Jackson counties.

Planners have been working on the project since 2001 when the N.C. Rural Economic Development Center agreed to kick \$3 million into the lines and a treatment plant for Whittier Sanitary District.

Engineer Jeff Bishop of McGill and Associates said the area was first surveyed for the need, looking at failed septic systems and other environmental problems. A new wastewater treatment plant will serve two older industries in the Gateway area, along with

residences and businesses from the Qualla section on U.S. 441 to the east and to Whittier and Thomas Valley Road in the west.

Bishop recently told a gathering of about 35 residents that construction could begin in November. He said he is looking for all regulatory approvals next month (August), an awarding of construction bids in September, and a project completion date by the end of 2005.

“Although we’ve tried to keep all the lines in public right-of-way,” he said, “some private easements will be needed.”

The engineers are trying to permit for a 200,000

gallon-per-day discharge, but that is looking to the future. Expected GPD discharge initially is 100,000 gallons.

The gravity flow system is planned to include 3,800 feet of 12-inch line, and 17,170 linear feet of eight-inch line.

Bishop said archeological discoveries off Thomas Valley Road necessitated moving of lines. “We may have to wrap around more sites as the project gets going.”

Additional funding for the project will come from Appalachian Regional Commission, \$200,00; U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, \$99,000; Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, \$116,000; Jackson County/EBCI, \$88,700.

“The district was lucky to get this money,” Bishop said.

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2004 Annual Dinner

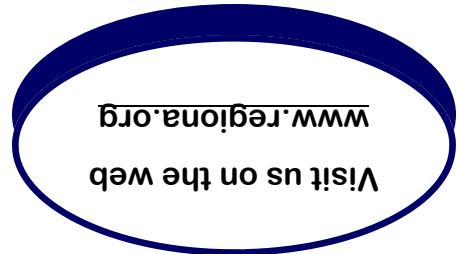
On Monday, July 26, 2004, representatives from towns, counties, businesses and state agencies in North Carolina along with their guests and staff of the Southwestern Commission, gathered at the Holiday Inn, Cherokee for Region A's Annual Dinner Meeting. A. Roland Leatherwood, mayor of

Clyde was recognized for his 37 years of community service.

After appetizers and a buffet dinner, Rick Carlisle, Managing Partner with Dogwood Equity, spoke on the state's economic growth. Jan Davidson, Director and Folklorist with the John C. Campbell Folk School,

entertained those gathered with his humor and music.





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New Staff Member at Southwestern Commission

Southwestern Commission welcomes new staff member Rebecca Viar, Workforce Development Specialist. Becky will be working primarily in the Graham County JobLink Office and can be reached there at 828-479-3376.

To reach a Southwestern Commission staff member, dial 828-488-9211 and the extension listed for that person below.

Lisa Aldridge 3034	Mary Barker 3024	Susan Bogart 3036
Lonnie Dockery 00	Susan Fouts 3037	Sandi Garrett 3026
Bill Gibson 3027	Vicki Greene 3031	M. R. Hall 3040
Marian Hill 00	Lois Hipp 3020	Debra Ivey 3021
Jeanne Mathews 3023	Sarajane Melton 3032	Barbara Mills 3030
Sara Peterson 3029	Matt Roark 3035	Tom Tyre 3039
Becky Viar 3042	Roger Wiggins 3022	Tamara Young 3033