

THE CENTRAL VIEW

Serving the Citizens of Fairfield, Lexington, Newberry & Richland Counties



CMCOG HOSTS FIRST REGIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD



Mrs. Gail Spires receives the First Central Midlands Regional Leadership Award on behalf of her late husband, Butch Spires from CMCOG Chairman E.W. Cromartie, II

On May 26th, 2005 the first ever *Central Midlands Regional Leadership Award* was presented at a banquet at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

This award was originally the concept of CMCOG Chairman E.W. Cromartie, II to recognize an individual or group for their outstanding contributions to the Central Midlands region. The *Central Midlands Regional Leadership Award* will be presented every two years to coincide with the terms of successive CMCOG chairmen.

This year's event, attended by close to 400 people, was presented to the family of the late Lowell C. "Butch" Spires, Jr, from Lexington County, who had served on the Central Midlands COG Board for over 20 years.

Mr. Spires was recognized for his many and varied contributions to the Central Midlands region, particularly for his work in forming the Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority which took over Columbia's bus system from SCE&G in 2002.

The event, emceed by local television personality, Joe Pinner, included a video tribute to the life, leadership and legacy of the late Butch Spires, a man who has made such a significant impact on quality of life issues in our region over the last 30 years.

"Thanks to Butch's legacy, residents of the Central Midlands region enjoy safer roads, a more robust economy, a healthier natural environment and improved community facilities. He is the true embodiment of regionalism and continues to be a source of inspiration to us today," said CMCOG Chairman E.W. Cromartie, II. "Without his extraordinary vision, guidance and leadership, many of the things that we take for granted today, would not have been possible."

Mr. Spires also was posthumously awarded with the Order of the Palmetto by State Senator Jake Knotts. It was also announced that the new CMRTA Regional Transit Facility will be named in honor of Mr. Spires as gratitude for his efforts to provide better public transportation throughout the region.

MIDLANDS SENIORS ATTEND WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE

The South Carolina White House Conference on Aging was held April 25-27, 2005 in Myrtle Beach. This conference takes place every ten years and serves to make policy recommendation to the White House Conference on Aging. These recommendations assist the public and private sectors in promoting the dignity, health, independence and economic security of current and future generations of older persons.

The South Carolina Conference was attended by 49 delegates from the Central Midlands region.



A wide number of issues relating to the elderly were discussed at the conference. The primary issues, as determined at an Issues Forum focused on health care, senior-friendly communities, Long Term Care, caregiving, future planning efforts, housing for seniors and Alzheimer's-related issues. The issues raised at state level will be passed on to the National White House Conference on Aging, and will, in turn be used by the President and Congress to determine policies for our seniors.



SC Delegates at the White House Conference in Myrtle Beach

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MWDB Recognizes Employers & Unveils New Look

The Midlands Workforce Development Board hosted an Employer Appreciation Luncheon on Thursday, May 12th, 2005.

The event, attended by over 175 business leaders and elected officials recognized area employers for their contributions to the advancement of the workforce in the Central Midlands.

The event also honored past WIA chairman, James P. Armstrong and announced the creation of a new Partnership Award to be presented to future employers in his honor.

A new MWBD website, logo and a series of public service announcements and billboards were also unveiled.



Spotlight on: Workforce Development

Announcements

Please join us in welcoming our newest Board members:

Bill Banning
Lexington County

Wilber Lee Jeffcoat
Lexington County

Joe Owens
Lexington County

Kelly White recently received certification as an authorized WorkKeys Job Profiler from the American College Testing (ACT) Program.

The intensive course included 125 hours of education and training and authorizes her to conduct ACT job profiling services for businesses to help them identify critical skills for the workplace.

Gregory Sprouse is one of twenty recent graduates from the United Way's Blueprint for Leadership training program. The 8-week program gave participants an insight into the community's non-profit business structure.

The program focused on different components of the non-profit field including leadership, board development, fundraising, strategic planning and outcomes measurement. The training also included 6 hours of service on community projects in the Midlands.

The Workforce Development Program has implemented a number of innovative programs and initiatives since becoming part of Central Midlands COG last year.

The newest tool for workforce development is the **WorkKeys Program**, a comprehensive program designed to carefully match employers with the right employees for the job. The three basic components of WorkKeys are: Job Profiles, Skills assessments and Skills training.

The Job Profile helps identify critical skills necessary to perform a particular position effectively. The Skills Assessment takes the Job Profile to the next level. Assessment scores show



employers the current skill levels of employees or job applicants. Assessments simulate increasingly complex workplace situations and problems to which the employee must respond or resolve. Performance is graded from bronze to platinum depending on the level achieved. The Assessment provides the employer with evidence of skill attainment while documenting personal achievements.

The final phase in the WorkKeys Program is Skills Training, which is designed to close any existing skill gaps using a mobile, web-based training program, which can be tailored to meet individual training goals.

WorkKeys offers businesses the type of affordable, targeted and compliant solutions they need to increase their bottom line through their employees, and offers an invaluable opportunity to sharpen skills and document achievements while training for success. Through collaborative efforts such as WorkKeys, the Midlands Workforce Development Board is taking the next step towards building a better workforce.

WETLANDS MITIGATION BANK PLANNING CONTINUES

Central Midlands COG is entering the final stages of establishing its Wetlands Mitigation Bank.

In May 2004, the Central Midlands COG Mitigation Bank prospectus was presented to the SC Mitigation Bank Review Team (MBRT), in which three watersheds for a possible mitigation bank were identified, with a pilot tract in each watershed. The three watersheds are: Cedar Creek in northwest Richland County; Cedar Creek in lower Richland County, and Congaree

Creek in Lexington County. Five potential restoration sites and five potential protection sites



Cedar Creek in lower Richland County

have also identified for each eco-region.

Phase III will include more extensive mapping of the suggested sites, meeting with property owners to explain the concept, gauge interest and gain property access to verify mapping and restoration opportunities. The final step in Phase III will be to prepare a draft mitigation bank instrument for each eco-region bank to be presented to MBRT. The final phase will be a revision of this draft after comments have been received, for final approval by the MBRT.

RECORD YEAR FOR BUILDING PERMITS IN 2004

In 2004, a record number of building permits were issued in the Central Midlands region. For the first time, since CMCOG began collecting information in 1975, more than 9,000 permits were issued, totaling more than \$1.3 billion in value.

The number and value of single-family housing permits issued in 2004 also reached a new high. 5,178 permits for new single-family homes were issued, beating the previous high

from 2003 by more than 200 units. Richland Northeast, Lexington, Irmo and Blythewood continue to be the residential hotspots accounting for 75% of single-family housing permits issued last year.

Non-residential growth also continues to be strong with permit values exceeding \$413 million; a 23% increase from the previous year.



Home under construction at West Columbia's Village At Riverwalk

CMCOG STAFF UNDERTAKE A RANGE OF TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES

As it prepares to start work on the next update to its urban Long Range Transportation Plan, the CMCOG Transportation staff is currently working on a number of other significant transportation-related projects.

The finishing touches are being made to the COATS Early Action Compact (EAC). The Clean Air Act (CAA) requires that air quality in every state meet health based Air Quality Standards. If an area is in non-attainment, then the Statewide Implementation Plan must be revised to include control measures to ensure that 8 hour ozone standards are met and maintained by the end of 2007. The Early Action Compact offers a more expeditious time line for achieving emissions reductions, while providing "fail-safe" provisions for the area to revert to the traditional process if specific milestones are not met. Under the Early Action Compact,

local, state and EPA officials have agreed to work together to develop and implement local and state early action plans which aim to reduce ground-level ozone to comply with the 8-hour standard by the end of 2007 and maintain standards beyond that date.



CMCOG is undertaking a Commuter Transit Feasibility Study

Three transportation planning studies are also being conducted by COG staff. The first corridor plan is being performed along S-48 from I-26 into Downtown Chapin. This stretch of highway was the top-ranked project in the latest COATS Long Range Transportation Plan. The finished plan will be used to

help guide the improvements needed for the highest priority highway improvement project in the Columbia urban area.

A Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan is also under development. Data collection for this study was recently completed and a working committee will work on establishing a vision, identifying goals and objectives to achieve that vision and identifying stakeholders to help implement the final plan.

The Commuter Rail Study is one of the most anticipated studies in recent years in the Central Midlands region. CMCOG is in the final stages of procuring a consultant to undertake a commuter rail feasibility study along a number of corridors from suburban areas to Downtown Columbia. As the region continues to grow and roads become more congested, alternative means of transportation will be necessary to get people from home to work or school.

CMCOG would like to recognize its outgoing Board Members:

Quay W. McMaster
Town of Winnsboro

S. Lyman Whitehead
Lexington County

Homer Mitchell
Lexington County

Central Midlands COG would like to express its gratitude for their years of service to the Central Midlands region.

SILVERHAIRCED LEGISLATORS APPOINTED TO GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Two Silverhaired Legislators from the Central Midlands region were recently appointed to the Governor's Advisory Council on Aging.

Margaret Brackett of Newberry (left) and Jean Bridges of West Columbia were appointed to advise the Governor's office on a wide range of issues affecting older South Carolinians, their



families and other caregivers.

The two legislators will assist in planning education initiatives about programs and services for older citizens, promote responsibility for retirement and facilitate public and private partnerships to expand resources to meet the needs of the elderly in the region. Ms. Brackett and Ms. Bridges will serve 4 year terms.

CMCOG RECEIVES \$175,000 PLANNING GRANT

Earlier this year, Central Midlands COG applied for and received a grant of \$175,000 from the Office of Economic Adjustment of the Department of Defense for an advance planning exercise to consider possible uses for Fort Jackson and McEntire Air National Guard Station, in the event they were to be closed during the latest Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process.

On May 15th, it was announced that both facilities had survived

the BRAC process, however, all three phases of the Advanced Planning Grant will be completed.

Phase one consists of redevelopment visions for each facility. Phase two is a stakeholder analysis, and the final phase is a comprehensive economic base analysis of Richland County. "It is critical to complete all three phases," says John Huffman of CMCOG staff, who worked on the project. "The study will provide insight into the changing economy of

Richland County and better help policymakers absorb additional military personnel into the community." The study will be completed by the end of September.



Recruits drilling at Fort Jackson

News In Brief

On March 2, 2005 the Central Midlands Hazard Mitigation Plan was formally approved by FEMA. The Plan is now being adopted by local governments.

Following on the success of the Grant Writing seminar held in the fall, CMCOG, in conjunction with Grant Writing USA, will host a second seminar August 29th-30th, 2005.

The seminar consists of two full days of training with Grant Writing USA's staff. The cost of the training is \$349 per person. For more information call Andy Simmons, Information Services Manager: 744-5148



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Cayce, City of Columbia, City of Forest
Acres, Town of Immo, Town of Lexington,
City of Newberry, Town of Springdale,
City of West Columbia, Town of
Winnsboro.**

A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

At the end of June, my two year tenure as Chairman of Central Midlands Council of Governments will come to an end. It has been an honor to serve as chairman of this prestigious organization during a busy two years, which has seen a number of happenings and changes occur.

In the past two years, we have hired a new Executive Director in Norman Whitaker, who I feel, has the necessary knowledge and experience to take the "COG" to the next level. Under his tutelage, Central Midlands COG can only go from strength to strength.

Last summer, the mortgage on the CMCOG building was retired, and this was commemorated with a mortgage burning ceremony. Our good financial stewardship has enabled us to embark on an expansion program to add an additional 1,500 square feet of office space as our work program increases and our staff grows.

Last year, a new Program Area, the Midlands Workforce Investment Area (WIA), was added to the COG. The Midlands WIA Program is committed to building an



E.W. Cromartie, II, CMCOG
Chairman, City of Columbia.

integrated workforce development system in the Midlands to serve the needs of both job-seekers and employers. In the short time that the WIA Program has been part of the COG, it has received a prestigious Regional Innovator Award from the Southern Growth Policies Board for its Hispanic Outreach Program and recently implemented its new Work Keys Program, designed to match employers and job seekers.

Last October, a number of Board members joined me on a field trip to the City of Charlotte, which served to broaden our horizons as we learned first-hand about their experiences as they tackled their own growth issues, with particular regard to the development and

expansion of the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS). This trip was a marvelous experience, particularly with regard to the fact that we have recently revived the CMCOG Rail Committee, which is currently considering proposals to undertake a new feasibility study for commuter rail in the Midlands. As the Midlands continues to grow, new transportation alternatives must be explored to ease road congestion and improve air quality in our region.

Over the last two years, we have also undertaken a number of efforts to advance the image and visibility of the Central Midlands COG. This newsletter has been re-introduced, as has the Annual Report, and at my behest, the Central Midlands Regional Leadership Award was initiated. The inaugural event, held in May, was a grand affair, attended by close to 400 guests, and was a fitting tribute to the legacy of our dear friend, the late Butch Spires.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the COG Board for their support in initiating the new programs and policies. I feel that each chairman has the duty of leaving a legacy, and I trust that many of the initiatives implemented under "my watch" will endure as we pursue our ultimate common goal: a better Central Midlands region.

*Articles contributed
by CMCOG staff*