

JULY 2020

# PINNACLE

*Georgia Mountains Regional Commission*

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Cover Photo:  
Summer Visitor  
Gainesville, GA

# Executive Director's Report



Heather Feldman  
Executive Director

- I would like to welcome our newest GMRC Council Member, Ms. Nan Bowen. Ms. Bowen serves as a City Council member for the City of **Cleveland**. Gina and I met with her on July 28<sup>th</sup> to conduct a mini "orientation" for her. I look forward to getting to know Ms. Bowen and having her as an active member on the GMRC Council!



- We are excited to announce that we have been awarded supplemental funding from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) through the CARES Act for RLF Funding. GMRC received \$2,101,000 in funding, of which \$1.9 million will be reserved for loaning to businesses in all 13 of our counties.

- Congratulations to the City of **Dawsonville** on their recent Ribbon Cutting and opening of the city's Farmers Market. What a huge asset for the downtown area, and it will greatly complement the City Park located in close proximity!!



- We are underway with our FY20 Audit. Rushton and Company was in the office the week of July 20<sup>th</sup> doing preliminary work. Thank you to the entire Finance staff and Administrative staff for working with the auditors to get them what they need.

- Chairman Norton and I had the distinct honor to present Jim Dove, former Executive Director at North-east Georgia Regional Commission with the Whisman Award. The Whisman Award is given annually at the Development District Association of Appalachia (DDAA) annual conference in Washington, DC. Due to COVID, the conference was cancelled this year, but wanted to present the award to Jim to receive this well deserved recognition.



- Adam Hazell is working on Rural Zone Applications for three of our communities: City of **Clayton**, City of **Hiawassee**, and the City of **Lavonia**. The Rural Zone program targets rural downtown areas that have been adversely impacted by local economic conditions by creating "Rural Zones" which offer economic development incentives. Incentives may include a Job Tax Credit, Investment Tax Credit, or Rehabilitation Tax Credit. If your community is interested in applying, please contact Adam Hazell at [ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov](mailto:ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov) or 770-538-2617.

- Congratulations to the City of Hiawassee, who recently received certification from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs as a Broadband Ready Community. Broadband plays an important role in all aspects of local government, and I commend the city's initiative on seeking this designation. This designation recognizes a city and/or county whose local government has completed the application and demonstrated compliance with the adoption of a local comprehensive plan inclusive of the deployment of broadband services and a Broadband Model Ordinance. For more information, please view DCA's website at [www.dca.ga.gov](http://www.dca.ga.gov)

- Governor Kemp has signed SB473, which transfers the Historic Preservation Division from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

- Thank you to David Cassell, Strategic Programs Administrator for the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA) for virtually presenting at our Zoom Council Meeting on July 30<sup>th</sup>. David gave a great presentation and program overview on the Georgia Transportation Infrastructure Bank, and we look forward to seeing some projects come to fruition in the Georgia Mountains Region!

Sincerely,

*Heather Feldman*

Heather Feldman  
Executive Director



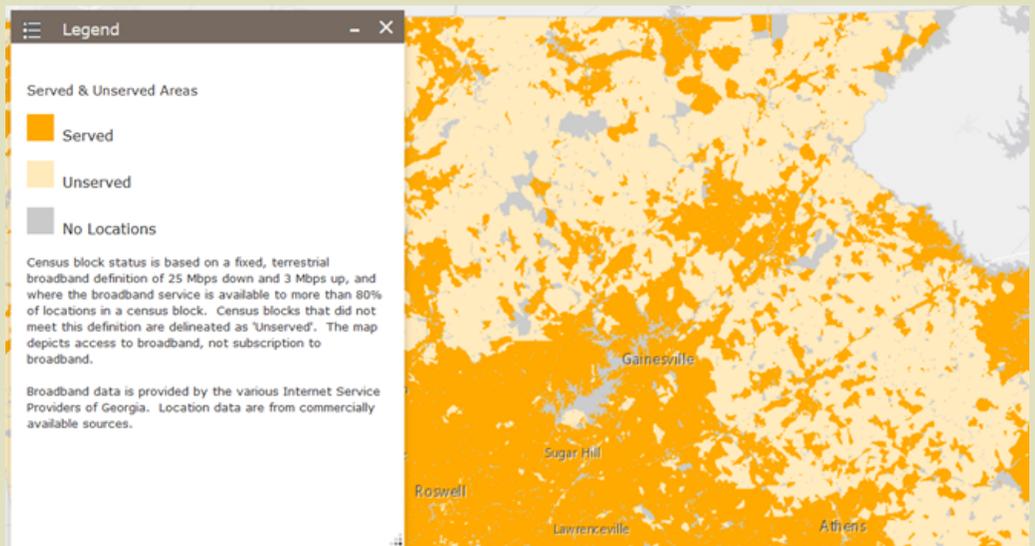
# Planning

## Upgrading Support for Broadband Ready Applications

As communities and local governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, the region's growing dependence on broadband technology became a prominent issue. As employees worked from home, students participated in online classrooms, and more people sought entertainment options from home, the demand for faster speeds and more bandwidth was a common theme from counties and municipalities across the region and the country. If businesses and residents are to better adapt to such scenarios in the future, the communication and information infrastructure will need upgrades.

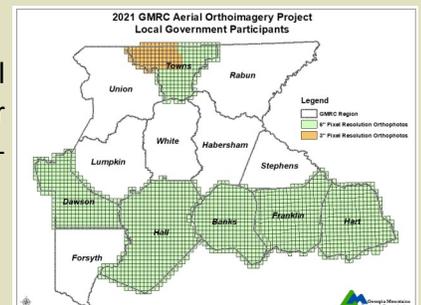
To support this effort, the GMRC is actively engaging with our member governments to help them with achieving Broadband Ready status, allowing them eligibility to participate in state programs aimed at expanding higher-end fiber-optic connectivity. To this end, the GMRC Planning Department is ready and able to assist any and all local governments to quickly develop the Broadband Assessment to be included in their local comprehensive plan as required before applying for the Broadband Ready designation. This involves communications with key stakeholders to identify targeted areas in need of improvements, and can be done three months or less depending on the scope of assessment desired. Our goal is to have every community eligible to apply to have their Broadband Assessment in place within the next 3 years.

Visit [broadband.georgia.gov](http://broadband.georgia.gov) to learn more about the Broadband ready program and contact [ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov](mailto:ahazell@gmrc.ga.gov) if you wish to have the GMRC help you with this effort.



## Information Services

- A request for proposal was released on July 27<sup>th</sup> for the 2021 GMRC Aerial Orthoimagery Project. Proposals are due August 27<sup>th</sup>. RFP can be found on our website [www.gmrc.ga.gov](http://www.gmrc.ga.gov) under GIS Services. Contact Faith Bryan (770) 538-2614 or [fbryan@gmrc.ga.gov](mailto:fbryan@gmrc.ga.gov) for additional information.



- GMRC has entered into contract with the City of **Dahlonega** to create digital layers of data for water, sewer, and storm water infrastructure.
- The City of **Clayton** requested assistance with compiling an elevation contour map of the city.
- The Cities of **Cornelia** and **Toccoa** requested assistance with updating their Official Zoning Map.

## Economic Development

- Congratulations to the City of **Hiawassee** on being awarded a \$66,750 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) to assist in funding improvements for two buildings in downtown **Hiawassee**.
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) - Has your community considered pursuing CDBG funding? This program provides funding to assist with various activities such as water and sewer lines, local health centers, senior centers or head start centers, and economic development projects. All projects must substantially benefit low and moderate income persons. The application deadline will be in Spring 2021 and the planning process should begin now. Contact the Economic Development department for more information.

## Finance Department

- On July 22, Heather Feldman, Daniel Martin, and Andrea Newsom attended the ribbon cutting of Twelve South artisan market in **Hartwell**. We were pleased to be there to support our client Debra Taylor as well as the City of **Hartwell**. There were a total of six ribbon cuttings that day for E. Carolina Street. Please make a point to stop by Twelve South when in **Hartwell**.



- The Finance Department has already begun preliminary work with the auditors. We will begin the full audit on August 10<sup>th</sup> and present the audit to the Council in November.

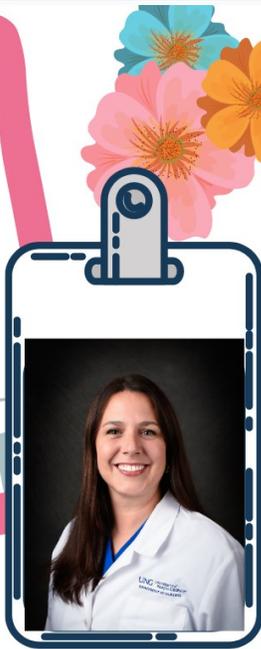
## WorkSource Adult Programs Success Stories

WIOA services allowed me the opportunity to move forward through a competitive nursing program while raising four children.

The financial assistance and peace of mind that WIOA provides is amazing and I'm so very appreciative.

If you're thinking about applying, you have absolutely nothing to lose and only support, both financially and emotionally to gain!

Rebecca Couget, BSN



I come from a low income family and have faced food and housing insecurity. I started college with a desire to become a Physical Therapist.

I started the training program at Brenau University and they supported me every step of the way! They were thorough and well organized.

Using the WIOA grant was an amazing opportunity! Do yourself a favor and apply!



Samuel Rego,  
Doctor of Physical Therapy

### ADULT PROGRAMS UPDATES

- The On-the-Job Training (OJT) program is assisting Sahni's Enterprises in Forsyth County to fill an Operations Manager and Office Manager position through the OJT Program. Both participants are dislocated workers, one being related to the COVID-19 layoff.
- A total of 69 people signed up for Overviews in July.
- The Career Coach is still operating virtually! One-on-one resume sessions and job search assistance are available!



Before I decided to go to school to become a Radiology Technician, I felt unfulfilled.

I learned about WIOA from the program director at Lanier Technical College and I am so happy that he shared the information with our class. WIOA services are amazing. I'm not sure how I would have been able to attend school without it!

I feel extremely grateful and blessed. I had a full time job offer before graduation and will be making a decent salary to contribute to my family's finances.

If you are thinking about applying for WIOA assistance- DO IT!! It's worth the hoops you jump through and all the paperwork!

KERI MCCOY, RADIOLOGY TECHNICIAN

## WorkSource Youth Program Success Story - Kaitlyn King

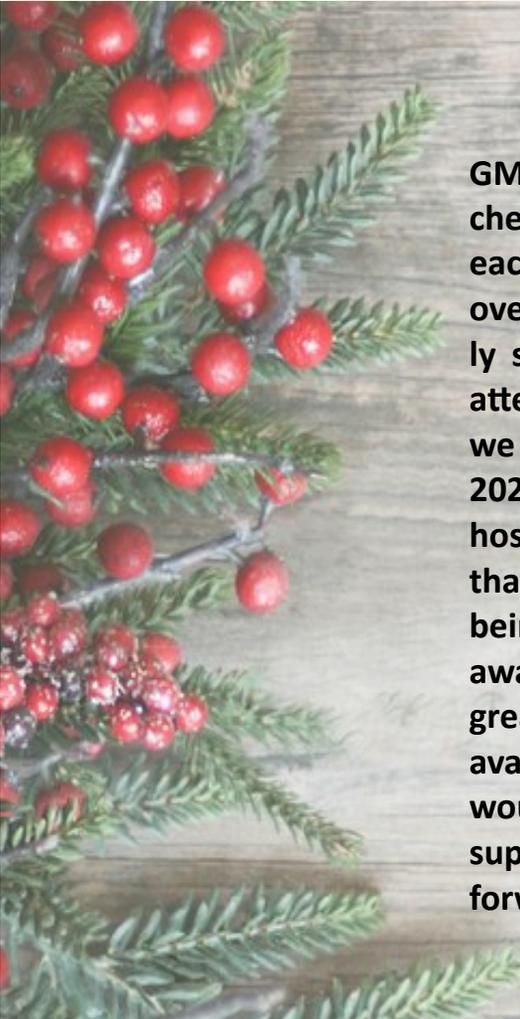
Kaitlyn King recently received her GED after taking classes through the WIOA GED Career Pathways grant at Lanier Technical College's Adult Education program at the Banks County Campus. She is now enrolled in the Phlebotomy Technician program at Lanier Technical College.

About her experience, Kaitlyn said:

*"I always worried that I wouldn't succeed because I'm slow at learning and really bad at math. But I was able to succeed because of my willpower, God's will, and the people around me cheering me on."*

Kaitlyn's GED instructors and Adult Education team members cannot say enough about how proud they are of her accomplishments.





## 2020 GMRC Annual Meeting Cancelled

GMRC's Annual Meeting held each December is a highly cherished event that allows us to celebrate our region and each other. Over the past few years, the event has grown to over 375 people and is a testament to the pride we collectively share for this region. The health and well-being of our attendees is our chief priority, so bearing the health pandemic we are currently facing, the GMRC has decided to cancel the 2020 event. Due to rising numbers in cases and increased hospitalizations throughout the Georgia Mountains, we felt that this was the most prudent option for the safety and well-being of everyone. GMRC does plan to present our annual awards and celebrate the accomplishments and people of this great region and more information on this will become available in the near future. The GMRC Council and staff would like to express our sincere appreciation for everyone's support of the GMRC throughout the year, and we look forward to an awesome event in 2021!!!

### UPCOMING GMRC COUNCIL MEETINGS AND PROGRAMS

- 
- ⇒ August 27, 2020 *Georgia's Rural Center, Janet Cochran*
  - ⇒ September 24, 2020 *Scott Hilton, Georgians First Commission*
  - ⇒ October 29, 2020\* *Lumpkin County/City of Dahlonega - Randall Toussaint, GDEcD, Cyber Security*
  - ⇒ November 19, 2020 *City of Dawsonville - Rushton & Company, GMRC Audit*

**GMRC Council Meetings begin at 5:00 PM; Executive Committee meets prior at 4:00 PM.**

**\*WD Board Meeting at 3:00 PM**