UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina

Learning opportunities
around every corner at the Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting (July 18-21 in Greenville) has an agenda packed with educational sessions, inspirational speakers and time to share best practices. But don't let the opportunity slip by to lace up your sneakers and explore a nationally recognized model for downtown revitalization.

Start off with a quick orientation by hopping on one of the three trolley tours scheduled for Thursday. Greenville city staff will point out items of municipal interest along the way. See related story on page 3.

Attendees need not travel farther than the host hotel to experience the project credited with kicking off Greenville's renaissance in the 80s. NOMA Square (formerly Greenville Commons) was the result of a public-private partnership that was the first of its kind in the country. The facility, including the Hyatt, just concluded a major renovation project in early 2013.

Step out the Hyatt's front door and let the mice lead you down Main Street. The mice? Mice on Main is a whimsical scavenger hunt from the Hyatt to the Westin. See if you can find all nine of the unique bronze mice sculptures.

The mice aren't the only public art on display. Before you arrive in the upstate, visit the city's website and download a

Photo/City of Greenville

copy of the "Art in Public Places" guide. It provides a great resource for discovering public art that has complemented the city's continued growth.

The community's commitment to art and culture is on display everywhere you turn.

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McElveen steps up

Municipal Association President Randy Randall resigned his position on the board as of July 1 because of his election to the Public Service Commission. At its June meeting, the board elected First Vice President Mayor Joe McElveen of Sumter to serve Mayor Randall's unexpired term. Elections for the 2013-2014 board will take place at the Annual Meeting.

The Peace Center for the Performing Arts, partially funded with revenue from tax increment financing, was another early anchor of Greenville's redevelopment effort. Jersey Boys, winner of the Best Musical Tony Award on Broadway, will take the main stage from July 10-21. According to the box office, reserve tickets now. It is sure to be a sellout.

As you make your way down Main Street headed to the West End, pay special attention to the streetscaping. What was once an expanse of nondescript concrete is now a tree-lined, pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare.

Falls Park on the Reedy is the result of a more than 20-year project to transform the park into a dramatic public garden. Using funds generated through the local hospitality tax, Falls Park includes 20 acres of gardens showcasing the Reedy River Falls. Included in the project was construction of a 355-foot-long, 12-foot-wide, curved suspension bridge that provides dramatic views of the upper falls and the gardens below.

Make your way past Falls Park to Fluor Field, home of the Greenville Drive minor league baseball team. Modeled after Boston's Fenway Park, Fluor Field has been another catalyst for downtown development. The Drive will be playing each night during the Annual Meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Greenville understands the importance of having a vibrant downtown after five o'clock. City leaders have made it a priority to offer live music on Main Street on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday nights. The Southern Crescent with its wide variety song list will perform as part of the Reedy River Concert series on Wednesday night, July 18, at the Peace Center's amphitheater. On Thursday, the Downtown Alive Music Series at NOMA Square starts at 5:30 p.m. with local rock musician Luke Cunningham. Local band 20 Point Turn headlines Main Street Friday also at NOMA Square.

Bringing people back downtown during the weekend is another hallmark of a great downtown. Many cities are turning toward sponsoring a Farmers Market to accomplish that goal. Greenville's Saturday Market in front of the Westin features more than 50 local vendors with everything from in-season produce and prepared gourmet foods to fresh cut flowers and handmade crafts. The market is open 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

An agenda packed with educational sessions, municipal colleagues from across the state and a living laboratory for successful downtown revitalization, the 2013 Annual Meeting promises to be educational, informative and high energy.

For more information about the Association's Annual Meeting, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: Annual Meeting).

All aboard

Start your Annual Meeting by rediscovering downtown Greenville on a trolley tour. On the ride from the Hyatt to the West End and back, city staff will point out new developments and municipal projects along the way.

Photo/City of Greenville

Project One

Project One is a new 185,000 square-foot mixed-use infill development project. The $100 million project offers a mix of spaces for offices, retailers, restaurants and Clemson University's MBA program.

Piazza Bergamo Renovation

The $4 million renovation will create an inviting and active public open space complete with water features, comfortable seating, shade structures and trees, and outdoor dining opportunities. Construction should be completed this summer.

The Peace Center

The Peace Center represents one of the most significant public-private partnerships ever entered into by the City of Greenville. Constructed in 1990, this $42 million state-of-the-art development was financed through private sector contributions, city funds, state bond issue and county funds. The Center completed a major $20 million renovation in 2012 that included a new façade for the concert hall, plaza renovation and improved pedestrian connection from Main Street to the riverfront.

While on the tour, you will also have the opportunity to get a quick orientation of all that downtown Greenville has to offer and understand how Greenville made it to *O* magazine's list of favorite things last year. Take note of the nearly 100 restaurants, retail additions to Main Street like Anthropologie, and old favorites like O.P. Taylors and Mast General. Plus, you can't overlook the lush natural beauty of the waterfalls and Falls Park Bridge.

The trolley tours will be available on a first-come, first-served basis at 11:15 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, July 18. They will depart from the Beattie Street entrance of the Hyatt near the parking garage.

Tap into
the Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting is going mobile. Attendees can get up-to-the-minute meeting information directly on their Android or Apple smart phones and tablets.

The app is free and contains everything you'll need to know about the 2013 Annual Meeting. You can review the full agenda then create a personalized schedule complete with reminders. Want to know more about the speakers? You can view brief bios for each and get contact information.

Leave your business cards at home. You can have your contact information added to allow others to email, follow or friend you. "Networking is an important aspect of any meeting," explained Executive Director Miriam Hair. "It is a great way to keep the connections going after the meeting is over."

Providing a digital connection among municipal officials, speakers, exhibitors and patrons is one of the biggest benefits for using the app. You can virtually visit with the vendors participating in the Exhibitor Showcase. You can locate their booth and can phone, email or visit their website directly from the app. You can use the app to contact the Association's patrons in similar ways.

Twitter user? From the app, follow (or better yet) be part of the discussion about all things Annual Meeting. Share and discuss key takeaways from the sessions.

"This is our first step into the mobile app world," said Hair. "We have researched the possibility for quite a while and felt the time was right to 'dip our toe in the water.' We hope attendees will use the app and let us know if using the app enhanced their Annual Meeting experience. Based on that feedback, we will look at offering it for other training sessions we offer."

To download the app, simply go to the Android Marketplace or Apple App Store and search for "Municipal Association of SC." The attendee listing will not be added until just before the meeting. Make sure you check for updates to the app for the most current information.

Want to learn more or receive help to download the app? During the Annual Meeting, technology sessions are scheduled for Thursday and Friday, and Municipal Association staff will be available in the Mobile Device Lab to provide one-on-one assistance.

Summer Safety

Summer is upon us. While visions of long, lazy days by the water invade our thoughts, there are other not-so-pleasant visions that invade every risk manger's head this time of year.

Safety Issues

During warmer weather, we see increased outdoor activity among employees. Exposure to poisonous plants and insect bites accounts for a large share of claims this time of year. Thankfully, most incidents are not severe. Wearing the proper gloves and clothing (lightweight, long-sleeved shirts and pants) are the preferred prevention techniques.

Heat injuries, such as heat stroke or heat exhaustion, are a more serious concern. High temperatures alone are not the only problem. High humidity can cause heat injuries at much lower temperatures. Several measures can lessen the likelihood of heat-related injuries: engineering controls (ventilation/fans, shielding, personal cooling devices and proper clothing), work practices (water breaks, rest periods) and education (training employees about heat injuries and how to recognize problems).

Summer also brings several weather-related exposures. Hurricanes are an ever-present concern for South Carolina.

Coastal and inland communities should prepare for the threat of hurricanes and the associated tornadoes and flooding that may occur. Afternoon thunderstorms and lightning also pose a threat to employees working outside. Training and education about the dangers of these exposures are as important as having good incident plans in place and practiced.

Liability Issues

Warmer weather also brings increased outdoor activity among the general public. Increased usage of municipal parks, playgrounds and recreation programs increases the potential for liability. It is imperative for grounds and equipment to be well maintained and be inspected routinely. Note deficiencies and give them immediate attention, making sure to document all work performed. Post warning signs identifying special hazards or minimum age requirements where appropriate at parks, pools and playgrounds.

Inclement weather can create liability problems in the form of slips and falls at entrances to municipal buildings. Address wet entrances and aisles where the public must travel to conduct business.

Auto liability exposure is another area of concern. The period from Memorial Day to Labor Day is the most hazardous time of year for vehicular accidents.

Annual motor vehicle record checks and periodic driver training can help minimize auto liability losses.

Teach employees how to identify and protect themselves and members of the public from hazards. This attention will benefit everyone.

Summertime tips

- Download the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's free mobile app to help protect workers from heat-related illness.

- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has fact sheets on protecting workers from ticks and mosquitoes, poisonous plants, stinging insects, sun exposure and heat stress.

- South Carolina Municipal Insurance Trust members have access to grants to purchase body cooling materials for public works or fire service employees. Contact Joy Gloster, member services specialist, at jgloster@masc.sc for information.

Municipal officials encouraged to attend regional meetings

Join Municipal Association staff at one of 10 Regional Advocacy Meetings to discuss bills that passed during the 2013 legislative session and get ready for legislation still in play for 2014. The meetings will last from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. with lunch included.

It is critical that all local elected officials and staff attend these meetings and contribute to the conversation about setting priorities for the 2014 legislative session.

Aug. 14 .... Town of Blythewood
Aug. 15 .... City of Greenwood
Aug. 19 .... City of Conway
Aug. 21 .... City of Sumter
Sept. 4 .... City of Simpsonville
Sept. 5 .... City of Lake City
Sept. 11 .... City of Union
Sept. 12 .... Town of Holly Hill
Sept. 18 .... City of Walterboro
Sept. 19 .... City of North Charleston

The locations are organized by council of government region, but officials may attend any session that is convenient.

Look for additional information in the weekly *Uptown Update* and on the Association's website. Contact Michelle Willm (mwillm@masc.sc) at 803.933.1259 for more information.

These meetings are free, but the Association needs an accurate head count for lunch and handouts.

For more information and to register online, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: regional advocacy meeting).

2013
Achievement Awards

Started in 1987, the program provides local government officials and employees the opportunity to receive deserved recognition for superior and innovative efforts in local government. The program also provides a forum for sharing the best public service ideas in South Carolina.

This year, 33 municipalities entered the Achievement Awards. Summaries, along with a video highlighting this year's winners, are available on the Association's website.

Town of Edisto Beach
Population 1 - 1,000

The improvements to Edisto Beach's 38 public beach access points began in 1994, when officials committed to renovating two per year. The project's goals were to provide beachgoers safer and more convenient access to the sandy shores and to make the town eligible for state funds that are awarded only to municipalities that meet standards set forth by the Beachfront Management Act of 1991.

Each public access is a road terminus that was deeded to the town in 1975. During the 18-year project, officials collaborated with many groups in the community—nonprofits, businesses and resident committees—to upgrade the access points to meet state standards.

Each access point had its own characteristics, but almost all of them were being encroached upon by private property. Officials worked with property owners to delineate boundaries. Another concern officials addressed was the health of the nearby dune system. Where appropriate, the town constructed dune walkovers to protect critical areas.

Funding came from a combination of grants and local taxes. Plans for each access point evolved over time, and although each one received upgrades, no two are alike.

The improvements are impressive. Better parking and reflective signage accommodate Edisto Beach's day-trippers. New rope fencing, as well as trash and dog waste receptacles, protect the coastal ecosystem. The town installed safety stations to educate visitors about seaside dangers like riptides. Volunteers constructed bike racks and beach-viewing benches.

Getting to the shoreline in Edisto Beach is easier and more enjoyable these days, thanks to the town and its residents who had a long-term vision and saw it through to the end.

Contact Iris Hill at ihill@townofedistobeach.com or 843.869.2505 ext. 211.

City of Loris
Population 1,001 - 5,000

The old Loris public safety building was so cramped that police officers were doing their paperwork from jail cells. Important fire equipment was crowded into garages, and firefighters lacked meeting space and sleeping quarters. Officials understood that a new facility was vital and that outside funding would be essential for such a massive project.

Officials asked their local council of governments for help in pursuing grants. A team was put together to identify and secure funding. Grants from the South Carolina Department of Commerce, Horry County and the USDA Office of Rural Development kick-started the project. Various individuals made donations to furnish and landscape the new building.

To get the public on board with the necessary expenditures, town officials held an open house so that residents could see for themselves the outdated facilities. After the event, residents voted resoundingly to pass a bond referendum for the city to fund the project. With the money in place, construction began.

The new public safety building is practical and modern. Firefighters are enjoying a comfortable day room, sleeping quarters, kitchen and showers while police officers now have their own offices as well as secure evidence and interview rooms. The departments share conference space and a training area. A backup emergency generator ensures police and firefighters will be ready for a city-wide crisis. The facility meets the community's current needs and has space in the event of future growth.

The new building is one that firefighters and police are proud to call home and that residents are proud to visit.

Contact Mayor David E. Stoudemire, Jr. at mayor@ cityofloris.com or 843.756.4004.

City of Lancaster
Population 5,001 - 10,000

Downtown Lancaster needed an anchor. The University of South Carolina Lancaster needed space to store and showcase its large collection of Catawba pottery and artifacts. A partnership was born.

Plans for the Native American Studies Center began when Lancaster municipal officials met with community groups to discuss cultural tourism and historical assets as catalysts for downtown revitalization. They brought faculty in on the conversations. The faculty shared that they were in desperate need of more room for the half-million Catawba artifacts—the world's largest Catawba collection—in the school's possession, as well as space for a growing number of students attending USCL.

The City of Lancaster purchased a long-empty furniture store on Main Street using funds raised from hospitality taxes and a Duke Energy grant. Officials worked with faculty from USCL's Native American Studies department to design classrooms, labs and galleries in the renovated space. The city improved existing parking and created additional parking areas. Working with regional tourism and preservation groups, the city then developed a marketing plan to promote the new center.

Locating a cultural attraction downtown has been a boon for tourism in Lancaster. Even better, there are more college students spending time—and dollars—in the city center. The project has been so successful that officials are working with USCL to relocate more of the University's departments downtown. Workshops, festivals, seminars and other public events are in the works as well to draw more people to the Native American Studies Center.

A once-empty building is now a cultural asset, and downtown Lancaster is once again the center of conversation.

Contact Helen Sowell at hpsowell@lancastercitysc.com or 803.289.1699.

Town of Bluffton
Population 10,001 - 20,000

The population of Bluffton has surged by 1,700 percent in the last 20 years. This sharp and sudden boom brought soaring land costs, making it almost impossible to build affordable homes within town limits. Worried about the impact of pervasive development on the outskirts of town and hoping to encourage growth in an underutilized area of Bluffton's historic district, officials pledged to redevelop run-down Wharf Street into affordable housing.

Numerous grants funded the project, including money from the Neighborhood Stabilization Program and HOME funds. The town donated the parcel of land for the new homes. Although spearheaded by Bluffton officials, many partnerships—at the county, regional and state levels—were formed to ensure the project was a success. The public as well as the town's planning and historic preservation commissions played important roles in the project, providing volunteers and advice about maintaining the historical integrity of the neighborhood.

In the end, six modular homes were constructed on Wharf Street in the center of Bluffton's Old Town District. The environmental impact on the land and community was lessened by the modular construction process. These affordable homes were built to fit in with the historic nature of their surroundings, and took the place of two vacant lots. The modular homes feature energy-efficient mechanical systems and appliances which provide lower utility bills and maintenance costs to homeowners. Through this project, officials demonstrated that it is possible to integrate affordable housing into an existing city center—even a historic one. The six houses on Wharf Street are now an integral part of the diversity and economic stability of Bluffton.

Contact Danny Wilson at dwilson@townofbluffton.com or 843.706.4521.

The Town of Mount Pleasant
Communications

The Mount Pleasant Employees Public Service Announcement campaign originally began as an internal communications strategy. Seeking to improve employee morale and promote public safety internally, communications staff invited Mount Pleasant employees to stretch their acting muscles in low-cost, light-hearted videos about various safety practices. After they were placed online, however, the videos became a hit around town.

When communications staff sent out a casting call of sorts for the first anti-texting video, 40 employees answered the call and four PSAs were shot. Recognizing that the videos had become a point of pride for the employee-actors, communications staff created an awards program as part of the new initiative. More than 120 employees voted for their favorite video. The winners were honored with an Oscar-like statue and a gift card at a town committee meeting. But the internal success of the program was just the beginning.

As an added benefit, the public embraced the PSAs. The videos received almost 20,000 views on the Mount Pleasant website. Communications staff began posting the videos to the town's Facebook page, where each one averaged 500 views. Staff also reached an estimated 27,000 households via advertisements in various print media.

Town employees and communications staff immediately got to work on producing more videos featuring more of Mount Pleasant's finest. Video titles include "Lock It or Lose It," and "Don't Let Scrooge Burn Your Christmas Tree!" Currently, 30 employees are on the waiting list to act in a future PSA.

This inexpensive project spread awareness about various public safety issues. It also allowed Mount Pleasant employees an opportunity to be town ambassadors while enjoying their moment in the spotlight.

Contact Martine Wolfe-Miller at mwolfe@tompsc.com or 843.884.8517.

City of Florence
Economic Development

In 2005, the City of Florence hired a consultant to create a master plan for downtown redevelopment. The plan identified arts and cultural development as a necessity to encourage renewal for the city center. In the years that followed, a new library and theatre were constructed, and the city anticipates the opening of a new museum this year. But the crown jewel of these new developments is the state-of-the-art Francis Marion Performing Arts Center, located in the heart of downtown Florence.

The $37 million facility boasts a main stage and outdoor amphitheater, a garden courtyard, an academic wing, and upper and lower lobbies for events and receptions. It has been honored with architectural awards for its innovative use of sustainable materials.

Officials formed partnerships with private entities to secure the land and fund construction of the Center. The partnership formed between the city and the university is a mutually beneficial one. Francis Marion handles the ongoing costs and daily operation of the performing arts center and, in return, the university's theatre and fine arts department is in the academic wing of the facility. Pee Dee residents are winners as well, as they now have a venue to enjoy musical and theatrical performances close to home.

Using culture and the arts as an economic development tool is working in Florence. After the performing arts center was constructed, a boutique hotel opened downtown. New businesses and restaurants are flourishing as well, and office and retail space in the city center is being redeveloped for new merchants.

Contact Andrew H. Griffin at dgriffin@cityofflorence. com or 843.665.3113.

City of Sumter
Public Safety

The City of Sumter's Fire Department struggled to recruit new firefighters. During the past two decades, the city recruited only half of the number of firefighters it had been able to previously. Extensive training requirements made the job a tough sell to college-bound kids, and the department grappled to find qualified candidates while dealing with an ever-tightening budget.

In 2011, the Sumter Fire Department approached the school district to create a training program that would satisfy Department of Education standards while allowing students to earn a Fire II certification. The course is a two-year endeavor designed for juniors and seniors, and takes place at the county's career center.

Paying for the initiative is a team effort. The school district pays for the costs of the classroom facility and the instructor's salary. The city assumes all costs associated with using and maintaining the emergency vehicles and fire-training grounds. The fire department provides the personal protective equipment and also received a grant from the South Carolina Firefighters Association for medical equipment.

Thirteen students enrolled in the first year. News of the program increased interest in the city's regular certification classes, which saw a 30 percent increase in participation. By hiring from a pool of 25 perspective firefighters trained through the program, the city can cut training costs by 60 percent through partnerships and collaborative efforts with the school district.

Officials anticipate enrollment in next year's class will double based on the interest of area high school students.

Contact Shelley Kile at skile@sumter-sc.com or 803.795.2463.

Town of Blackville
Public Service

For many years, the Town of Blackville has struggled with poverty, racial disparity and crime. After a devastating trend of violence in 2011, officials and residents had had enough. The mayor and town council hosted a well-attended community forum to discuss the radical changes the town needed to thrive again. The Community Action Team — made up of residents, youth groups and government officials — formed as a result of the forum.

The team's first objective was to identify initiatives that might combat apathy and violence in Blackville. After a comprehensive community survey, the team decided to focus on developing youth and neighborhood watch programs while encouraging community events and economic development.

The team developed the Crime Buster Summer Camp for children that incorporated robotics and athletic activities as well as character development exercises. The Boy Scouts are back in Blackville, and the Blackville Youth Council now organizes a monthly movie night.

Crime has dropped 10 percent since the neighborhood watch groups were formed. Fifty-five residents are now members of one of the groups.

To encourage civic engagement and economic development, the team hosts one community event per quarter. The Taste of Blackville is a popular occasion, and residents enjoyed the first annual Music and Arts Festival. The team invites new vendors to each event in an effort to attract new businesses to town.

The Community Action Team is more than an event-planning committee. It is the central engine for communication, development and engagement in Blackville.

Contact Mayor Mike Beasley at mike.beasley@ barnwell19.net or 803.284.2444.

Town of Kiawah Island
Public Works

Officials in Kiawah Island faced an uphill challenge when they decided to improve two waterfront recreational sites in town. Land on the island is some of the most expensive in the state, and environmental restrictions can constrain certain oceanside projects. Officials persevered, renovating the sites to ensure public access and safety.

The Kiawah bridge embankment had long been a popular kayaking and fishing area but lacked a safe route to the shoreline. Beachwalker Pond had been originally conceived as an engineering structure but had grown into a popular fishing spot. However, there were no guardrails or boardwalks to protect the public. Realizing the recreational boon these sites could be for the town, these two projects became a priority for local officials.

The first hurdle officials had to jump was funding. Because the town could not afford to purchase the land outright, officials worked with Charleston County to make the projects eligible for funding from the Greenbelt Program, a land conservation program initiated within the Charleston County Road Wise Program. After receiving the funds, officials faced permitting challenges due to environmental restrictions on coastal land. The town had to receive approval through the county, DHEC's Office of Ocean and Coastal Management as well as the Kiawah Island Architectural Review Board. When the approval process was finally complete, officials collaborated with a construction company to acquire environmentally-sound materials for the projects.

The bridge embankment now features an access plaza with ramp, stairs, kayak-staging area and guardrails. Beachwalker Pond is a fisherman's dream with a boardwalk, benches and rod-holders. Thanks to the town's persistence, these sites are now safer and more accessible for Island residents and visitors.

Contact Tumiko Rucker at trucker@kiawahisland.org or 843.768.9166.

Other entries

Aiken

In the 1980s, Aiken was recognized as one of the top ten places to retire. Officials have remained proactive about preserving the distinction while caring for the city's aging population. The Aiken Senior Commission makes recommendations to city council on ways to ensure and advance the well-being of its seniors.

Created initially as a task force, the commission took on its first assignment to determine the best way to care for the city's seniors. After completing a comprehensive survey, the task force concluded that seniors had numerous and diverse needs which would be best accommodated by a permanent commission. The commission is made up of seven volunteers representing different governmental and human service groups.

Comission members meet monthly and have developed a strategic plan outlining goals to ensure Aiken remains a popular senior destination. The goals – currently in different stages of implementation – include improved transportation options, more activity and companionship opportunities, senior housing and better access to healthcare.

Contact Richard Pearce at rpearce@ cityofaikensc.gov or 803.642.7654.

Anderson

Anderson officials hoped to encourage economic growth by offering incentive programs to potential businesses. After seeking advice and best practices from other municipalities, officials created an economic toolkit – with three distinct programs – to stimulate growth.

Anderson's grant incentive program bolsters businesses by supporting them financially. Applicants must meet general eligibility requirements.

The Advantage Program provides small, short-term loans to new businesses to cover startup costs. Funds come from Community Development Block Grant funds. To qualify for the money, the business must satisfy an unfilled niche in the community.

The "I Wish I Was…" program makes creative use of vacant space. Officials used general fund revenue to produce temporary and portable storefront graphics. The graphics included the phrase, "I Wish I Was…" followed by a type of business the community lacks, such as a candy store or toy shop. These graphics are placed in vacant storefronts to spur interest and attract new businesses.

The toolkit is working. Last year five businesses took advantage of programs offered through the toolkit creating more than 38 jobs.

Contact Arlene Young at ayoung@ cityofandersonsc.com or 864.231.5933.

Cayce

During Lexington County's population boom in the early 2000s, Cayce's wastewater treatment plant came dangerously close to capacity. Realizing that the aging facility would have to be replaced, officials initiated a decades-long planning process to fund and construct a new plant.

Working with other municipalities in the county and the local council of governments, Cayce officials took the lead on the project. Officials set the following goals: construct the new plant within a conservative budget, protect the integrity of the Saluda River and allow for shutting down smaller, less efficient plants around the county. The public was kept in the loop through public meetings and newspaper articles.

Opened in 2012, the state-of-the-art wastewater treatment plant processes 25 million gallons a day. Even more impressive, officials designed the facility to handle growth for the next 30 years. Officials are already planning a companion facility to handle septic tank waste and cooking grease.

Contact Tara Yates at tyates@ cityofcayce-sc.gov or 803.796.9020.

Clemson

When the mayor of Clemson and president of Clemson University decided they would like to host an autumn charity event to bring residents and students together, their attention turned to the University's 11,500 square-foot boat house and training facility on the banks of Lake Hartwell.

The Team Up for Clemson Community Regatta would pair skilled university rowers with amateurs in a race to raise money for six local charities. The Joint City-University Advisory Board, a committee dedicated to fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between the City of Clemson and the University, organized the event.

Members recruited business sponsors, encouraged resident involvement and invited nonprofits to take part. More than 297 rowers signed up for the regatta, and approximately 400 spectators came to cheer them on.

The University donated the space and equipment for the regatta and student rowers volunteered their time. The event raised more than $8,000 for charity, and officials hope the regatta will become an annual tradition.

Contact Rick Cotton at rcotton@ cityofclemson.org or 864.653.2033.

Clover

When Clover officials met with their Roosevelt Community Watch and local school district representatives, the conversation revealed two needs could be met with one initiative. The community members were concerned about a dilapidated building in Roosevelt Park that needed renovations. The school district officials felt struggling elementary students could benefit from a tutoring program. The new Stellie J. Jackson Enrichment Center would replace the decaying building and become the venue for a new tutoring center.

The Center – named after a Clover native and education advocate – was restored using funds from the town, as well as donations from the community watch and local rotary club. The local school district donated furniture and equipment. The district also developed the tutoring program, installed computers and provided other educational materials. The district oversees the tutoring program, ensuring each student's academic needs are met. The local YMCA provides the day-to-day management.

Improved test scores and grades indicate that the new tutoring center is having a positive effect. As an added bonus, the active Roosevelt Community Watch has a new place to hold its meetings.

Contact Allison B. Harvey at aharvey@cloversc.org or 803.222.9495.

Columbia

Columbia boasts multiple entertainment districts. When these high-traffic areas began to experience an increase in crime, city officials and law enforcement took a multifaceted approach to solving the issue. Along with a greater police presence and a renewed dialogue between officials and local merchants, the city formed a public-private partnership with existing retail associations.

To install surveillance cameras in the affected areas, the city provided each association with grant money from its hospitality tax fund on a dollar-for-dollar matching basis. Participating merchants paid for half of the material and installation costs for the initial 70 cameras installed around the city. The merchants own and operate the cameras and agree to help police prevent and solve crimes.

The program has been a big success. Violent crime in these areas has dropped 16 percent, and the cameras have already been used to solve several high-profile cases. This success has led to a network of approximately 2,000 cameras that keep Columbia safe.

Contact Chris Segars at cmsegars@ columbiasc.net or 803.545.4143.

Eutawville

For many years, an overgrown, vacant lot sat in the heart of Eutawville. Hoping to encourage tourists on their way to popular nearby lakes – as well as local residents – to stop for a while in downtown, officials decided to turn the eyesore into an asset with a new community park.

After contacting their state representatives for support, officials set out to get area businesses on board. Large companies provided materials and labor for the more complex features like the walking bridge and bandstand gazebo. A team of local residents landscaped the area, and one resident furnished the new playground equipment.

The Eutaw Village Community Park took nearly two years to complete while some components, like the walking trail and surrounding fence, are still a work in progress. But the once-empty lot is now full of residents and visitors taking time to enjoy Eutawville.

Contact M. Jean Akers at Eutawtownof@yahoo.com or 803.492.3374.

Fort Mill

There are more than 100 monuments scattered throughout Fort Mill that memorialize local servicemen and to women. However, local officials noticed that residents lacked one centralized location to honor all veterans from all wars. City leaders partnered with local veterans' groups to repurpose a vacant lot on a prominent street into a veterans park.

Funding for the project came from veterans' groups, festival proceeds, capital fund money and individual donations. Residents purchased paving bricks inscribed with the names of an active or former service member. Hundreds of personalized bricks now pave the park's "walk of honor."

The park features stunning structural elements. A statue of a World War I doughboy looks over a column engraved with names of Fort Mill's fallen soldiers, and five granite walls stand in the shape of a star to represent the five branches of the military. Residents now have a quiet place to say "thank you" to all those who have served.

Contact Kimberly Starnes at kstarnes@fortmillsc.gov or 803.547.2116.

Fountain Inn

Ten years ago, downtown Fountain Inn was deteriorating. More than 50 percent of building owners reported losing tenants. Foot traffic had dwindled to almost nothing. Declining business license fees and hospitality tax

income, as well as depressed property values, heightened the need for downtown revitalization.

Officials organized a team of residents and community leaders. Over the course of a year, Fountain Inn Forward met to discuss ideas to restore downtown. These ideas and solutions were used to formally develop a master plan which council adopted.

A downtown façade program helped business owners restore historic buildings and city parks received a facelift. The city purchased an entire downtown block, then demolished the existing dilapidated structures. The city built a facility that can serve as a visitors center, farmers market, history center and amphitheater.

Thanks to city efforts and volunteer labor, downtown Fountain Inn is buzzing again. Festivals and events are now held regularly downtown and attract crowds of people.

Contact Eddie Case at eddie.case@ fountaininn.org or 864.862.4421.

Greenville

It's not every day that an entire city anticipates and celebrates the birth of a baby. But that's what happened in Greenville when the Greenville City Zoo's beloved Masai giraffe, Autumn, became pregnant. City officials wanted to harness the energy surrounding Autumn's bundle of joy by devising a comprehensive communications campaign to keep the public engaged, while simultaneously bolstering attendance and fundraising at the zoo.

Using free platforms like Facebook and Twitter, as well as traditional channels like press releases, city officials gave daily updates about Autumn's pregnancy. They installed a webcam in the giraffe's living quarters, and a local radio station worked with officials to host a name-the-baby contest. The station received more than 2,000 entries.

The campaign came to a culmination when the baby giraffe finally arrived. Akiko was born in October. In the next few months, the zoo experienced record foot traffic and visits to its website. The zoo's fundraising efforts also saw a considerable surge. Through this creative and engaging campaign, officials strengthened support for the zoo while celebrating the birth of its new resident.

Contact Jeff Bullock at jbullock@ greenvillesc.gov or 864.467.4300.

Greer

As stories of former football players' head trauma continue to fill the airwaves, Greer officials wanted to take steps to prevent and treat concussions in the city's recreation leagues. At a 2012 Greer Recreation Association board meeting, two board members – one a former football coach and the other a physical therapist – volunteered to train the city's youth football coaches on concussions.

The training provided stressed the importance of properly fitted equipment and showed coaches how to recognize and manage concussion-related symptoms. Coaches received cards that listed the signs of head trauma and on-the-field cognitive testing procedures. The Greer Parks and Recreation Department also purchased first aid kits for the coaches.

The concussion workshops have been so well-received. Greer officials plan to offer the training to coaches of other city sports like baseball and soccer. They will also place videos of the workshops online to reach a wider audience.

Contact Steve Owens at sowens@ cityofgreer.org or 864.416.0121.

Hanahan

Hanahan officials wanted to reach out to the city's youth and get them involved in local government. They developed four projects that connected city employees with local students. All four were free of charge and relied on volunteers and cooperation from the school district.

The Lunch Buddies program matches one city employee or volunteer with one elementary student for a mentoring meal once a month. This positive interaction has boosted the students' test scores and curiosity about local government.

The mayor and city staff work with Hanahan's young women, showing them how science, technology, engineering and math – fields that have traditionally been male-dominated – are integral to local government.

Each month, one lucky student is chosen to serve as honorary mayor for a city council meeting in the Honorary Mayor program. For the Trails program, city staff collaborates with local high school students to design and improve bicycle and walking trails.

Through these initiatives, city officials have fostered a relationship with this important group of Hanahan residents.

Contact Johnny Cribb at jcribb@ cityofhanahan.com or 843.576.5250.

Kingstree

At 100 years old, Kingstree's water and wastewater infrastructure desperately needed upgrading. The high maintenance costs were a burden, unaccounted-for water loss was excessive, and the water storage volume did not meet DHEC standards. Knowing they had to take action, Kingstree officials secured a low-interest USDA Rural

Development loan and began the improvement process.

Town officials divided the large construction project into manageable parts, which in turn encouraged more competitive bidding from outside consultants. They considered water needs for fire services and made improving Kingstree's fire protection capabilities and ISO ratings a part of the project's goals. Through town council meetings, public hearings and weekly press releases, officials kept residents updated about the infrastructure improvements.

The exhaustive efforts drastically improved Kingstree's water and wastewater infrastructure. The new system is efficient and up to government standards. A solar powered drying bed allows the town to create a Class A biosolid that can be given away to local residents instead of transported to the landfill.

Perhaps most importantly, this project provided sewer service to a previously underserved and impoverished part of town, which is home to a number of residential, special-needs facilities.

Contact Daniel B. Wells at dwells@ kingstree.org or 843.355.7484.

Lexington

Because their town is one of the fastest growing in South Carolina, Lexington officials understood the need for a comprehensive plan to guide the community's progress in a smart and efficient way. Town council began collaborating with a consulting firm and solicited input from businesses and residents about how they'd like to see the town develop in 10, 15, and 25 years.

Some of the goals set in this year-long planning session were identified to improve traffic flow, create a vibrant downtown, improve pedestrian walkways and preserve

Lexington's rich history. Council also sought ways to preserve the town's rural character and promote its location near Lake Murray. A few of these goals have already become a reality. Officials recently implemented a downtown façade grant program, and the united traffic plan is making it easier to drive around town.

Contact Jennifer Dowden at jdowden@lexsc.com or 03.356.8238.

Manning

The Manning police bicycle team founded the Palmetto Patriots in 2010. The group's mission is to honor fallen law enforcement officers and support surviving families through community events. Annual memorial rides were just the beginning. Soon the Patriots were hosting multiple creative events throughout the year.

The Patriots printed a calendar, held bake sales and bazaars, and participated in a zoo trip and Christmas banquet with the families of fallen officers. The group also sponsored a memorial service in Clarendon County and was an integral part in developing roadside memorials. To keep the community informed, the Patriots developed a video for civic and government presentations, and prepared press releases for media coverage.

The events are funded entirely through business and individual donations. In three years, the group has raised more than $50,000 for the families of fallen officers. Community members have stepped up to provide the venues, food, hotel rooms and ad space for the Patriot's events and fundraisers. The group's future plans include becoming a recognized 501(c)(3) organization and developing a bicycle safety course for community schools.

Contact Scott Danback at sdanback @clarendonsheriff.com or 803.460.2120.

Marion

Marion officials wanted to channel residents' Christmastime generosity into a tangible project everyone could feel good about. Realizing the need of the poor and elderly in the community, officials worked with the chamber of commerce to develop the Food for Friends program. For every $36 of residents' donations, deserving families would receive a food box filled with everything they need to make a holiday meal.

Officials garnered support for the program through emails, letters and stories in the newspaper. They worked with the local grocery store to put together the meal-in-a-box at a discounted price. The Marion Department of Social Services agreed to participate and identified the families who needed help the most. Once the funds and food were in place, police officers and firefighters delivered the food to each doorstep.

The program's success has grown each year. Last year, 150 families who otherwise might not have had a holiday meal received holiday food boxes. Because of residents' generosity, small items like milk and eggs have had a big impact on families in Marion.

Contact Bobby L. Davis at DPOBOB@aol.com or 843.423.5961.

Mauldin

Mauldin's core is more of a crossroads than a downtown. Though many shops and restaurants exist along the busy US 276 corridor, residents lacked a slowed-down space to gather and socialize. Noting the success of other upstate communities with flourishing downtowns, officials committed to creating one of their own in Mauldin.

City leaders assembled a steering committee to create a master plan

for the new downtown. This group was comprised of local business owners, real estate professionals, downtown property owners and city staff. Working with an outside consultant, the committee first tackled plans for improving traffic flow through the downtown, as well as providing adequate infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians. The committee identified a 12-block area just north of the existing municipal complex as a location for new buildings to house potential downtown merchants. The committee also delineated areas for outdoor public spaces to accommodate parks and cultural programming.

Now that the master plan is complete, officials are taking steps to implement the aggressive strategy. The city is working on purchasing property, marketing the area and creating policies to create the new downtown.

Contact Olivia Vassey at ovassey@ mauldincitysc.com or 864.289.8903.

North Myrtle Beach

Residents in North Myrtle Beach wanted a permanent farmers market to support local farmers and artisans. City officials knew the amenity would be an asset for the community, encourage healthy habits and serve as a venue for local producers to reach out to new customers. They chose an empty lot adjacent to city hall as the market's location and received help from the Clemson Cooperative Extension.

The farmers market consists of two open-air structures that can accommodate 28 vendors. It was built using funds from the city's capital improvement budget. Officials held public hearings to gather input from residents about the market's design.

Vendors now gather at the market to sell local produce and meat as well as arts and crafts. The sound

system provides a festive atmosphere, and ceiling fans keep customers cool. As a bonus, the site can be used on off-days by community groups and for special occasions. The city-owned market will be an asset and a gathering space for years to come.

Contact Jim Wood at jwwood@ nmb.us or 843.280.5556.

Orangeburg

For several years, the City of Orangeburg and the Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization Association, a volunteer committee, have worked to attract businesses and visitors to the city center. Realizing the need for enhanced parking options, the city began fundraising and forming partnerships to add more parking to the downtown area.

They used tax dollars for a portion of the project, but private donors provided the vacant land for the new parking area. During the planning stage, the Association held well-attended events downtown to generate excitement and money for the project. Once funds were in place, multiple city departments got to work turning the blighted area into a parking area.

Bounded by two downtown streets and adjacent to businesses as well as a cultural center, the 75 new parking spaces fill up quickly. Decorative lights, landscaping and benches make the area not just useful but pleasing to the eye. Local businesses report an increase in patron traffic, and officials have seen an uptick in private investments downtown.

Contact John H. Yow at jyow@ orangeburg.sc.us or 803.533.6000.

Port Royal

In Port Royal, dense housing developments stand next to treasured wetlands. Over the years, stormwater runoff had been diverted into these wetland systems. This was destructive to the fragile ecosystem and caused flooding in town. Not satisfied to simply fix the problem, officials undertook an ambitious project to restore the wetlands and create a public park in the process.

After remedying the stormwater issues and installing a new drainage system, officials set to work on creating a recreational space in the wetlands. They built an amphitheater for special events and constructed more than 800 feet of boardwalk. They restored bird rookeries and harvested non-native plants.

The town used stormwater fees and TIF money to fund the project and relied on strong partnerships to get the work done. The local Audubon Club inventoried the bird species, trained tour guides and gave advice on signage. The Lowcountry Institute, a conservation and education nonprofit organization, made recommendations on wetland restorations. Beaufort County produced a short educational video featuring the wetlands for the local public access channel.

Truly a collaborative effort, the new wetlands park is good for the town and good for the environment.

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

Rock Hill

Rock Hill residents who participated in the 2011 National Citizen Survey indicated a high level of satisfaction with the city's employees as well as a high level of public trust. However, the respondents gave low ratings regarding city services and public awareness. These results

indicated to officials that individuals were not connecting their experiences with city employees to the city as a whole. They designed the "Always On" campaign to reinforce the city's commitment to provide quality services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

They incorporated the "Always On" tagline into the city's logo and revamped the website to reflect the new initiative. Officials improved media relations by expanding the city's presence on social media sites and the public access channel. City employees came together to shoot a 30-second video promoting the "Always On" campaign. Presentations to community groups were also a vital component for reaching the public. Garbage trucks and other city vehicles received colorful new graphics that promote city services.

As a city-wide initiative, employees from every department participated, and the campaign was integrated into new employee training.

Contact Katie Quinn at kquinn@ cityofrockhill.com or 803.326.3791.

Simpsonville

A few years ago, Simpsonville terminated its curbside recycling service. City employees were sorting materials at the curb, which was both labor-intensive and dangerous. After the economic downturn, the city couldn't afford to keep the cumbersome program going. Effects of this decision were felt at local landfills, where more than 5,000 tons of additional materials were disposed. Residents were also unhappy and demanded a curbside service.

Officials discovered that partnering with a South Carolina-based private recycling service would keep costs low for the city while preserving manpower and equipment. They used funds from the public works

budget to construct a transfer station and purchase roll carts. Residents pay directly for the service.

To promote the new service, city officials partnered with a number of governmental agencies and local businesses. Residents responded positively and quickly signed up for the service. Plans are in the works to expand the service to small businesses.

Contact Jay Crawford at jcrawford@ simpsonvillepublicworks.org or 864.962.5723.

Society Hill

Building unity, restoring pride and changing lives: that's the motto of Society Hill's Community Policing Outreach Program. The nonprofit organization, founded by the town's police chief, is working to improve the lives of residents, specifically school-aged children and senior citizens. Comprised of residents from all walks of life, the CPOP holds two popular annual events: a back-to-school bash and a free Thanksgiving meal.

Because most students enrolled in Society Hill's public schools live below the poverty level, the start of a new school year can be an anxious time. The CPOP recognized that most families could not afford the long list of supplies most students would need for the upcoming term. The back-to-school bash provided students with everything from glue sticks to book bags, as well as parents with the opportunity to meet teachers and police officers.

The volunteer team organized the free Thanksgiving meal a few months later. Grocery stores offered extraordinary discounts for the food, and a local church provided the venue. Funding came from local businesses in and around Society Hill.

The CPOP is far from finished. Members are planning for an expanded

back-to-school bash that will offer supplies to adult students seeking higher education or their GEDs.

Contact Kaynnera Terrell Capers at shpdchief601@gmail.com or 843.858.1439.

Walterboro

Even though I-95 passes less than two miles from the city center, travelers were not making their way to downtown. Walterboro city officials knew that luring motorists away from the exits and into downtown could be a huge boon for the local economy. Attention focused on turning 1,000 acres of swampy, undevelopable land in the heart of downtown into the Great Swamp Sanctuary.

Government and private-sector representatives formed a commission to develop a long-range plan for the new park. Together, they imagined a trail system for local residents and tourists alike, as well as the vital connectors from those trails to the interstate and downtown. They gave careful consideration to protecting the local ecosystem. Funding came from a variety of sources, including a significant number of grants secured by the Friends of the Great Swamp Sanctuary, a local volunteer group.

The City of Walterboro's Welcome Center has seen a sharp increase in visitors since the Sanctuary opened. Officials hope to open a discovery center and offer more trails in the near future.

Contact Bill Floyd at bfloyd@ walterborosc.org or 843.782.1060.

Risk Management Service Awards

Local governments can't operate without assuming risk—and therefore, they cannot operate effectively without managing that risk. Each year, the Municipal Association's two insurance pools recognize municipalities that have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to safety.

The South Carolina Municipal Insurance Trust and the South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund base these awards on the number of employees and the entity's loss experience for the current year and the prior three years. This year's award recipients have reduced their total costs and kept employees safe while delivering better public services.

Winners will receive a $2,500 monetary award and a luncheon for up to 25 staff members.

South Carolina Municipal Insurance Trust award winners

- **Division I** (1-50 employees) **Town of Richburg**
- **Division II** (51-150 employees) **City of Darlington**
- **Division III** (more than 150 employees) **Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works**

South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund award winners

- **Division I** (1-50 employees) **Town of Johnston**
- **Division II** (51-150 employees) **City of Fountain Inn**
- **Division III** (more than 150 employees) **City of Gaffney**

Organized in 1983, the South Carolina Municipal Insurance Trust is a cooperative local government program providing self-funded workers' compensation protection for municipal employees. SCMIT serves 111 entities.

The South Carolina Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund provides all lines of property and casualty coverage including tort liability and automobile coverage for its member municipalities. SCMIRF serves 98 entites.

In addition to municipal-specific insurance coverage, the programs offer free onsite and online training, grant funding, access to a labor hotline and many other benefits.

Main Street South Carolina Inspiration Awards

Main Street South Carolina empowers residents, business owners and local officials with the knowledge, skills, tools and organizational structure necessary to revitalize downtowns, neighborhood commercial districts and cities/towns into vibrant centers of commerce and community.

Main Street South Carolina follows the National Main Street's Four Point Approach – Organization, Promotion, Design and Economic Restructuring. Each year, Main Street South Carolina recognizes members' achievements and successes in downtown revitalization.

Downtown Service Award

The award recognizes an elected official, appointed public official, citizen or organization who contributes leadership, vision and support to downtown revitalization efforts beyond the normal call of duty.

Marie Land

Nominated by Main Street Manning

Marie Land's determination and tenacity set her apart from other downtown supporters.

She has been a driving force behind downtown revitalization in Manning for many years, serving as chair of Main Street Manning since its inception four years ago. When she is not presiding over a board meeting, she does not mind getting her hands dirty by planting, pruning and decorating downtown.

She is a long-time advocate of historic preservation. She was instru-

mental in rehabbing a historic livery stable and turning it into the family's law office. Marie Land has spent countless hours on revitalization efforts not only in downtown but also other places in the community such as Weldon Auditorium, the Breedin Garden Room and the Pocotaligo Trail.

As she travels South Carolina, Marie encourages others to visit historic downtown Manning. She returns with ideas from other communities, always pushing for Manning to be "Matchless for Beauty and Hospitality."

Contact Carrie Trebil at trebil@ clemson.edu or 803.435.8477

Master Merchant

The award recognizes excellence in the retail field and is awarded to a merchant who is a "mover and shaker" in downtown revitalization and exemplifies creativity and success in merchandising, inventory, display and value-added retailing and services.

Nan Sutton, Lulu Burgess

Nominated by Main Street Beaufort, USA

In 2000, Nan Sutton opened a unique gift shop - Lulu Burgess - in downtown Beaufort. Nan has an eye for the unique, the whimsical, and the latest trends and items to tickle the funny bone. The store has become a "must" for locals and visitors alike. Lulu Burgess boasts it has something for everyone. Shoppers can find goodies from greeting cards to locally designed jewelry and clothes to name brand accessories.

Nan has embraced the digital world to promote her business. She maintains an active Facebook page, regularly updates the store's website, which features a shopping cart, and films a YouTube video each Friday called "Filmfastic Friday" showcasing inventory from the store. She also has an iPhone app.

Not only is Nan a successful small business owner, but she is also active in the Beaufort community. She served on the Main Street Beaufort board of directors, including two terms as chair. She continues to support the organization with recruiting new members, speaking at city council meetings, promoting events, donating for fundraisers and sponsoring the Small Business Partner Award at the Main Street Beaufort Annual Meeting.

Nan is more than a downtown ambassador and cheerleader; she is a successful business owner and master merchant.

Contact: LaNelle Fabian at director@downtownbeaufort.com or 843.525.6644

Outstanding Public Private Partnership

The award recognizes a public/ private partnership that has resulted in successful achievements for both and clearly demonstrates a cooperative spirit and long-term commitment to the partnership.

Municipal Parking Lot – City of Orangeburg and the Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization Association

Nominated by Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization Association

Accessible and convenient parking is a critical component for the success of downtown businesses. Because they want to park directly in front of the store they want to visit, many shoppers find parking on Main Street is a frustrating experience.

Downtown Orangeburg Revitalization Association and the City of Orangeburg tackled this challenge head on. They set out to create off-street, public parking convenient to both shoppers and

patrons of the nearby Stevenson Auditorium.

The area identified for the parking lot was comprised of numerous land parcels with separate property owners. DORA purchased two of the large parcels and contacted owners of several additional parcels. Four property owners donated their smaller parcels to help make the project a reality. With an understanding it would develop the space into the needed parking lot, DORA gave the parcels to the City.

City workers ensured the necessary infrastructure was in place to allow the area to accommodate street dances and other outdoor events. They moved the utilities underground and installed landscaping and decorative lighting.

What was once a neglected eyesore in downtown Orangeburg is now an inviting space where shoppers feel safe and welcome.

Contact: Jennifer Hoesing at jhoesing@orangeburg.sc.us or 803.531.6186

Outstanding Promotion

The award recognizes either a single promotional event staged during 2012 or the best promotional series during 2012.

Main Street Beaufort Dollars

Nominated by Main Street Beaufort, USA

Main Street Beaufort Dollars was a big economic shot in the arm for downtown Beaufort merchants during a normally slow time of year. It also gave shoppers the chance to rediscover downtown Beaufort.

In February 2012, Main Street Beaufort, USA sold $15,000 worth of "Beaufort Dollars" to the public at half price. Shoppers could use the Dollars at more than 50 participating downtown merchants. The supply sold out in 18 minutes to the nearly 200 community members who stood in line hours before the sale began.

Once purchased, the tickets were good for six weeks. Merchants turned in receipts from "dollar purchases" to be reimbursed for the full-face value. Main Street Beaufort, USA used funds from their marketing budget to help fund the promotion.

Participating businesses also enjoyed the added publicity of being featured on flyers and posters promoting the event. A local newspaper also offered discounted ad space to the merchants.

The Main Street Beaufort Dollars promotion was so successful; it was repeated in August with similar results.

Contact: LaNelle Fabian at director@downtownbeaufort.com or 843.525.6644

MASC Municipal Association of South Carolina℠

Healthcare reform and small cities – what you need to know

By Erin Rian, NLC-RISC

Since Congress passed the Affordable Care Act in 2010, a number of provisions have gone into effect. However, some of the more significant provisions are scheduled to take effect beginning in 2014.

While the extent to which these provisions will impact municipal employers differs based on whether the city is considered a small or large employer, one thing is clear – government employers generally are not exempt from these requirements. The law defines a large employer as having 50 or more employees.

Not all of these regulations are final and are subject to change, but it's important to consider which of these provisions may impact your city and where you may need to focus your compliance efforts.

Employer shared responsibility provisions (aka "play or pay") – are you exempt?

Starting January 1, 2014, an "applicable large employer" must offer affordable health coverage with minimum essential benefits. If coverage does not meet these standards and at least one full-time employee receives a premium tax credit for purchasing coverage through an exchange, the employer may be subject to an Employer Shared Responsibility fee to help cover the cost of the tax credit.

Even cities with less than 50 employees should carefully evaluate their status regarding this provision. The ACA defines a full-time employee as one who works an average of at least 30 hours per week, even though most cities define a full-time employee as one who works 37.5 to 40 hours per week and receives additional benefits just as retirement and insurance.

Employers need to consider full-time and part-time employees to determine if they are an "applicable large employer." In addition, seasonal employees may need to be considered, although a partial exemption is in the proposed rules. Because of these provisions, even "small cities" may be considered a large employer for this purpose.

Health care exchanges

Small employers can purchase health care coverage for employees through a health insurance exchange (Small Business Health Options Program). States have the ability to define the small group market for purposes of determining which employers can purchase coverage through the exchanges.

Employers will continue to have the option of providing coverage outside of the exchange. The specific options vary from state-to-state. There is still uncertainty about how the exchanges will be established among states that have deferred to the federal government or have expressed intent to form a federal-state partnership.

Additional provisions on the horizon

There are several other key health reform provisions on the horizon that cities should be be aware of regardless of their size.

Health Reimbursement Arrangement: A Health Reimbursement Arrangement is an IRS approved, employer-funded, tax advantaged employer health benefit plan that reimburses employees for out-of-pocket medical expenses and individual health insurance premiums. HRAs must be "integrated" for employees to receive contributions. Integrated means employees must be enrolled in the employer's medical plan and cannot opt out or waive coverage if they want the HRA contribution.

W-2 reporting requirements of employer-sponsored health coverage: Larger employers already must report the value of employer-sponsored health coverage on employees' W-2 forms. There is transitional relief for employers who issue fewer than 250 W-2 forms to employees. This relief applies to future calendar years until the Internal Revenue Service issues additional guidance. Any guidance expanding the reporting requirements will only apply to the calendar year that starts at least six months after the guidance is issued. The IRS has a chart on its website showing which employers are eligible for this relief, as well as what is to be reported for those electing to do so.

Notification of exchanges: Employers will need to notify employees in writing about the availability of exchanges. However, federal regulators have delayed this requirement indefinitely (originally required by March 1, 2013) until regulations are issued and "become available." The U.S. Department of Labor is considering providing a model notice to employers that would satisfy this requirement.

Prohibition on excessive waiting periods: Effective for plan years beginning on or after January 1, 2014, employers must provide coverage within 90 days of a new employee's hire date. Employers currently requiring longer waiting periods before benefits become available should review their employee handbooks and/or insurance contracts to determine if a change needs to be made by January 1.

Premium and other financial considerations

Annual fee on health insurance providers: An annual fee will apply to certain health care providers beginning in 2014. The Treasury Department and IRS recently issued proposed regulations on this provision.

Transitional reinsurance program: Beginning in 2014, insurance carriers and self-funded employer plans must pay an annual fee to the federal Department of Health and Human Services to help

Ethics

Reporting gifts

The following article is the second in a series about properly filing the annual Statement of Economic Interests with the State Ethic Commission. The first article appeared in the June issue and dealt with reporting income and benefits.

Reporting gifts is one of the most challenging sections of the Statement of Economic Interests. The state Ethics Act broadly defines the term "gifts" to include "…anything of value, including entertainment, food, beverage, travel, and lodging given or paid to a public official, public member, or public employee to the extent that consideration of equal or greater value is not received."

The SEI instructs filers to report anything of value worth $25 or more in a day and anything of value worth $200 or more in the aggregate in a calendar year. This language conflicts with a section of the Ethics Act which requires reporting anything of value. The State Ethics Commission staff advises public officials, public members and public employees who file a Statement of Economic Interests to disclose anything of value received as a result of their public office or position.

Example of items to report

- Meal, food and beverage expenses paid for by a third party, including but not limited to, lawyers, engineers, consultants, suppliers of goods and services, and contractors. Officials must report these expenses regardless of whether the entire council is invited.
- Entertainment such as golf green fees or a sporting event, concert or theater tickets
- Trips and associated expenses paid for by a third party
- Gift baskets and specialty food items
- Municipal officials serving in an ex officio or appointed capacity on boards, agencies or commissions must disclose travel, lodging and meals paid for by these organizations, even if the expenses are required as part of their service on the board/commission.

Example of items not considered "of value" for reporting purposes

- Reimbursement for actual incurred and authorized business expenses paid by your municipality. Per diems not supported by receipts for actual expenses are subject to reporting.
- Printed informational or promotional material worth less than $10
- Items of nominal value, worth less than $10, containing or displaying promotional material such as exhibit hall and vendor giveaways
- Door prizes or other items awarded by random selection
- Personalized plaque or trophy worth less than $150
- Promotional or marketing items offered to the general public on the same terms and conditions without regard to status as a public official or public employee
- Campaign contributions properly received and reported under the Ethics Act

Understanding the SEI requirements and maintaining proper records are the keys to proper reporting. When in doubt, the safest practice is to disclose and report all gifts. Next month's article will cover reporting real and personal property and business interests.

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offset the cost of high claims through the exchanges. This fee will apply for a three-year period and average approximately $63 per participant (including dependents) per year.

Patient centered outcomes research fee (comparative effectiveness fee): Group health plans will be assessed a fee based on the average number of covered lives in the plan during each calendar year. The money will be used to fund research that compares different medical treatments and interventions to provide evidence on which strategies are most effective in different populations and situations. The fee will sunset for plan years ending after September 30, 2019.

Tax on high cost coverage: Beginning in 2018, the federal government will impose a 40 percent tax on insured and self-insured employer-sponsored health plans with aggregate expenses exceeding $10,200 for individual coverage and $27,500 for family coverage.

Additional resources

HealthCare.gov website: This is the official government website for health care reform. You can register to receive free alerts and updates from the US Department of Health and Human Services as regulations and guidance are issued.

Internal Revenue Service: The IRS has issued much of the guidance on the Affordable Care Act. Information is available at www.irs.gov/uac/Affordable-Care-Act-Tax-Provisions.

Kaiser Family Foundation: This site (healthreform.kff.org) has a wealth of information about the Affordable Care Act.

Note: This information is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Please consult your attorney or benefit consultant for guidance relating to your specific situation.

Erin Rian is Program Manager for the National League of Cities Risk Information Sharing Consortium. Prior to joining NLC-RISC, she worked for the League of Minnesota Cities serving as a resource for Minnesota cities in the area of human resources and employee benefits.

Doing what's right when no one is looking

Webster's Dictionary defines ethics as a "system of conduct or behavior, moral principles." Ethics for the public official seems easy to understand: comply with the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability and Campaign Reform Act and you're done. Right? Not quite. While the Ethics Act is a great start toward ethical behavior, there is much more public officials can (and should) do to ensure they perform ethically.

The public holds government officials to a high standard, expecting them to govern and behave in an ethical manner. That expectation is often referred to as public trust. Officials must act ethically beyond that which is required by law.

The ethics law provides very clear cut rules to follow, i.e., recuse yourself from voting when there is a conflict of interest. Beyond the law, gray areas abound. When in doubt, officials should consult their municipal attorney.

Public officials must assess every decision - public or private - as to whether or not it will pass the front page (or home page of a website) test. How would your action/decision come across if it appeared on the local paper's front page, home page, Twitter feed or Facebook post? Would your action embarrass you or your city? Would you be comfortable discussing your decision with a local television reporter?

It may frustrate officials having to accept that even private decisions must be weighed against public perception, but that is the nature of public service. Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "When a man assumes a public trust, he should consider himself public property."

Ethical decision making and behavior may, on the surface, appear simple. However, they can be complicated and nuanced. What appears to be ethical under state law may not pass the front page test, which erodes public trust. The public expects its leaders to demonstrate a higher level of ethical behavior than others. Public officials should expect no less from themselves.

Scott Slatton, the Municipal Association's legislative and public policy advocate, spoke about ethical issues and considerations during a series of public official liability seminars sponsored by the SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund. SCMIRF, a program of the Municipal Association, provides all lines of property and casualty coverage including tort liability for its member municipalities. For more information, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: SCMIRF).

NEWS BRIEFS

Six South Carolina cities *(Camden, Greenville, Marion, North Charleston, Rock Hill and Spartanburg)* received the "Playful City USA" designation from KaBOOM!, a national nonprofit dedicated to saving play for America's children. Spartanburg has received the designation every year since the program's inception.

The City of Anderson received a 2013 Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Award from the SC Arts Commission. Anderson was recognized for publicly embracing art and recognizing its value to the community.

The Professional Tennis Registry, a global organization of tennis coaches and teachers, named the *Cayce Tennis and Fitness Center* as the 2013 Public Facility of the Year.

American Public Works Association selected *Melissa Gentry*, assistant city manager of Columbia, as one of the National APWA Top Ten Public Works Leaders for 2013.

Bianca Sancic, public information officer and fire and life safety educator for the North Charleston Fire Department, received the Educator's Award from the South Carolina Fire and Life Safety Education Association.

SC Community Development Association members recently elected their 2013-14 officers. President: Matthew DeWitt of Newberry; Vice-President Grazier Rhea of the Catawba Regional Council of Governments; Secretary: Martin Livingston of the Greenville County Redevelopment Authority; and Members at Large: Carolet Thomas of Sumter, Cyndi Gawronski of the Central Midlands Council of Governments, Allison Harvey of Clover, Diana Seydlorsky of Horry County and Debra Livington of Columbia.

Electrical linemen from the Easley Combined Utility System finished first place in every competition during the SC Association of Municipal Power Systems' 2013 Lineman Training Competition.

Calendar

*For a complete listing of training
opportunities, visit www.masc.sc
to view the calendar.*

JULY

**18-21 Municipal Association of South
Carolina Annual Meeting.** Hyatt Regency
Greenville. See realted article on page 1.

**31-Aug 2 Main Street South Carolina
Retreat.** Pawley's Plantation, Pawley's
Island. Topics include design, economic
development and local Main Street
Program funding.

AUGUST

**7-9 Municipal Court Administration
Association Annual Meeting.** Avista
Resort, North Myrtle Beach. Topics
include courtroom security, best practices
for court financials, and legal update
sessions from the state Department
of Motor Vehicles and the SC Court
Administration.

**14-September 9 Regional Advocacy
Meetings.** See story on page 4 for loca-
tions and more information.

**27 Setoff Debt Collection Program
Annual Meeting – Mandatory New
Participant Training.** 1411 Gervais St.,
Columbia.

**29 Setoff Debt Collection Program
Annual Meeting – Mandatory Train-
ing Session for Current Participants**
(Employees new to working with the
Setoff Debt Program) 1411 Gervais St.,
Columbia.

SEPTEMBER

**11-13 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers
Institute - Session II.** Clarion Hotel
Downtown, Columbia. Topics include
levels and forms of government, business
license administration, and the role of the
municipal clerk.

**12 SC Association of Stormwater
Managers Third Quarter Meeting/Exhib-
itor Showcase.** Columbia Conference
Center.

**18-20 Municipal Technology Associa-
tion of SC Annual Meeting.** The Westin
Poinsett, Greenville.

**19 Municipal Elected Officials Institute
of Government: Municipal Economic
Development and Forms of Municipal
Government.** Via Web stream. Councils
of Governments' offices.

OCTOBER

**9 SC Utility Billing Association Fall
Meeting.** DoubleTree Hotel Columbia.

**10 SC Community Development Asso-
ciation Fall Meeting.** SC State Museum,
Columbia.

**11 Forum for SC city/town managers
and administrators.** Clarion Hotel Down-
town, Columbia.

**22-24 SC Municipal Finance Officers,
Clerks and Treasurers Association
Annual Meeting.** Columbia Marriott.
Topics include performance management,
meeting minutes, state Department of
Revenue services, and reporting require-
ments for the state Ethics Commission.