

**VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

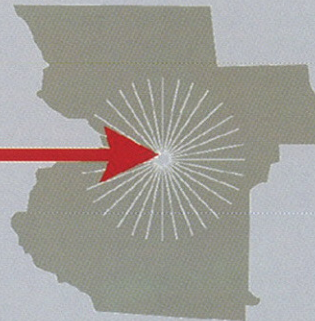
Leading Businesses.
Leading Communities.™



Annual Report
2008

IMPACT

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A BUSINESS ACTION PLAN

Led By The Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce

LIST OF INVESTORS

We are grateful to these corporate and community leaders for making IMPACT 2012 a success!

Aaron's Rental Purchase
ACE Electric
Advanced Hearing Care / Hear Central LLC
Alert-Tech Systems
Allan Dear Real Estate
Ambling Companies
American Classifieds
Ameris Bank
ASA Engineering & Surveying, Inc.
Astro Exterminating Services
AT&T
Atlantic Southern Bank
Chet & Myrna Ballard (P)
Bank of Valdosta
Barnes Drug Stores of Valdosta
BB&T
Bemiss Citizens Bank
Black Crow Media
Blanton and Griffin Insurance
Brandon, Rackley & Dukes, P.C.
James Bridges (P)
Bush Investment Group, LLC
Carson McLane Funeral Home
Cauthan Construction Company
Citizens Community Bank
City of Hahira
City of Lake Park
City of Remerton
City of Valdosta
CJB Industries, Inc.
Classic Art & Frame Company
Coldwell Banker Premier Real Estate
Coleman Talley LLP
Colony Bank
Colquitt EMC
Colson Printing Company
Coombs Heating & Air Conditioning
Covington's Dining & Catering / 306 North
Coward Electric and Industrial Contractors
Culbreth, Minick & Associates, PC
Cypress Lakes Development / Teamtemps Personnel Staffing
Darby Bank
Fred DeLoach (P)
Elliott, Blackburn, Barnes & Gooding
Ellis, Ricket and Associates Architects
ERCO Worldwide, Inc.
Express Employment Professionals
Eye Associates of South Georgia LLC
Family Health Care
Farmers & Merchants Bank
Farmers Home Furniture Company
First State Bank & Trust Company
Fowler, Holley, Rambo & Stalvey, P.C.
Friendly Financial Services, Inc.
Full Circle Marketing & Advertising
Fusion Creative Marketing
Gary Minchew Realty
Genesis Christian School
Georgia Power Company
Mary & Tom Gooding (P)
Great Southern Yellow Pages
J. Glenn Gregory Architects
Griffin Corporation
Griner Automotive Group
Guardian Bank
H & S Supply Company
Henderson & Godbee
The Herndon Company
Holiday Inn/Comfort Suites/Days Inn
Home Builders Association of South Georgia
Home Instead Senior Care
Jodi's Accessories
Johnson Distributing Company
Keeman Petroleum Company, Inc.
Kentucky Fried Chicken
Lamar Advertising
Landis International, Inc.
Lovell Engineering Associates
Lowndes County
Lowndes County Farm Bureau
James McGahee (P)
Magic Media, Inc.
Mediacom
Mike Hill Real Estate
Miller Hardware Company
Moore, Clarke, Duvall & Rodgers, P.C.
Music Funeral Services
Nexxtep Technology Services
Packaging Corporation of America
Park Avenue Bank
Pinnacle Prime Contractors / GPM
Presser Productions, Inc.
D/B/A Fox's Pizza @ Funstreet
Prince Automotive of Valdosta
Prudential ACS Real Estate
Quillian Powell Construction
Radiology Associates of Valdosta, PC
Regal Marine
Regions Bank
Regulatory Compliance Services
Richard Hill & Associates
Riley Church Pew Company
Ron Borders GMAC Real Estate
Larry Rodgers (P)
SAFT America
S. C. Barker Construction
The Scruggs Company
Scruggs Concrete Company
C. Byrd Simmons, P. C.
SMITH Northview Hospital
South Georgia Medical Center
South Georgia Vein Center
South Georgia Travel
Southeastern Capital Management Group, LLC
Southeastern Federal Credit Union
Southeastern Freight Lines
Sunset Farm Foods
Talk 92.1
U.S. Press
Valdosta Daily Times
Valdosta Electric Company
Valdosta Insurance Services, Inc.
Valdosta Magazine
Valenti, Rackley & Associates, LLC
WALB TV10
Waller Heating & Air Conditioning Company
Wetherington Farms

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

When I came to Valdosta in the '70's, Valdosta and Lowndes County had a population of about 45,000 people. Obviously Interstate 75, Moody Air Force Base and Valdosta State University have contributed to the growth we've experienced. We are now a community of over 100,000 people and still growing. Many positive things have come out of this growth. We are a regional transportation and distribution center. We are a regional education center. We are a regional health care center. We are certainly a regional retail center. We offer dining and entertainment to the region as well as many other regional services. We even have some national and international business products produced here.



Even with this very positive growth, we are still below the state average in personal income per household. As a result, we lose many of our younger, brighter students to other cities and states. We need to keep and/or attract our fair share of the young highly educated. Businesses utilizing talented, skilled, better educated people can make that happen.

This is why I decided to support and participate in the Chamber of Commerce's IMPACT 2012 initiative. The intent and ultimate goal of IMPACT 2012 is to attract and support businesses that offer opportunities to the skilled, talented, and better educated workers. The result of this type of planned economic development will be a higher economic standard of living for our community providing greater opportunity for our young people in their pursuit of a career and an attractive community to live, work and play.

The investment our community has made in IMPACT 2012 is confirmation of the need for planned development and a vote of confidence in the Chamber's vision. Let's make it happen!



James McGahee, Chairman
2008 IMPACT 2012
Oversight Committee

2008 IMPACT 2012 Oversight Committee:

Bill DeCoudres
Guardian Bank

Curtis Fowler
Fowler, Holley, Rambo & Stalvey, PC

Walt Gill
GPM (Gill Property Management, LLC)

Mike Godwin
Ambling Companies

Jeff Hanson
Park Avenue Bank

Walter Hobgood
Express Employment Professionals

Tim Jones
Ameris Bank

Terri Lupo
Georgia Power Company

James McGahee
South Georgia Medical Center

Paul Nichols
Nexxtep Technology Services, Inc.

ON THE COVER:

The leadership team of IMPACT 2012 received the 2008 A.L. Girardin award for their outstanding contribution to the community. Front row: 2007 Chairman of the Board, Nick Valenti (Valenti, Rackley & Associates), Leadership Council Chairman, James McGahee (SGMC), Pacesetter Division Co-Chairman, Paul Nichols (Nexxtep Technology Services), Leadership Division Co-Chairman, Chuck Roberts (SMITH Northview Hospital), Pacesetter Division Co-Chairman, Jud Rackley (Brandon, Rackley & Dukes), and Pacesetter Division Co-Chairman, Darrell Wilder (Georgia Power). Back row: 2006 Chairman of the Board and Board Campaign Leader, Tim Carroll (Farmers Home Furniture), Leadership Council Vice Chairman, Jeff Hanson (Park Avenue Bank), Campaign Chairman, David Durland (First State Bank & Trust), Advance Division Co-Chairman, Terri Lupo (Georgia Power), and Advance Division Co-Chairman, Bill DeCoudres (Guardian Bank). Not Pictured: Leadership Division Co-Chairman, Stan Fillion (South Georgia Classic).

COVER PHOTO BY:
WES SEWELL PHOTOGRAPHY



SCHOOL SYSTEM STUDY TASK FORCE

Rusty Griffin, Chairman
Leroy Butler, Vice Chairman
Joe Cordova
J.C. Riley
Walter Hobgood
John Manning
Carolyn Eager
Roy Copeland



Workforce Development & Education

2008 GOAL: *Determine the impact of school system organization on our local economy and take appropriate action*



The Chamber appointed a blue-ribbon task force to provide oversight to this important initiative and contracted in January 2008 with the Carl Vinson Institute and Fanning Institute of the University of Georgia to conduct a study which consisted of four elements:

1. A review of the literature on school system organization
2. A survey of business leaders in peer communities and business site selectors regarding their school system organization preference
3. A survey of Chamber members regarding their school system organization preference
4. A community information meeting to receive input from the community at large

After 11 months of dedicated work, the task force presented their recommendations to the Chamber Board of Directors in December 2008. The study concluded – and the task force agreed – that while school system unification is not a ‘silver bullet’ and will not alone result in education system improvements, it is an important first step in the unification of our community to achieve educational excellence.

The Chamber Board voted unanimously to accept and endorse the task force’s recommendation. The Chamber has appointed a committee to begin the process of creating an independent Community Public Education Foundation, whose mission will be to unify our school systems as a first step in unifying our community to achieve educational excellence. The Foundation is scheduled to begin operation in early April 2009.

2008 Goal: *Establish a ‘Boot Camp’ to develop better managers and supervisors; serve 100 supervisors in 2008*



Four ‘Boot Camps for Supervisors’ were conducted in 2008 in partnership with the Georgia Department of Labor, Valdosta Technical College, and Valdosta State University. Numerous private sector businesses, including attorneys and human resource professionals, provided workshop leaders for the ‘Boot Camps’. The 2008 goal was surpassed, with 104 supervisors served.

2008 Goal: *Expand ‘World Class Employee Recognition’ program to improve work ethics*



First State Bank & Trust Company provided a major IMPACT 2012 investment to expand the World Class Employee Recognition program in 2008. Four exemplary employees were rewarded with \$1,500 checks to recognize their outstanding work ethics.


2008 Goal: *Encourage parents to become more involved with their children’s education*



Regal Marine provided a major IMPACT 2012 investment to expand the ‘Helping Your Child Succeed’ program in 2008. Knowing that working parents are not always able to participate in PTO and other school-sponsored functions, this program takes lunch and a message to parents at their places of work that being involved in their children’s education can make a difference in educational success. Although the 2008 goal was not reached (280 parents were reached in 14 businesses), the committee is confident that 400 parents will be reached in 2009.

Expansion of Targeted Businesses


2008 GOAL: Create a marketing outreach program to encourage young professionals to live and work in Valdosta-Lowndes County after completing their university or technical college education


 **MetroOne** unveiled a new interactive Web site for young professionals, www.metroonevaldosta.com.

MetroOne surveyed 81 young professionals during the Second Annual Young Professionals Day in September to gauge the success of the program, and to ascertain young professionals' perspectives on the business world in Valdosta.



2008 GOAL: Facilitate the creation of 200 new jobs for college and university graduates in information technology, environmental technology, medical services and support, and other knowledge-based businesses

 **The Environmental Technology Showcase** in February featured Dr. Carol Couch, Director of the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, as the keynote speaker. More than 100 leaders in manufacturing, local government, healthcare, and agriculture were on hand to hear Dr. Couch, and to learn more about the services offered by local environmental technology firms.

 **The Metro In Motion Speaker Series** began in 2008 with international speaker and author Charles Landry in July, and Peter Kageyama, a Tampa-based expert in building creative cities for knowledge-based businesses, in November. As our speakers noted, the key to growing knowledge-based businesses is to grow a quality community where well educated people want to live.





Enhancement of Pro-Business Environment

2008 GOAL: Host a regular forum among elected officials, education leaders and other economic development partners regarding business issues and initiatives

 **The South Georgia Partnership for Regional Development** was created in 2008. Three lunch meetings during the year included 275 business, government, and other community leaders. Keynote speakers were Ken Stewart (Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Economic Development), George Israel (President of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce), and Mike Beatty (Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs).

2008 GOAL: Advocate for pro-business permitting regulations and practices, and formalize a 'rapid response team' to respond to business and industry needs

 **VALET** (Valdosta And Lowndes Expansion Team) was created in 2008 to identify perceived obstacles in the business permitting, licensing, and inspections processes, and to create an opportunity for all economic development organizations in the county to better understand the role each of us plays. VALET includes representatives of all local governments in Lowndes County, and representatives of all economic development organizations in the county, all working together to create a seamless business start-up and expansion process. A survey of new businesses provided the information needed to identify difficult elements of the process. The VALET slogan is: "There is no wrong door for a new or expanding business to enter in Lowndes County."

 **Creative Cities Consulting** was engaged in 2008 to work with the Chamber to develop benchmarks for measuring the growth of knowledge-based businesses in the area, and to help us identify implementation strategies to achieve IMPACT 2012 goals for targeted business expansion.



 **ConnecTECH Innovation Expo** in September provided an opportunity for local information technology companies to showcase their products and services to the business community.

Entrepreneurial & Small Business Development

2008 GOAL: *Serve 500 clients in the S.E.E.D.S. Center of South Georgia*

- ✓ **The S.E.E.D.S. Center** (Sowing Entrepreneur and Economic Development Success) served 633 clients in 2008. Twenty-two businesses have been established in 2008 using S.E.E.D.S. Center assistance. 'The ABC's of Starting a New Business in Lowndes County' was the most frequently requested resource (222 hard copies and 78 electronic copies distributed), with targeted mailing lists second (275). A total of 144 customized market research reports were generated in 2008. The new Web site (www.seedscenterofsga.com) was launched in February.



2008 GOAL: *Create a nurturing environment for entrepreneurial success*

- ✓ **The Ameris Bank Business Outlook 2008 Breakfast** took place in February with 102 business leaders in attendance. Dr. Jeffery Humphreys (University of Georgia) and Dr. Cynthia Tori and Dr. Cliff Lipscomb (VSU) shared predictions regarding the economic climate of the U.S., Georgia, and the Valdosta-Lowndes area, including an outlook for the local housing market.
- ✓ **The 3rd Annual Guardian Bank Business Competition** winner was announced in April. Azalea Health Innovations won \$15,000 in start-up capital, along with legal, accounting, marketing, advertising, and human resource services valued at more than \$40,000.
- ✓ **Entrepreneurs In Action**, a resource fair for entrepreneurs that showcases services available to help small businesses succeed, took place in April, with special guest speaker Jeff Hoffman, co-founder of Priceline.com.
- ✓ **The Commercial Lenders Breakfast** took place in September with special guest speaker Don Betts (Georgia Tech Entrepreneur Network), who encouraged the Chamber and local lenders to create a South Georgia Angel Investor Network to provide start-up financing.
- ✓ **The Search Engine Optimization Workshop** in October gave local business owners an opportunity to get tips from nationally-recognized speakers on optimizing their companies' locations on the major search engines.



Attraction of Amenity-Seeking Retirees



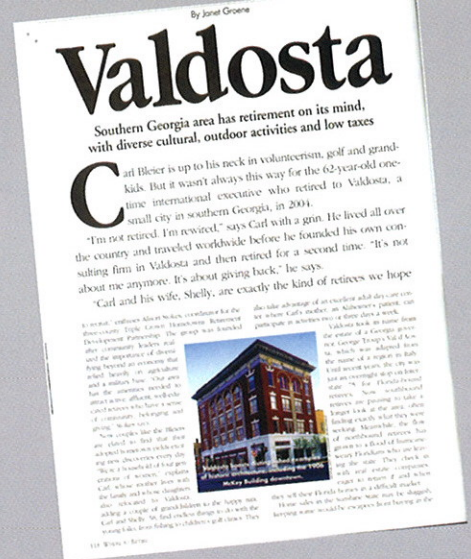
Triple Crown Hometowns

RETIREMENT DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP
LOWNDES • BROOKS • LANIER
"Jewels of South Georgia"



2008 GOAL: Develop and implement targeted national advertising for retiree recruitment and expand the marketing efforts of the Triple Crown Hometowns Program

- Implemented new Web site on www.GeorgiaRetire.com with over 114,000 visitors
- Developed over 3,400 retiree prospect leads from 47 states and three countries
- Named "Top Four Retirement College Towns" by *Georgia Trend* magazine.
- Named "Top Ten Small Towns to Operate a Business and Retire" by *Southern Business and Retirement* magazine.
- National Advertising on the Golf Channel during the South Georgia Classic.
- Named "Top 100 towns in U.S.A. to live" by Relocate-America.com
- Advertisement in *Georgia Trend* magazine
- Named "One of 11 Great Places to Retire in the South" by *Retirement Lifestyles*
- Profiled as "Top Undiscovered Retirement Haven" in the national publication, *Where to Retire* magazine
- Sent monthly e-newsletter, *Hometown Happenings*, to over 1,600 retiree households nationwide



By the year 2012, Valdosta–Lowndes County will enhance its position as the business, educational, social and cultural center of excellence for South Georgia. Recognized nationally as a “Smart Community” that uses technology effectively and provides career opportunities for its technical college and university graduates, Valdosta–Lowndes County will be a forward thinking place to live, learn, work and play. Boasting a business-ready environment with a progressive school system, excellent health care, affordable housing and a quality of life second to none, Valdosta– Lowndes County will attract entrepreneurs and a diversity of new business and industry. Young professionals will come to Valdosta–Lowndes County to start a career, raise a family and then join a growing retirement community. With the support of its corporate and elected officials working together, Valdosta–Lowndes County will enhance its standard of living and continue to be a model for progressive communities throughout Georgia and the Southeastern United States.



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VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Leading Businesses.
Leading Communities.™



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