

IMPACT ACTION

Quarterly newsletter for IMPACT 2012, a business action plan led by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce

Summer 2010
VOL.3 NO.3



Calling this Chamber initiative “IMPACT” 2012 was not unplanned. When the 72 leaders from business, government, and education developed the IMPACT 2012 Business Action Plan and the five initiatives included in it, they intended it to have a

major impact on our community’s economy and overall quality.

As we approach the mid-point of this five-year initiative, consider some of these major, measurable impacts:

2,700 clients have been served in the S.E.E.D.S. Center

105 new businesses have started, creating 263 new jobs and an annual payroll of \$6 million

365 new knowledge-based jobs have been created

500 young professionals are included in the MetroOne mailing list, with 100 participating regularly in MetroOne activities

230 supervisors have completed “Boot Camp”

644 parents have experienced “Helping Your Child Succeed”

302 amenity-seeking retiree households have relocated to our community

The IMPACT 2012 Oversight Committee believes that the secret to the success of this initiative will be accountability. We take our responsibility as the overseers of your financial investment in IMPACT 2012 very seriously. That includes the ability to measure the impact of our efforts. At each of our regular meetings, we look at measurable results. We’re satisfied that IMPACT 2012 is accomplishing what our 132 investors intended it to accomplish. We hope that you will agree that the Chamber is making a difference in our community through IMPACT 2012.

Curtis Fowler, 2010 Chairman
IMPACT 2012 Oversight Committee

2010 OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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Heritage Bank

Mike Godwin
Ambling Companies

Terri Lupo
Georgia Power
Company

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Services, Inc.

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GPM (Gill Property Management, LLC)

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Citizens Community Bank

ENHANCEMENT OF PRO-BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Goal: Host a regular forum regarding business issues and initiatives

The future looks brighter for 2010 economy

The staff of Ameris Bank welcomed Chamber members to the annual Ameris Bank Business Outlook Breakfast at Valdosta Country Club on Feb. 17. **Dr. Jeffrey Humphreys**, Director of the Selig Center for Economic Growth at the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business, predicted "...a slow but sustained economic recovery for Georgia" at the annual Ameris Bank Business Outlook Breakfast on Feb. 17 at the Valdosta Country Club.

Dr. Humphreys is invited each year to share his expert opinion regarding the economic state of the Nation and Georgia. Humphreys is a member of the Governor's Council of

Economic Advisors for the State of Georgia and has published over 250 applied and academic studies regarding market research, economic forecasting, transportation, and economic development. Humphreys suggested that although economic recovery will be bumpy, it has begun and by spring will be accompanied by a small recovery in jobs.

Dr. Cindy Tori, an economist at VSU's Langdale College of Business encouraged businesses to be part of the recovery. She advised businesses to take advantage of opportunities available during recovery, such as an abundance of skilled workers and competition that is risk averse. "Invest in your future now. It is the time to go out and execute your



Tom Gooding (Elliott, Blackburn & Gooding P.C.), Bill Osborn (Ameris Bank), Dr. Jeffrey Humphreys (UGA's Terry College of Business), Dr. Cliff Lipscomb and Dr. Cindy Tori (VSU's Harley Langdale Jr. College of Business).

plans to expand profits, increase your net worth, start a business, or look for a job."

More than 75 business leaders attended the breakfast. Other speakers included **Bill Osborn** (Ameris Bank) and **Dr. Cliff Lipscomb** (VSU's Langdale College of Business). To view all of the Business Outlook presentations go to www.valdostachamber.com and select Chamber Programs/Pro-Business Enhancement/Business Outlook Breakfast.

ATTRACTION OF AMENITY-SEEKING RETIREES

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



One of the most important goals of IMPACT 2012 is to expand our marketing efforts to attract amenity-seeking retirees by implementing targeted national advertising. One very important element of the plan is billboard advertising. Thanks to financial support through IMPACT 2012, we are increasing our efforts this year to gain exposure to retirees traveling through our South Georgia

area to Florida. This year Triple Crown Hometowns will have two billboards on I-75, one of them a double billboard, spectacular compared to only one billboard in 2009. More than 45,000 vehicles travel I-75 daily and the additional exposure is sure to increase retirees' interest in relocating to South Georgia.

Triple Crown Hometowns nominated Valdosta and for the third year in a row, Valdosta was named to America's "Top 100 Places to Live" by RelocateAmerica. This year RelocateAmerica focused on communities poised for recovery and

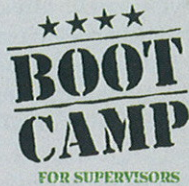
future growth. The editorial team identified and recognized communities with strong local leadership, employment opportunities, thriving community commitment, improving real estate markets, growing green initiatives, plentiful recreational options and an overall high quality of life.

Hey, that sounds like Valdosta!

For more information on Triple Crown Hometowns visit www.GeorgiaRetire.com.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION

Goal: Further develop the management skills of 100 supervisors



Boot Camp for Supervisors

28 supervisors participated in the second session of Boot Camp for Supervisors on May 6 at the Georgia Department of Labor. "Grab & Go Tools for Supervisors" was the theme at Boot Camp for Supervisors, as participants learned essential skills to ensure success in their leadership roles.

Goal: Motivate 400 working parents to become directly involved with their children's academic success



Helping Your Child Succeed

"Reach a parent, teach a child"-- Helping Your Child Succeed was presented to 20 TANF parents

recently. Since the program's launch in spring 2008, 664 parents in 19 businesses have viewed the presentation. This year we aim to exceed our goal of reaching 400 parents by targeting the major employers in our region as well as Parent Summits, Parent Universities, weekly TANF trainings through Lowndes County DFCS and PTO events.

Limited time offer, register today!
In **30 minutes** your employees will learn strategies that work to ensure academic success of their children, our FUTURE WORKFORCE

Why Should YOUR Business Participate?

- Improve Employee Productivity
- Decrease Employee Absenteeism
- Strengthen the Future Workforce
- Support Education Initiatives in Our Community
- FREE 'Lunch-n-Learn' for your entire staff

To schedule "Helping Your Child Succeed" presentation at your business contact: [Kevara Hamilton at 229-247-8100](mailto:Kevara.Hamilton@229-247-8100)

Goal: Expand "World Class Employee Recognition Program" to improve work ethics.

World Class Recognition



Secure 30 World Class nominations and award two supervisory and two non-supervisory employees with \$1,500 in cash prizes. First State Bank World Class Recognition Early Bird Breakfast will be enhanced through the 5 Star Employer Program, a new initiative recognizing elite employers of the Valdosta-Lowndes County business community.

- o 15 employees nominated in 2007
- o 22 nominees in 2008
- o 28 nominees in 2009

Nominate your outstanding employees!
Four prizes of \$1,500!

The mission of the program is to acknowledge and reward outstanding work ethics in the Valdosta-Lowndes County labor force. Nomination forms will be available August 2, 2010 for download on-line www.ValdostaChamber.com and select the "First State Bank World Class Recognition Forms" button on the homepage. Nomination categories:

- o Employee, Small Business (1-49 employees)
- o Employee, Large Business (50 + employees)
- o Supervisor, Small Business (1-49 employees)
- o Supervisor, Large Business (50+ employees)

ENTREPRENEUR & SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Goal: To enhance and strengthen local resources for entrepreneur development

“Economic gardening” in the S.E.E.D.S. Center



2010 goal is to serve 600 clients

With an annual IMPACT 2012 investment of approximately \$100,000, the S.E.E.D.S. Center of South Georgia has been able to provide services to more than 2,700 clients in all stages of the business life cycle including seed businesses, start-up businesses, expanding businesses and established businesses. To plant the seeds of business growth, resources are provided for planning, advice and finding customers – all without cost to anyone, regardless of Chamber membership, because of YOUR investment in IMPACT 2012.

IMPACT 2012 funds are used to purchase subscription databases that assist clients with market research, information about competitors, targeted leads lists and mailing lists, and detailed industry-specific data. IMPACT 2012 also funds a full-time coordinator and a part-time assistant. “My goal is to make certain that the Chamber provides professional and confidential assistance and service to every business owner, commercial developer, Realtor, and would-be entrepreneur who could possibly benefit from the high-tech services the S.E.E.D.S. Center has to offer,” said **Courtney Ruttinger**, S.E.E.D.S. Center Coordinator.

Of the 2,700 S.E.E.D.S. Center clients, more than 900 were in the start-up stage, more than 400 were existing or expanding businesses, in excess of 800 were Chamber members, Realtors or developers, and more than 400 were returning clients or those seeking general information. With assistance from the S.E.E.D.S. Center, 105 businesses have been started, creating more than 263 jobs with an estimated annual payroll of \$6 million. We have also distributed more than 1,400 “How to Start a Business Guides.”

Access to free professional consultations and a leads group

We currently have 33 professional consultants who have provided 18 hours of free professional consultation in an array of areas including accounting, legal, marketing and advertising, and Web design. Our Professional Consultants also submitted articles for Sprouts newsletter, a bi-monthly publication distributed free to more than 500 subscribers, and they serve as seminar panelists for the S.E.E.D.S. Center Business University.

The Valdosta Networking Professionals has grown to 33 members who exchange an average of 10 leads every week. **Greg Reid** (Edward Jones Investments) stated, “VNP has been beneficial in a number of ways. It has helped me grow my business, not only through members becoming clients, but also through their referrals. I have developed friendships that will last forever and I have had the opportunity to help other businesses to grow too. I look forward to meeting each Monday to see all our members and also to meet any newcomers.”

The 2010 Guardian Bank Business Plan Competition kicked off in April. Ten applications were received and five contestants are currently competing for the grand prize to be announced in December.

S.E.E.D.S. Center Business University (BU), a seminar series for small business owners and employees to learn new skills and overcome business challenges, was introduced in 2010. BU began in May with the Award Winning Customer Service seminar covering a variety of topics to keep customers coming back again and again. Panelists included the Top 10 Finalists for the Members’ Choice Award and the recipient of the Best Customer Service in Town from the Valdosta Daily Times.



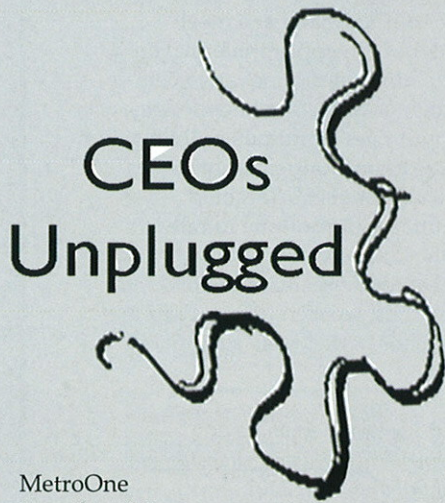
Pictured above are the panelists for the Award Winning Customer Service Seminar. (Back Row) **Michael Jetter** (ActionCOACH), **Marcie Dennard** (The Park Avenue Bank), **Laura Love** (South Georgia Medical Center), **Susan Mullis** (Flower Gallery), **Jane Shelton** (South Georgia Travel), **Katie Hardin** (Hospice of South Georgia), **Frank Richards** (Second Harvest of South Georgia) and **Sherry Zipperer** (First State Bank & Trust). (Front Row) **Jason Bellflowers** (Virtual World Technologies), **Jodi Doss** (Jodi’s Accessories), **Rita Hughes** (H&H Insurance Solutions) and **Amanda Garland** (Commercial Banking Company).

What’s next for the S.E.E.D.S. Center? Spreading the word about this valuable resource is what’s next. Visits with local lenders have begun, as well as visits with partnering chambers. The Web site (www.seedscenterofsga.com) has been updated to better serve clients and the community. The S.E.E.D.S. Center will continue to maintain its important partnerships, build professional relationships, track database use to ensure excellent service and recognize outstanding entrepreneurs in the community.

EXPANSION OF TARGETED BUSINESSES

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 Introduces CEOs Unplugged Series



MetroOne introduced its "CEOs Unplugged" series in March. This series gives an unedited, inside look into the minds of top leaders and executives throughout South Georgia.

Placed in an informal setting, this networking series provides young professionals a comfortable and laid-back environment to ask questions, learn new strategies and techniques for getting ahead in



the business world, and find out what it takes to make it to the top. CEOs Unplugged is designed to give future entrepreneurs, executives, and CEOs the opportunity to interact with, and learn from those who have already seen success in their fields. This series takes place bi-monthly.

Our February CEO guest was **Deidra White**, owner of the Bleu Group and newly elected councilwoman for the City of Valdosta. Pictured above: Back row: **Joe Belson, Anthony Felder** (Dream America), **Corey Hull** (Associate Member), **Sean Panizzi** (TeamTemps), **Bill Simmons** (ADM) and **Wes Sewell** (Wes Sewell Photography). Middle row: **Tara**

Nichols (Chamber), **Natalia Huffman, Nikki Forman** (City of Valdosta), **John Trombetta** (VSU), **Courtney Ruttinger** (Chamber), **Jade Jarvis** (LaQuinta Inn & Suites), **Britney Foster** (PCA), **Monica Boyd** (SMITH Northview), **Erika Biddix** (MAC Meetings & Events) and **John Fretti** (Mayor, City of Valdosta). Front row: **Deidra White** (Bleu Group), **Beth Anne Trombetta, Walt Moody** (Moody Law Firm) and **Anne Shenton** (Nexxtep Technologies).

In April, **Eric Hahn**, Director of the Valdosta-Lowndes Parks & Recreation Authority enlightened the group. Pictured below: **Sirocus Barnes** (Valdosta-Lowndes Parks & Recreation Authority), **Monica Boyd** (SMITH Northview), **Nikki Forman** (City of Valdosta), **Courtney Ruttinger** (Chamber), **Zach Miller** (SC Barker Construction), **Corey Hull** (Associate Member), **John Trombetta** (VSU) and **Eric Hahn** (Valdosta-Lowndes Parks & Recreation Authority).



EXPANSION OF TARGETED BUSINESSES

Goal: Facilitate the creation of jobs for college and university graduates

It's working! Updated analysis shows growth in knowledge-based jobs.



Chris Miller presents the 2008 TBEC Economic Analysis & Benchmark at the April Chamber Board Meeting.

Helping to create more jobs for college and university graduates is one of IMPACT 2012's most ambitious goals. "Essentially, you're talking about transforming a local economy," explained Chris Miller, the Chamber's consultant on

growing knowledge-based jobs. Miller (Creative Cities Consulting) shared updated information with the Chamber Board and key leaders from various public and private organizations in April. Also included in the presentation were the Chamber's Targeted Business Expansion Committee (TBEC) current and past efforts to facilitate the growth of knowledge-based jobs and businesses in Valdosta-Lowndes County.

"TBEC is focused on building an innovative and higher-wage future economy to improve the quality of life and increase economic opportunities for our college and university graduates," Miller explained. "This doesn't mean other local economic development organizations aren't doing their jobs or doing them well – they are. But it's the 'mix' of jobs that is important. If this community would like to continue to see sustainable growth, there must be a balance of all jobs, and right now it's those jobs that require a technical college or university degree that are lacking in this local economy."

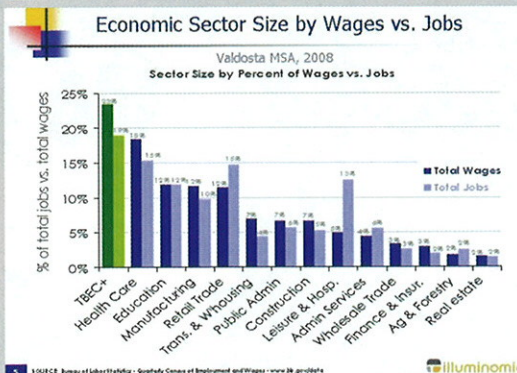
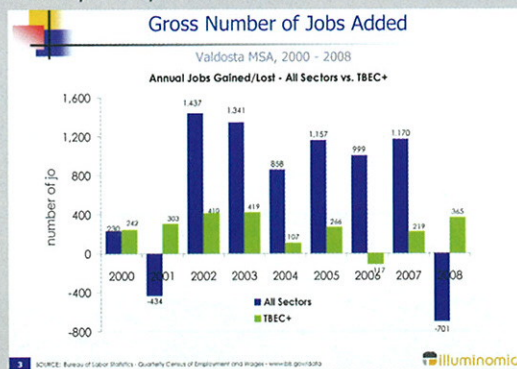
Since 2007 the Valdosta Metro Area has seen a nearly 5 percent increase in TBEC jobs, gaining 365 jobs from 2007 to 2008. TBEC jobs represent 19 percent of all jobs and 23 percent of all wages. But while TBEC jobs are experiencing growth, sectors such as retail and hospitality – sectors which provide great jobs for our high school graduates and college students, but are traditionally not high-wage jobs – are growing even more rapidly. "Again, it's the 'mix' that matters," said Miller.

The Targeted Business Expansion Committee was formed in 2005 following a Georgia Tech study facilitated by the Chamber to identify industry sectors with

high growth potential, which could employ graduates of Valdosta State University and Valdosta Technical College. Initiatives such as the IT Professionals Network focus on specific high-growth industries such as information technology. TBEC's initiatives have evolved to include focus on growing smart businesses, retaining talent and building an attractive community for young, well educated professionals.

Dana Massingill (South Georgia Medical Center), who chairs TBEC, noted that one of the Chamber's most important roles is to bring all of the appropriate players to the table to focus on cultivating local innovative companies. "Growing, expanding, or attracting knowledge-based businesses and jobs will raise standards of living in our region and increase economic opportunity for residents," said Massingill. "The Chamber's Targeted Business Expansion Committee will continue to rally key partnerships with public and private leaders to make Valdosta-Lowndes County more attractive to knowledge-based businesses and workers. The payoff in the form of more and better jobs makes such initiatives worthwhile."

The presentation and the 2010 Economic Analysis & Benchmark can be viewed online at <http://www.valdostachamber.com/about/Boardmeeting.html> and select Our Chamber/Board of Directors Meeting/Business Expansion Division Report, April 15, 2010.



EXPANSION OF TARGETED BUSINESSES

Goal: Facilitate the creation of jobs for college and university graduates in knowledge-based businesses

Urban design expert shares his observations about Valdosta



Thanks to IMPACT 2012, each year the Chamber brings to Valdosta national and international experts who can share

with us their ideas on how we can build the kind of community that embodies a high quality of life – the kind of community that will attract higher wage businesses. “We are specifically interested in making our community an attractive place for knowledge-based businesses,” said **Dana Massingill** (South Georgia Medical Center), who chairs the Chamber’s Targeted Business Expansion Committee.

“Knowledge-based firms are those where the core of business is highly dependent on possessing or applying knowledge,” explained Massingill. “Typical knowledge-based businesses are financial services, architecture, software design or engineering, where knowledge is necessary for the very survival of the venture. Such businesses are characterized by high growth, they are technology intense and immensely dependent on their talent. And many times, such businesses want to be located in a ‘cool’ downtown area, like Downtown Valdosta.”

Christian Sottile, a professor at Savannah College of Art and Design and principal of Sottile & Sottile Urban Design firm, visited Valdosta in April as part of our Metro In Motion Speakers Series. Sottile provided an eye-opening look at how communities can be transformed into alluring places that are compact, walk-able and diverse. He noted that communities like Valdosta,

Christian Sottile (Savannah College of Art and Design) shows illustrations of interesting ‘New’ urban design in various areas of Valdosta during his presentation at the Metro In Motion Speaker Series.

Metro In Motion Series
ClientTell, Inc. & Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber



Sue Cox (Covington’s Dining and Catering), Richard Hill (Richard Hill & Associates) and Christian Sottile, an urban design expert from Savannah College of Arts and Design, discuss the history of Downtown Valdosta at the Metro In Motion Speaker Series presentation in April.

with 150 years of history are ahead of the curve and encompass the ‘bone structure’ for this type of living.

Sottile spoke to a group of about 40 Downtown Valdosta business owners, elected officials, and other interested business leaders. His comments focused primarily on downtown or as he called it “the city’s center,” but he also shared ideas on how we could improve other areas of the community.

Pat Sullivan (ClientTell), host of the Metro In Motion event shared his thoughts on why downtown is so important. “If we lose our downtown, which encompasses our history, we lose Valdosta’s heart and soul,” he said. “We all enjoy downtown; it belongs to the entire community. Continuing to bring in forward thinkers like Christian is one way to convey to our leaders better approaches to development as our city grows.”

“What a great way help the community understand that the attractiveness of our community physically affects our growth,” noted **Richard Hill** (Richard Hill & Associates). “I found the presentation intriguing and instructive.”

Sottile’s presentation can be viewed online at <http://www.valdostachamber.com> and select Chamber Programs/ Business Expansion and click on the Metro In Motion logo. The next Metro In Motion Speaker Series event will be held in the Fall and the conversation about the built environment will be continued.

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

Aaron's Rental Purchase	Elliott, Blackburn, Barnes & Gooding	Music Funeral Services
ACE Electric	Ellis, Ricket and Associates Architects	Nexxtep Technology Services
Advanced Hearing Solutions	ERCO Worldwide, Inc.	Packaging Corporation of America
Alert-Tech Systems	Express Employment Professionals	The Park Avenue Bank
Allan Dear Real Estate	Eye Associates of South Georgia LLC	Pinnacle Prime Contractors / GPM
Ambling Companies	Family Health Care	Pleats & Creases
American Classifieds	Farmers & Merchants Bank	Prince Automotive of Valdosta
American Drill Bushing	Farmers Home Furniture Company	Prudential ACS Real Estate
Ameris Bank	First State Bank & Trust Company	Quillian Powell Construction
ASA Engineering & Surveying, Inc.	Fowler, Holley, Rambo & Stalvey, P.C.	Radiology Associates of Valdosta, PC
Astro Exterminating Services	Friendly Financial Services, Inc.	Regal Marine
AT&T	Full Circle Marketing & Advertising	Regions Bank
Atlantic Southern Bank	Fusion Creative Marketing	Regulatory Compliance Services
Chet & Myrna Ballard (P)	Genesis Christian School	Richard Hill & Associates
Bank of Valdosta	Georgia Power Company	Riley Church Pew Company
Barnes Drug Stores of Valdosta	Mary & Tom Gooding (P)	Ron Borders GMAC Real Estate
BB&T	Great Southern Yellow Pages	Larry Rodgers (P)
Bemiss Citizens Bank	J. Glenn Gregory Architects	SAFT America
Black Crow Media	Griffin Corporation	S. C. Barker Construction
Blanton and Griffin Insurance	Griner Automotive Group	The Scruggs Company
Brandon, Rackley & Dukes, P.C.	Guardian Bank	Scruggs Concrete Company
James Bridges (P)	H & S Supply Company	C. Byrd Simmons, P. C.
Bush Investment Group, LLC	Henderson & Godbee	SMITH Northview Hospital
Carson McLane Funeral Home	The Herndon Company	South Georgia Medical Center
Cauthan Construction Company	Holiday Inn/Comfort Suites/Days Inn	South Georgia Vein Center
Citizens Community Bank	Home Builders Association of South Georgia	South Georgia Travel
City of Hahira	Home Instead Senior Care	Southeastern Capital Management Group, LLC
City of Lake Park	Jodi's Accessories	Southeastern Federal Credit Union
City of Remerton	Johnson Distributing Company	Southeastern Freight Lines
City of Valdosta	Keeman Petroleum Company, Inc.	Sunset Farm Foods
CJB Industries, Inc.	Kentucky Fried Chicken	Talk 92.1
Classic Art & Frame Company	Lamar Advertising	U.S. Press
Coldwell Banker Premier Real Estate	Landis International, Inc.	Valdosta Daily Times
Coleman Talley LLP	Lovell Engineering Associates	Valdosta Electric Company
Colony Bank	Lowndes County	Valdosta Insurance Services, Inc.
Colquitt EMC	Lowndes County Farm Bureau	Valdosta Magazine
Colson Printing Company	James McGahee (P)	Valenti, Rackley & Associates, LLC
Coombs Heating & Air Conditioning	Magic Media, Inc.	WAAC FM, WGOV AM, WLYX FM
Covington's Dining & Catering / 306 North	Mediacom	WALB TV10
Cowart Electric and Industrial Contractors	Mike Hill Real Estate	Waller Heating & Air Conditioning Company
Culbreth, Minick & Associates, PC	Miller Hardware Company	Wetherington Farms
Cypress Lakes Development / Teamtemps Personnel Staffing	Moore, Clarke, Duvall & Rodgers, P.C.	Williams Investment Company
Darby Bank		WTLH-TV Fox 49/WTLF-TV(CW)
Fred DeLoach (P)		WTXL TV

IMPACT 2012 includes a number of initiatives designed to work together to enhance Valdosta-Lowndes County's position as the business, educational, social and cultural center of excellence for South Georgia. Funded by 132 community-minded investors, IMPACT 2012 is a five-year, \$2.3 million business action plan, led by the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber, with measurable goals and outcomes. Shareholders receive regular progress reports from the Chamber. Questions or comments are welcome. Please contact IMPACT 2012 Oversight Committee Chairman Curtis Fowler (cfowler@valdostacpa.com).