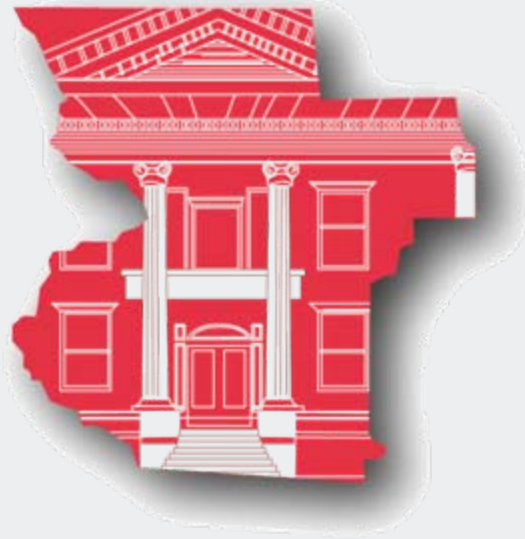


VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Leading Businesses.
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August 21, 2008

Board of Directors

Meeting



**Board of Directors Meeting
Thursday, August 21, 2008
10:30 am – 12:00 pm
Country Inn & Suites**

AGENDA

- **Call to order, establish a quorum, and review agenda**
- **Consider minutes of the July 17, 2008 meeting**
- **OPERATIONS & ADMINISTRATION**
- **Reaccreditation responses**
- **Chamber July 2008 Financial Statements**
- **Chamber Activity Report**
- **IMPACT 2012 Oversight Committee**
- **Action Items to Consider**
 - **Consider Amendment to Chamber By-Laws**
 - **Consider By-laws of the Education Council, Inc. (dba B.E.S.T.)**

Agenda continues →

Division Reports

- **Public Affairs Division** – Tom Gooding (Vice Chairman)
 - Government Affairs Council
 - Military Affairs Committee
- **Workforce Development & Education Division** –
Tim Jones (Vice Chairman)
 - B.E.S.T. Program
 - Workforce Development Program
 - World Class Recognition Program
 - DRUGS DON'T WORK Program
- **Business Expansion Division** – Jeff Hanson (Vice Chairman)
 - Targeted Business Expansion Committee
 - VALET
 - South Georgia Partnership for Regional Development
- **Member Services Division** – David Newbern (Vice Chairman)
 - Membership Report
 - Marketing Committee
 - Ambassadors Committee
 - Existing Industry Committee
- **Economic Development Division** – Terri Lupo (Vice Chairman)
 - Home Grown Entrepreneurs Program
 - Triple Crown Hometowns Program
 - Task Force to Study the Impacts of School System Organization on Economic Development in Our Community



➤ **Consider Minutes of July 17, 2008 Board Meeting**

Minutes of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors meeting held Thursday, July 17, 2008, 11:30 a.m. at the James H. Rainwater Conference Center.

Members Present: Sally Bloom, Ed Cockman, Tim Coombs, Allan Dear, Stan Fillion, Jeff Fulp, Tom Gooding, Jeff Hanson, Walter Hobgood, Tim Jones, Greg Justice, Terri Lupo, Lee Morgan, David Newbern, Paul Nichols, Giovanni Panizzi, Jane Shelton, Debra Tann, Nick Valenti and Myrna Ballard

Members Absent: Jodi Doss, Trey Fausett, Jerome Riley, Phyllis Royal, Jay Prince

Chairman Hobgood called meeting to order and established a quorum. Chairman Hobgood acknowledged the Conference Center for hosting the Chamber's event.

Minutes of the June 19, 2008 Board Meeting were reviewed.

G. Panizzi made a motion to accept minutes with the correction of the date for the last Meeting. S. Fillion seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Chamber June 2008 Financial Statements: P. Nichols reviewed the Chamber financial statement. L. Morgan made a motion to accept the financial statements as presented. S. Bloom seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. *(see pgs. 3-28 of original Board packet)*

IMPACT 2012 Report – Chairman Hobgood reported. *(see pg. 33 of original Board packet)*

Chairman's "State of the Chamber" Address:

- **Appointment of Nominating Committee for 2009 Board and Officers:** The Chamber By-Laws require that a Nominating Committee be appointed at the July meeting. This committee will be responsible for nominating 2009 Board members and officers. Chairman Hobgood appointed Nick Valenti, Jodi Doss, Jeff Hanson (chairman), Walter Hobgood and Myrna Ballard.
- **Appointment of Additional Barber House Advisory Board Members -** Chairman Hobgood appointed the following to serve on the Barber House Advisory Board: Pam Cooper and Jud Rackley.
- **Consider Triple Crown Hometowns Proposed 2008 Budget -** D. Newbern motioned to accept the Proposed Triple Crown Hometowns 2008 Budget as presented. G. Panizzi seconded motion and it passed unanimously.
- **Consider IMPACT 2012 Budget Amendments –** J. Hanson made motion to accept the IMPACT 2012 Budget Amendments. T. Lupo seconded motion and it passed unanimously.

Division Reports: Chairman Hobgood referred Members to the Division's reports in their Packets (*see original packet*)

Chairman Hobgood shared the highlights of the progress the Chamber has made during the first half of 2008. An excerpt from His remarks appears below:



Promoting our members

- ✓ Named Nairobi African Art as the Minority-Owned Business of the Year.
- ✓ Named Carson McLane Funeral Home as Small Business of the Year.
- ✓ We are at an all-time high in our membership (1,559).
- ✓ We have 121 new members so far this year.
- ✓ Our retention rate is 94%....the industry average is 80%.

Chairman Hobgood noted the outstanding efforts of our Division Vice Chairmen, the leaders of our committees, programs, and task forces, and the more than 500 volunteers who currently serve on these committees.

- **“Silver Star” Award:** Jeanette Coody (2007 Silver Stars), presented the Silver Star Award to Bill & Sandy Prentiss
- **“Ambassador of the Year” Award:** Carol Kimbrough, Event Ambassadors Chairman, presented the Ambassador of the Year Award to Jerry Kozuch (South Georgia Vein Center)
- **“DDW Partner of the Year” Award:** Katinka Kelly, DRUGS DON'T WORK Program Chairman, presented DDW Partner of the Year to Regal Marine

- **The “BIG Thinker” Award:** Frank Ranicky, WCTV-6, presented the award to the Big Thinker on behalf of the Chamber. “The Big Thinker” of the Year is Mike Godwin (Ambling Co.).
- **U. S. Chamber of Commerce:** Debbie Carrothers (U. S. Chamber of Commerce) announced the 5 Stars Accreditation.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karil Brockington

Karil Brockington
Administrative Director

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Operations & Administration

UNITED STATES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ACCREDITED®



Reaccreditation

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THOMAS J. DONOHUE
PRESIDENT AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

1615 H STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20062-2000

June 10, 2008

Ms. Myrna H. Ballard
President and Chief Executive Officer
Valdosta - Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce
416 North Ashley Street
Valdosta, GA 31601

Dear Myrna:

On behalf of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, I would like to extend my congratulations for your successful completion of the Accreditation Program. At the most recent board meeting, nine chambers were accredited. You were one of only three chambers to receive the designation of Accredited with 5-Stars. This is an outstanding achievement by you and your volunteer leaders.

Accreditation is one of the highest honors bestowed on chambers fighting for pro-growth and jobs policies at the federal, state, and local level. This distinction honors your commitment to helping to advance the principles of free enterprise – the bedrock of this prestigious award.

Myrna, this is a special tribute to you. Without the skill and expertise of an effective chief executive, it would be almost impossible for an organization to reach this milestone. You and your associates are to be highly complimented on the quality of your chamber's performance.

Sincerely,



JOHNNY ISAKSON
GEORGIA



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, D.C.

July 25, 2008

Mrs. Myrna Ballard
Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce
Post Office Box 790
Valdosta, Georgia 31603

Dear Mrs. Ballard

It is with great pleasure that I send my congratulations to you and everyone at the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce for recognition by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as a Five Star Accredited Chamber. Recipients of this prestigious award are those who have committed themselves to the betterment of their local community by unifying businesses for a positive change. Valdosta-Lowndes is one of only 44 Chambers across the country who has achieved this distinction, and I commend you.

This is a wonderful achievement for the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce and a testament to your vision as president.

With warmest personal regards

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Johnny Isakson", written over a large, stylized blue scribble.

Johnny Isakson

Jl/kem



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20515

JACK KINGSTON
FIRST DISTRICT
GEORGIA

July 28, 2008

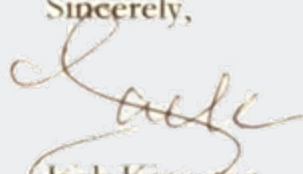
Ms. Myrna Ballard
President
Valdosta & Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce
416 N. Ashley Street
Valdosta, Georgia 31601

Dear Myrna:

Congratulations to the Valdosta & Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce on it's receipt of the 5-Star Accreditation from the United States Chamber of Commerce. As the first chamber to achive this 5-Star rating, you have set the bar of excellence very high.

I am excited to learn of your accomplishment and look forward to hearing of your continued success. If ever I can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to call my office.

Sincerely,


Jack Kingston
Member of Congress

Myrna,
You just get
better & better!

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY



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Financial Statements July 2008 and 2007

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Please refer to page 10 in your
handout.....

Chamber Activity Reports



- **Referrals**
- **Web site**



Mail Correspondence:

Newcomers Packets	<u>41 (73)</u>	Visitors Packets	<u>12 (1)</u>	Students Packets	<u>0(0)</u>
Includes:		Includes:		Includes:	
Realtors		Local Attractions		Visitors Guide	
Schools		Wild Adventures		Misc. as requested	
Churches		Hotels/B&B			
Apartments					
Self-Storage					
Quality of Life Magazine					

Miscellaneous Information Requested:

Request for BBB:	<u>16 (11)</u>	Email Information Requested:	<u>31 (35)</u>
Request for Events:	<u>25 (6)</u>	Civic Club Lists:	<u>3 (4)</u>
Web site Referrals by Phone:	<u>5 (7)</u>	Manufacturers List:	<u>5 (5)</u>
Request for Directions:	<u>15 (12)</u>	Map:	<u>318 (305)</u>
Request for Wild Adventures:	<u>5 (8)</u>	Membership Info. Packets:	<u>0 (15)</u>
Phone Books:	<u>45 (50)</u>	Membership List/Email:	<u>3 (6)</u>
Total Miscellaneous:		<u>471 (464)</u>	

Member Referrals:

Total Categories: 57

Top 10

Restaurants:	<u>89 (na)</u>
Real Estate:	<u>53 (na)</u>
Hotel/Motels:	<u>73 (na)</u>
Media:	<u>16 (na)</u>
Apartments:	<u>20 (na)</u>
Government::	<u>32 (na)</u>
Organizations/Nonprofits:	<u>15 (na)</u>
Banks:	<u>18 (na)</u>
Schools:	<u>26 (na)</u>
Health Care:	<u>28 (na)</u>
Other:	<u>95 (na)</u>
Total Member Referrals:	<u>465 (na)</u>

July 2008 Web Site Activity Report

www.valdostachamber.com

Web Site Hits:

April 2008	101,762
May 2008	135,193
June 2008	146,785
July 2008	147,533

Pageviews:

April 2008	15,035
May 2008	19,738
June 2008	16,398
July 2008	16,774



Search Engine Position for Chamber Site as of July 11, 2008

	Valdosta	Valdosta Chamber	Valdosta-Lowndes
Google	First page in 1 st place	First Page in 1 st place	First page in 1 st place
MSN	Third page in 3 rd place	First page in 1 st place	First page in 3 rd place
YAHOO	Second page in 8 th place	First page in 1 st place	First page in 2 nd place

Search Engine Position for Chamber Site as of August 12, 2008

	Valdosta	Valdosta Chamber	Valdosta-Lowndes
Google	First page in 3 rd place	First Page in 1 st place	First page in 1 st place
MSN	Third page in 3 rd place	First page in 1 st place	First page in 3 rd place
YAHOO	Second page in 5 th place	First page in 1 st place	First page in 3 rd place

Web site Button Advertisers

Arthur Herndon Company Real Estate, Inc.
Park Avenue Bank
South Georgia Medical Center

Coombs Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc.
Precision Pumps

For more information contact Sokanya Lanh at 247-8100 or email slanh@valdostachamber.com



Shareholders Meeting July 31, 2008

- **Semi-annual meetings hosted by the IMPACT 2012 Oversight Committee to provide budget information and program progress reports to the 129 investors in IMPACT 2012**
- **78 shareholders in attendance**
- **Reports from initiative leaders**

IMPACT 2012 Oversight Committee

James McGahee, Chairman

Jeff Hanson

Walter Hobgood

Walt Gill

Mike Godwin

Terri Lupo

Paul Nichols

Curtis Fowler

Tim Jones

Bill DeCoudres

David Durland



Action Item

➤ Consider Amendment to Chamber By-Laws

ARTICLE IV

Section 3: Selection and Election of Directors

- A. Nominating Committee.** At the regular July Board meeting, the Chairman of the Board shall appoint, subject to approval by the Board of Directors, a Nominating Committee of five (5) members of the Chamber. The Chairman of the Board shall designate the chairman of the committee.
- Prior to September 1, the Nominating Committee shall present to the President a slate of eight (8) candidates to serve three-year terms to replace the directors whose regular terms are expiring. Each candidate must be an active member in good standing and must have agreed to accept the responsibility of directorship. No Board member who has served two consecutive three-year terms is eligible for election for a third term. A period of one (1) year must elapse before eligibility is restored.
- B. Publicity of Nominations.** Upon receipt of the report of the Nominating Committee, the President shall immediately notify the membership by mail of the names of persons nominated as candidates for directors and the right of petition.
- C. Election.** The annual election of directors shall take place on the third Friday in October. *(The annual election of directors shall take place on the second Friday in October.)*
- D. Nominations by Petition.** The form of the Official Ballot shall be such that members shall have an opportunity to vote for any member for Director whether or not such member's name was on the list of nominees.
- E. Determination.** The candidates receiving the highest number of votes cast shall be declared members of the Board of Directors. The determination of the Nominating Committee as to the legality of the petition(s) shall be final. The Board of Directors shall at its regular October Board meeting declare the eight (8) candidates with the greatest number of votes elected.
- F. Judges.** The Chairman of the Board shall, at the regular September Board meeting, appoint, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors, at least three (3) but no more than five (5) judges who are not members of the Board of Directors or candidates for election. The Chairman of the Board will designate one as chairman. Such judges shall have complete supervision of the election, including the auditing of the ballots. They shall report the results of the election to the Board of Directors at the regular October Board meeting.



Action Item

- **Consider Education Council By-Laws (dba B.E.S.T.)**

Please refer to page 39 in your handout.....

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY
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Division Reports

Public Affairs Division Reports



**Tom Gooding
(Vice Chairman)**

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Government Affairs Update

Federal Legislative Committee

- United States Chamber Briefing
 - Thursday, July 17, 2008
- There were 13 guests in attendance
- Debbie Carrothers from the U.S. Chamber gave the briefing. She spoke about:
 - What happened in the 110th Congress
 - Campaign Season affect on Legislation
 - Issues of Concern for 2007-2008
 - Union Check Card
 - Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement
 - Education and Workforce
 - Issues of Focus for 2008
 - Immigration
 - Health Care
 - Why to Get Involved

State Legislative Committee

- State of Georgia Legislative Outlook
 - Monday, August 11, 2008
 - Speaker was George Israel (Georgia Chamber)
 - 25 in attendance

Local Legislative Committee (next page)

POSITION SUMMARY FOR BOARD ACTION

Position Issue: The City of Valdosta proposed Transportation Master Plan

Summary: The City of Valdosta is finalizing its comprehensive Transportation Master Plan. The Chamber has represented the business community throughout the development of the City's plan through a one-on-one meeting with the consultant, and a meeting with the City Engineer. After review of the plan, the Local Legislative Committee identified four important issues that we feel are most often identified by Chamber members as top transportation concerns. An email survey of our entire membership was conducted July 16-18, with 166 (11%) of our membership responding. In priority, these are the issues identified by our members as transportation issues of greatest concern.

The following are reasons to support this transportation plan:

1. A southern bypass will be constructed to bypass truck traffic from the downtown area, thereby, creating several improvements such as an overpass over the railroad as well as an opportunity to redevelop the City's southside.
2. Improvement of Public Transportation through the implementation of a bus and transit system.
3. The aesthetics of the plan will provide gateways to the community to promote a clean, beautiful and appealing look to the entrances to the City of Valdosta.
4. Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths would provide a safe and inviting way for young professionals, senior citizens, as well as the families of Valdosta to move throughout the City.

Committee Name: Local Legislative Committee

Date of Action: 07/21/08

Committee Recommendation: Endorse TMP, with particular emphasis on the four priority areas above.

Executive Committee Action:

1. Encourage the City to focus on the four important business development initiatives listed above
2. Commend the City for the effective process used to develop the TMP, which provided numerous opportunities for input from the business community
3. Encourage local governments to collaborate in the development and the implementation of transportation plans

Date of Action: 07/24/08

Board of Directors Action:

1. Encourage the City to focus on the four important business development initiatives listed above
2. Commend the City for the effective process used to develop the TMP, which provided numerous opportunities for input from the business community
3. Encourage local government to collaborate in the development and the implementation of transportation plans

Date of Action: 07/30/08


Myrna H. Ballard, President

7-30-08



RED CARPET COMMITTEE

Red Carpet Sponsorships are Available

The purpose of the Red Carpet Sponsor is to host a quarterly dinner to welcome senior personnel at Moody AFB, providing an opportunity for Chamber members to make Moody officers and senior personnel feel welcome.

Guidelines for Red Carpet Sponsorship

- ☞ Cost per event is \$150**
- ☞ Sponsors can host one, two, three, or all four events**
- ☞ Sponsorships include 2 guests (total). This means a sponsor will be allowed to bring one person including himself/herself.**

The cost to sponsor this event is \$150 (1 star sponsor – one dinner) or \$600 (4-star sponsor, all four dinners). Your company name will also be listed on a Sponsor board at the dinner at Ocean Pond. The sponsorship fee includes the dinner at Ocean Pond.

Red Carpet Parties for the remainder of 2008 are as follows:

Saturday, September 13th

Saturday, November 8th

**For more information you may call
Karil Brockington at 247-8100**

Workforce Development & Education Division Reports



**Tim Jones
(Vice Chairman)**

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B.E.S.T. Report

By-Laws of the Education Council, Inc.

Helping Your Child Succeed



REGAL

Luxury Performance Boats

Helping Your Child Succeed Presentations

Company	Date	Business Presenter	School Presenter	Parents
Union Tank Car Company	27-Mar-08	Jim Roberts	LaVerne Rome	7
Country Inn and Suites	10-Apr-08	Maggie Roberts	LaVerne Rome	12
Regal Marine	1-May-08	Jim Roberts	LaVerne Rome	22
Lowndes Teen Plus Center	13-May-08	Greg Justice	Judy Martin	13
Summer Educator Academy	2-Jun-08	Jim Roberts	Maggie Roberts	13
La Quinta Inn	24-Jun-08	Bill Tillman	LaVerne Rome	6
South Georgia Regional Library	28-Jul-08	Jim Roberts	Halley Little	11
Hudson Dockett and Ora Lee West	5-Aug-08	Greg Justice	LaVerne Rome	15
Parents Reached				99
			2008 Goal:	400

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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BOOT CAMP

FOR FIRST TIME SUPERVISORS

DATE: Tuesday, August 26

TIME: 8AM-12:30PM

PLACE: Department of Labor
221 S Ashley Street

COST: \$15- Chamber Members
\$30- Non-Members

To Register,

Please mail or fax this form to:

Diana McAlroy

PO Box 790

Valdosta, GA 31603-0790

FAX: 229.245.0071

LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED!

AGENDA

Robert Ryan, Jr. Law Firm of Moore, Clarke, DuVall and Rodgers, P.C.

"The nuts and bolts of worker's compensation for supervisors-reporting the injury, return to work/light duty situations"

Megan Smith, SmithBarnas & Associates

"Human Resource Issues Specific to Supervisors"

Susan Dukes, Georgia Department of Labor

"The Role of the Supervisor in the Unemployment Process"

April Lamon, Valdosta Technical College

"Making the Transition from First Time Manager to Competent Professional"

Walter Hobgood and Richard Lewis, Express Employment Professionals

"Dealing with Difficult Employees"

Company Name _____ Contact Name _____

Phone _____ Address _____

Email _____

Name(s) of Attendee(s) _____

Number of Attendees _____ @ \$15 each = \$ _____

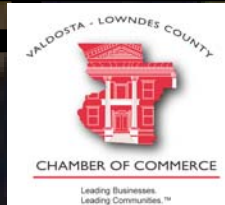
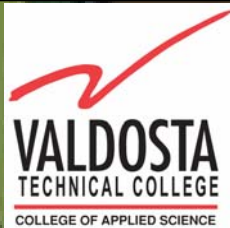
Check Enclosed (Payable to Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber)

Send Invoice Bill my Credit Card Circle One: Visa MasterCard

Card # _____ Exp. _____

Signature _____

BROUGHT TO YOU IN PARTNERSHIP BY:



Congratulations to the 2008 World Class Employees!



LeAnn Williams
Prudential ACS Real Estate
Small Business Employee Winner

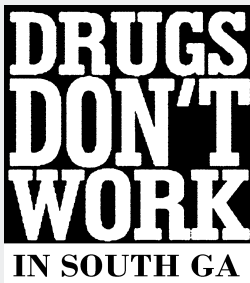
Fabiola Ceja-Garcia
Sleep Inn, Inn & Suites
Small Business Supervisor Winner



Sheree Boggs
Valdosta Technical College
Large Business Employee Winner

Theodis Ponder
South Georgia Medical Center
Large Business Supervisor Winner





July 2008 Summary

Total # of DDW Partners as of 12/31/07:	260	
Total # of DDW Partners as of 07/31/08:	266	
2008 New Members:	8	
2008 Losses:	2	
YTD Net Gain:	0	
	9	Need to meet goal (275)

Valdosta-Lowndes County

Total # of DDW Partners as of 12/31/07:	220		
Total # of DDW Partners as of 07/31/08:	226		
YTD Net Gain:	6		
	<u>YTD</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Total</u>
Valdosta-Lowndes New Prospects:	0	0	0
Valdosta-Lowndes Aged Prospects:	26	5	31
Valdosta-Lowndes Contacts:	26	5	31
New Members:	7	1	8
Losses:	2	0	2

Regional Program

Total # of DDW Partners as of 12/31/07:	40		
Total # of DDW Partners as of 07/31/08:	40		
YTD Net Gain:	0		
	<u>YTD</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Total</u>
Regional New Prospects:	2	1	3
Regional Aged Prospects:	118	23	141
Regional Contacts:	118	24	142
New Members:	0	0	0
Losses:	0	0	0

	<u>YTD</u>	<u>July</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Goal</u>	<u>Fav/Unfav</u>
Training (hours)	393.3	88.6	481.9	800.0	-319.3
Revenue	\$13,950	\$1,350	\$15,300	\$50,500	(\$35,200)

Business Expansion Division Reports



**Jeff Hanson
(Vice Chairman)**

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY
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Business Expansion Division

Targeted Business Expansion Committee

TBEC:

- Chris Miller (Creative Cities Consultant) visited Valdosta April 30 – May 3 and July 30-August 1, 2008
 - Visited with county, city, and other community/business leaders
 - Developing Targeted Business Expansion growth strategies (IMPACT 2012)
 - Identified/outlined tactical plans needed to fulfill those strategies
 - Developed guidelines for benchmarks to define current situation and measure progress
 - Reviewed current projects and programs – MetroOne, S.E.E.D.S., IMPACT 2012, TBEC
 - ConnecTECH Innovation Expo – September 11, 2008 4:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. James H. Rainwater Conference Center

VALET

- Generated a licensing and permitting survey
- Distributed survey to entire Chamber membership
- Survey results by late August
- Action plan for findings will be developed at the next VALET meeting in September

South Georgia Partnership for Regional Development

- Hosted more than 95 regional public and private business leaders at the 2nd SGPRD Luncheon, August 11, 2008. The President and CEO of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce was the keynote speaker
- Prior to Luncheon Israel gave a State Legislative briefing
- Mike Beatty, Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs will be the speaker at the Luncheon on November 10, 2008

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Tech_Train Luncheon

Tuesday, August 26, 2008

12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m. (Lunch) 345

12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. (Training) 334

Valdosta Technical College Building 300

Cost: \$10* Lunch Included

Sponsored by:

*Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce
Technology Education Subcommittee*



Nexxtep Technology Services, Inc.



Topic:

Microsoft Outlook 2007

Facilitator:

Ryan Williams (Nexxtep Technology Services, Inc.)

Outline:

- New Ribbon Bar
- Using categories to group items
- Creating customized views
- Managing contacts
- Managing folders
- Filtering messages
- Creating rules and alerts
- Working with tasks
- Archiving email
- Outlook Web Access
- Calendar Sharing

Business Name: _____

Name: _____

Attendee: _____ **Amount: \$** _____ **Check Enclosed:** _____ **Bill Me:** _____

Contact Number: _____

Credit Card #: _____ **Exp. Date** _____

Visa or MasterCard

Signature: _____

To RSVP, Please contact Sokanya Lanh at 247-8100 or email slanh@valdostachamber.com. For fax back, please fill out the information above.

FAX: 245-0071

Do you provide innovative technology services to businesses?

Do you want to do business with other local businesses?

Take advantage of this opportunity to Showcase your local IT services to Decision Makers and their IT Professionals!



verizonwireless

PRESENTS

ConnecTech Innovation Expo



Connecting technology with the business community

Thursday, September 11, 2008
James H. Rainwater Conference Center
5 p.m. - 7 p.m.
Hors d'oeuvres and Cash Bar.

Yes, my company would like to participate in ConnecTECH for \$50.00

Yes, my company would like to participate in ConnecTECH and also get a booth for *Entrepreneurs in Action 2009*(April 11, 2009) for a total of \$100

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____
Company Name: _____ Bill me* _____
Check Enclosed: _____ Credit Card# _____
Exp. Date: _____ Signature _____

Fax to (229) 245-0071

Make check payable to: Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 790, Valdosta, GA 31603
For more information call Evan Butler-Sands at (229) 247-8100

Member Services Division Reports



**David Newbern
(Vice Chairman)**

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Membership Development Report

Year 2008

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	2007 & 2008 <u>Variance</u>
Dec.	378,524.01	367,651.20		
Nov.	344,570.17	335,548.20		
Oct.	316,629.83	311,358.75		
Sep.	282,099.83	285,570.39		
Aug.	252,046.58	252,210.56		
July	222,116.83	221,976.37	213,829.60	(8,146.77)
June	187,334.33	192,752.62	174,847.00	(17,905.62)
May	165,643.08	158,994.68	147,411.33	(11,583.35)
Apr.	134,847.07	138,320.26	116,953.99	(21,366.27)
Mar.	109,604.72	114,470.42	85,689.56	(28,780.86)
Feb.	73,803.95	74,496.38	70,809.88	(3,686.50)
Jan.	39,124.18	45,297.34	48,150.38	2,853.04

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	2007 & 2008 <u>Variance</u>
Dec.	33,953.84	32,103.00		
Nov.	27,940.34	24,189.45		
Oct.	34,530.00	25,788.36		
Sep.	30,053.25	33,359.83		
Aug.	29,929.75	30,234.19		
July	34,782.50	29,223.75	38,982.60	9,758.85
June	21,691.25	33,757.94	27,435.67	(6,322.27)
May	30,796.01	20,674.42	30,457.34	9,782.92
Apr.	25,242.35	23,849.84	31,264.43	7,414.59
Mar.	35,800.77	39,974.04	14,879.68	(25,094.36)
Feb.	34,679.77	29,199.04	22,659.50	(6,539.54)
Jan.	39,124.18	45,297.34	48,150.38	2,853.04



Membership Summary Report As of July 31, 2008

DUES COLLECTED YEAR TO DATE: \$213,829.60
2008 goal for Dues Collection: \$396,000.00

NEW MEMBERS YEAR TO DATE: 136
2008 Goal: 244

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP: 1,563
2008 Goal: 1,550

NET MEMBERSHIP GAIN IN July: 4
NET MEMBERSHIP GAIN IN 2008: 44
2008 Goal: 31

2008 Retention Goal: 86%
(Industry Average: 80%)



New Members

2004 2005 2006 2007 2008

Jan	18	16	16	16	22
Feb	17	22	18	14	16
Mar	39	16	20	20	13
April	20	34	20	16	22
May	21	23	41	26	23
June	15	16	12	29	25
July	16	8	10	13	15
Total	146	135	137	134	136
Aug	14	18	16	17	
Sept	67	75	54	41	
Oct	24	7	13	48	
Nov	11	13	11	14	
Dec	12	7	12	9	
Total	274	255	243	263	136



New Members

July 2008

Azalea Women Center

Dr. Michael Sharon
2704 N. Oak St. Bldg K
Valdosta, GA 31602
(229) 242-8888
OB/GYN

Christian Montessori School

Michelle Gardner
1701 North Patterson Street
Valdosta, GA 31601
(229) 561-5809
SCHOOLS

Arthur Herndon Company Real Estate, Inc.

Dedra Hughes
1100 N Patterson St
Valdosta, GA 31601
(229) 244-1992
REAL ESTATE

Crown Wealth Management

Steven Schramm
4370 Kings Way Suite E
Valdosta, GA 31602
(229) 247-0850
INSURANCE

Bodywork Professionals

Natalie Miller
1601 N Ashley Street #77
Valdosta, GA 31602
(229) 333-8033
MASSAGE

Chris Greaves

Chris Greaves
738 Lawson Farms Road
Hahira, GA 31632
(229) 292-3653
ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Choices for Life of GA, LLC

La' Trina O'Neal
2200 N. Patterson Street
Valdosta, GA 31602
(229) 244-1707
HEALTHCARE-MENTAL HEALTH

Liberty National Life Insurance Company

Doug Henthorn
P O Box 616
Sparks, GA 31647
(229) 242-0661
INSURANCE



New Members

July 2008

Liberty National Life Insurance Company

Jeffrey Terry
509 N Patterson Street Suite 309
Valdosta, GA 31601
(229) 242-0661
INSURANCE

Office of Senator Johnny Isakson

Jody Redding
P O Box 1330
Moultrie, GA 31776
(229) 322-2274
GOVERNMENT

Personalized Health Care

Tiffany Hand
207 Northside Drive
Valdosta, GA 31602
(229) 244-0038
HEALTHCARE-PHYSICIANS

Shipping Unlimited

Elana Moorman
2904 N Patterson Street
Valdosta, GA 31602
(229) 244-5833
MAILING/SHIPPING/
PACKAGING SERVICES

Valdosta Coaching Network

Daren Waters
3426 Burkardt Drive
Valdosta, GA 31605
(229) 630-0940
MOTIVATION/INSTRUCTION

Valdosta State University Foundation, Inc.

John Crawford
1500 N Patterson Street
Valdosta, GA 31698
(229) 333-5939
ORGANIZATIONS/NON-
PROFIT

Verizon Wireless

Teri Peters
1602 Norman Drive
Valdosta, GA 31601
(229) 333-9830
CELLULAR PHONES

July 2008 - 15

July 2007 - 13

July 2006 - 10

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Leading Communities.™



Dues Account Status Report July 2008

<u>Billing Period</u>	<u>Accounts</u>		<u>Collection Rate</u>
	<u>Receivable</u>	<u>Collections</u>	
Current	\$40,072.24	\$18,817.35	47%
Previously Collected for current month	_____	\$8,377.50 _____	21%
Total Current	\$40,072.24	\$27,194.85	68%
1-30 Days	9,305.22	2,944.00	32%
31-60 Days	8,794.55	993.75	11%
61-90 Days	5,321.48	122.50	2%
91-120 Days	5,556.68	535.00	10%
120+ Days	<u>13,389.30</u>	<u>848.75</u>	6%
Subtotal	\$82,439.47	\$32,638.85	40%
New Members	\$2,665.00	\$2,665.00	
Total	<u>\$85,104.47</u>	<u>\$35,303.85</u>	41%

Dues Account Status continues →

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Dues Account Status continues

Previously collected for current months:

April	0.00
May	0.00
June	8,377.50
Total	<u><u>\$8,377.50</u></u>

Pre-Paid Dues for future months:

August	7,253.75
September	4,782.50
October	0.00
Deferred Revenue	<u><u>\$12,036.25</u></u>

Other Information:

Direct Debit Accounts to Date	74
Online Billing Accounts to Date	14



Write-Offs July 2008

Name	Join Date	Drop Reason	Amount
Black Crow Media, LLC	05/31/2001	Nonpayment of Dues	\$980.00
Construction, Painting & Repair, Inc.	12/18/2000	Nonpayment of Dues	\$250.00
Dr. Donna J. Cunningham	12/12/2006	Requested Cancel	\$85.00
Deployed Resources	08/16/2006	Requested Cancel	\$240.00
K & J Environmental Mobile Cleaning	09/15/2006	Nonpayment of Dues	\$240.00
Kid's Footwear	09/15/2006	Nonpayment of Dues	\$240.00
La Banderas Mexican Restaurant	07/23/2002	Requested Cancel	\$250.00
Nationwide Appliance Sales, Inc.	09/30/2006	Nonpayment of Dues	\$240.00
Office Depot	08/09/2006	Nonpayment of Dues	\$290.00
Orkin Pest Control	12/01/1994	Out of Business	\$320.00
Regional Emergency Medical Services	10/28/2002	Nonpayment of Dues	\$250.00
			\$3,385.00

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Write-Offs

July 2008 Summary

Summary	Month #	Month \$	YTD #	YTD \$
Budget Restrictions			4	\$430.00
Business Sold			3	\$670.00
Consolidated Business				
No Benefit Seen				
Member Deceased				
Member Moved			4	\$495.00
Member Retiring				
Nonpayment of Dues	7	\$2,490.00	29	\$8,961.70
Out of Business	1	\$320.00	28	\$3,568.50
Other				
Requested Cancellation-No Reason	3	\$575.00	25	\$3,389.18
Unhappy/Angry				
TOTAL	11	\$3,385.00	93	\$17,514.38
Write-Offs 2007	12	\$1,815.00	133	\$26,249.22



CHAMBER 101:

How to get the most out of your
Chamber membership

2008 Attendance Sheet

Month	1 st Invitation	2 nd Invitation	Attended
Jan. 9 th	14	27	8
Feb. 6 th	11	75	8
Mar. 5 th	19	56	9
Apr. 2 nd	12	45	7
May 7 th	21	37	12
June 4 th	10	34	7
July 9 th	22	44	8
Aug. 6 th			
Sept. 10 th			
Oct. 1 st			
Nov. 5 th			
Dec. 3 rd			
TOTAL	109	318	59

July 9, 2008 invitation list for CHAMBER 101
consists of members that joined from
Dec. 16, 2007 – May 15, 2008 (2nd time invites) &
May 16 - June 15, 2008 (1st time invites)



CHAMBER 101:

**How to get the most out of your
Chamber membership**

Board Members:

Please join us for an informative CHAMBER 101. Come and help Myrna and staff welcome our new members to the Best Chamber in Georgia.

Wednesday, Sept. 3, 2008

8:00 am - 9:00 am

Chamber of Commerce

For more information call 247-8100

I would like to attend:

The **CHAMBER 101** is designed for the new members to meet the Chamber staff as well as the Board of Directors and to give new members the opportunity to learn more about what the Chamber has to offer their business.

Board Member are asked to attend at least three (3) **CHAMBER 101** events:

The following have attended:

David Newbern (7)

Walter Hobgood (6)

Jeff Hanson (1)

Debra Tann (2)

Terri Lupo(1)

Jerome Riley (1)

MARKETING REPORT—JULY 2008

YEAR TO DATE

- Television Stories: **25** (23 in 2007)
Radio Presentations: **57** (26 in 2007)
Print Articles: **35** (41 in 2007)
Presentations: **15** (14 in 2007)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

PRINT

- GBBPC competition recapped in Tifton Gazette

RADIO

- 2009 GBBPC on Talk 92.1

BUSINESS EXPANSION DIVISION

RADIO

- MetroOne on Michael Jetter Show

PRINT

- VDT—Charles Landry Luncheon previewed (2)

MEMBER SERVICES DIVISION

TELEVISION

- WALB—Mid Year Membership
- WCTV—Mid Year Membership
- WALB—5 Star Designation

RADIO

- Newstalk—5 Star Designation
 - Talk 92.1—Membership
- Talk 92.1—Ambassadors Committee

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION DIVISION

RADIO

- DRUGS DON'T WORK—Talk 92.1

PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIVISION

PRINT

- VDT—Legislative Overview Luncheon

TELEVISION

- WALB—Legislative Overview Luncheon
- WCTV—Legislative Overview Luncheon

RADIO

- Black Crow—Legislative Overview Luncheon

AMBASSADOR REPORT—JULY 2008



Wingate by Wyndham
2010 W. Hill Avenue
(229) 242-1225



Christian Montessori School
1701 North Patterson Street
(229) 561-5809



AJ Caribbean & American Groceries
2029 N. Ashley Street
(229) 219-7951



Equipment Parts Supply
3974 Inner Perimeter Road
(229) 244-0016



Crittenden Cleaning Services, LCCS
(229) 292-9333



Alzheimers Association
415 Cowart Avenue
(229) 888-7676



Rental Depot
(229) 883-5777



Westside Elementary School
2470 James Road
(229) 316-1805



Talk 92.1
118 N. Patterson Street
(229) 561-7547



Maggie's
1733C Gornto Road
(229) 293-1393



Addie Cobb Golf Academy
(229) 560-2668

Divas Apparel
1715 Norman Drive
(229) 245-7890

Ribbon Cuttings for July: **12 (6)**
Groundbreakings for July: **0 (0)**
Business After Hours for July: **1 (0)**
Early Bird Breakfasts for July: **0 (0)**

2008 Ribbon Cuttings: **60 (54)**
2008 Groundbreakings: **4 (0)**
2008 Business After Hours: **3 (4)**
2008 Early Bird Breakfasts: **2 (2)**

UPCOMING EVENTS

August 26—Business After Hours, U.S. Press
5:00—7:00 PM
1628-A James P. Rogers Drive

September 11—ConnectTECH Innovation Expo
5:00—7:00 PM
James H. Rainwater Conference Center

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Cordially invites you to the
**2008 Salute to
Manufacturers Early
Bird Breakfast**

featuring



Michael Thurmond
Commissioner of the
Georgia Department of Labor

Thursday, November 13, 2008

7:30-9:00 a.m.

James H. Rainwater Conference Center

Call Katie Boles at (229)247-8100 to RSVP

Please Join Us for a

Combustible Dust Meet-N-Greet

With
John Oxendine
Insurance Commissioner

Friday, August 29, 2008

7:00-8:00 a.m.

Valdosta-Lowndes County
Chamber of Commerce

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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For more information
contact Katie Boles at
(229) 247-8100 or
kboles@valdostachamber.com

Economic Development Division Reports



**Terri Lupo
(Vice Chairman)**

VALDOSTA - LOWNDES COUNTY
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Regional Report – July 2008

	Lowndes	Region	Total (YTD)	July 2007 (YTD)
Clients				
Startup	5	5	10 (140)	N/A
Existing	14	1	15 (84)	“”
Returning	17	2	19 (N/A)	“”
General Info	20	3	23 (54)	“”
Developer/Realtor	2	0	2 (19)	“”
Overall	58	11	69 (393)	33 (243)
Resources				
ABC's	6	2	8 (167)	(97)
Demographics	14	3	17 (90)	(100)
Mosaic	1	0	1 (6)	(4)
Traffic Counts	1	0	1 (14)	(13)
Mailing Lists	31	0	31 (156)	(47)
Retail Lease Trac	1	0	1 (3)	(14)
Loan/Grant Info	0	3	3 (4)	(9)
Outcomes				
Business Established	1	1	2 (10)	(8)
Business Expanded	0	0	0 (3)	(2)
Chamber Member	5	1	6 (19)	(12)
Web Site Activity				
Hits			1,081 (23,758)	N/A
ABC Downloads			2 (25)	“”

1 Hour -on-One Way to Success

Professional Consultants Program

	July 2008 Report Month	Quarter	Total Year To Date
Consulting Hours			
Accounting	1	1	10
Legal	2	2	16
Banking	0	0	0
Financial Planning	1	1	1
Org. Development	1	1	3
Marketing	5	5	23
Web Design	0	0	1
Insurance	0	0	1
Development / Planning	0	0	2
Architecture	0	0	0
Computer Networking	0	0	1
Mediation Services	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Overall	10	10	58

	Quarter	Year
Goals		
Consultation Hours	19	75
New Consultants	2.5	10

New Consultants Recruited (YTD) 6



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

Monthly Activity Report
Period: July 2008

	<u>This Year</u>	<u>Last year</u>	<u>Cumulative</u>
Advertising leads:	0	0	342
Web site hits:	N/A	51,393	1,623,782
Web site sessions:	N/A	5,646	189,324
Web site leads:	15	19	1,213
Brochure leads:	0	0	20
Other TCH leads:	1	1	200
Quitman-Brooks Chamber leads:	0	0	27
Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber leads:	1	1	187
Lakeland-Lanier Chamber leads:	0	0	1
Other source leads:	0	0	1,490
Total leads active:	17	21	3,338

Relocations (households): 235 Lowndes: 198 Brooks: 21 Lanier: 12
2008 Relocations: 18
States inquiring: 47
Relocations from: FL: 123, GA: 31, NY: 14, AL: 2, CA: 6, CO: 4, IL: 3, MI: 4, VA: 3, IN: 1,
MD: 2, ME: 1, OR: 1, AZ: 1, UT: 1, NM: 2, MA: 1, TN: 4, NJ: 3, MN: 1, LA: 3, MS: 5, NJ:
1, NC: 1, NH: 1, TX: 3, UN: 2
Newcomers sources: TCH – Web site/Call in/Brochure: 151, B-Q Chamber: 6, V-L
Chamber: 28, L-L Chamber 0, Advertising: 1 other: 44

Economic Impact

Annual Income: \$ 33,605,000
Annual Spending: \$ 8,460,000
Liquid Assets: \$ 98,720,000
Indirect Jobs Created: 470
(average according to industry standards)

Hometown Happenings

THE SOUTH GEORGIA RETIREE
PREMIER NEWSLETTER

Monthly Publication
Volume 6, Issue 8

Attention Newsletter Newcomers:

Triple Crown Hometowns is a retirement development partnership of the Chambers of Commerce of Lowndes, Brooks, and Lanier Counties. We would like to offer you our assistance as you relocate and get settled in your new hometown. We hope you will take advantage of our invitation to come learn more about what South Georgia has to offer to you in retirement. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Don't forget to take note of our investor listing and use it as a resource when planning your visit or relocation.

To find out and/or receive more information about Triple Crown Hometowns and the South Georgia region, contact us toll free at 1-866-Retire2 (866.738.4732) or visit our website at www.georgiaretire.com.

In This Issue

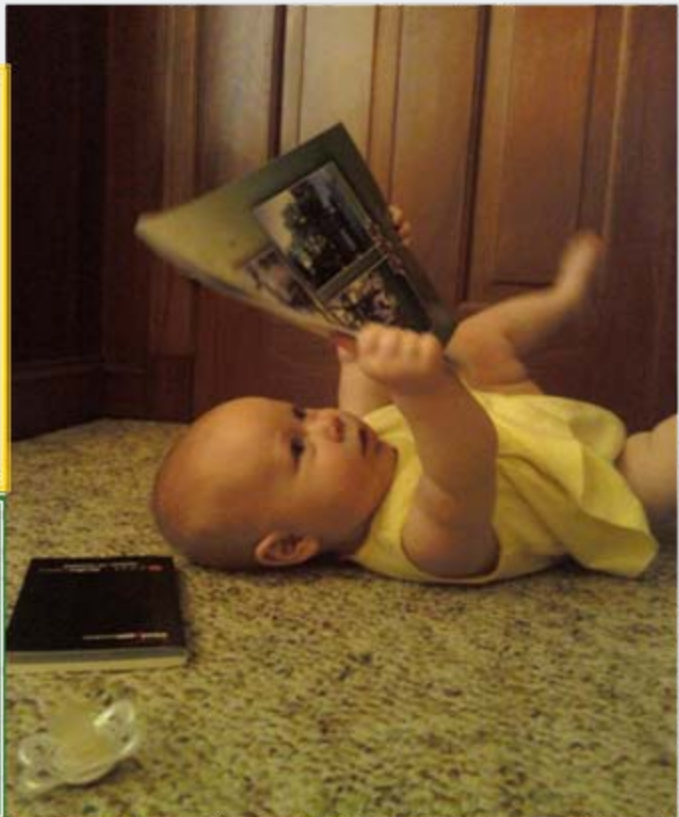
Order New Retiree Guide
—
Valdosta Named Titledown USA
—
Flatlander Frolics
—
V.S.U. Learning in Retirement
—
Relocation Services
—
Triple Crown Investors

Retiree Newcomers

Please contact us when you relocate and supply us with your new contact information. We would like to welcome you to the community and present you with a newcomer GIFT!

(229) 247-6706 or

astokes@georgiaretire.com



It is never too early to look for a retiree destination! Sophie can't walk or talk but she knows it is never too early to plan for retirement as she "reads" the

Triple Crown Hometowns Retiree Guide Magazine,
Retirement Living, South Georgia Style.

Request your 2008 copy now!

[FREE Retiree Guide click here](#)

Financial Consultant: How to Cut the Cost of Coastal Insurance

WHERE *to* RETIRE

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2008
Display until November 30

8 Bargain Finds Now

Relaxed, Fun-Loving
Pine Island, FL

Towns With Great
Trails for Cycling

Places That Welcome
You — and Your Pet

The Berkshires, MA:
Arts in the Country

Elko: Nevada's
Cool North

Old World Charm
In Natchitoches, LA

*Jennifer and Bruce Wilson
of Natchitoches, LA*

US \$4.95/CAN \$5.95

By Janet Groene

Valdosta

Southern Georgia area has retirement on its mind, with diverse cultural, outdoor activities and low taxes

Carl Bleier is up to his neck in volunteerism, golf and grandkids. But it wasn't always this way for the 62-year-old one-time international executive who retired to Valdosta, a small city in southern Georgia, in 2004.

"I'm not retired. I'm rewired," says Carl with a grin. He lived all over the country and traveled worldwide before he founded his own consulting firm in Valdosta and then retired for a second time. "It's not about me anymore. It's about giving back," he says.

"Carl and his wife, Shelly, are exactly the kind of retirees we hope

to recruit," enthuses Alison Stokes, coordinator for the three-county Triple Crown Hometowns Retirement Development Partnership. The group was founded after community leaders realized the importance of diversifying beyond an economy that relied heavily on agriculture and a military base. "Our area has the amenities needed to attract active, affluent, well-educated retirees who have a sense of community, belonging and giving," Stokes says.

Now couples like the Bleiers are elated to find that their adopted hometown yields exciting new discoveries every day. "We're a household of four generations of women," explains Carl, whose mother lives with the family and whose daughters also relocated to Valdosta, adding a couple of grandchildren to the happy mix. Carl and Shelly, 58, find endless things to do with the young folks, from fishing to children's golf clinics. They

also take advantage of an excellent adult day-care center where Carl's mother, an Alzheimer's patient, can participate in activities two or three days a week.



Valdosta boasts distinguished examples of historic architecture, including the 1906 McKey Building downtown.

Valdosta took its name from the estate of a Georgia governor, George Troup's Val d'Aosta, which was adapted from the name of a region in Italy. Until recent years, the city was just an overnight stop on Interstate 75 for Florida-bound retirees. Now southbound retirees are pausing to take a longer look at the area, often finding exactly what they were seeking. Meanwhile, the flow of northbound retirees has grown to a flood of hurricane-weary Floridians who are leaving the state. They check in with real estate companies, eager to return if and when

they sell their Florida homes in a difficult market. Home sales in the Sunshine State may be sluggish, keeping some would-be escapees from buying in the



SCOTT WATSON

Valdosta area, but local real estate agent Pat Miller finds sales in her area remarkably stable. "Last year at this time, the average home stayed on the market 215 days before selling; this year it's 98 days," she says. "In the 13 years I have been in real estate here, growth has seen a steady rise — not just in numbers, but in variety. Developers' offerings range from garden homes and condos to lavish four- and five-bedroom homes in luxury golf club communities."

Now the area is getting its first gated



The Turner Center for the Arts comprises six galleries, a theater and classroom facilities. Above: The Crescent, the restored neoclassical mansion of a U.S. senator, is now the Valdosta Garden Center. Below: Carl and Shelly Bleier enjoy the area's golf offerings.

CITY OF VALDOSTA



BOB SEIBEL PHOTOGRAPHY

community for active adults ages 55 and older. Southern Landing, 15 minutes south of Valdosta and just north of the Florida border in Lake Park, is being built from the ground up for aging in place. Prospective residents are expected to be able to view model homes by the start of the winter season, and a sales office was to open by the end of the summer.

While communities of this type are commonplace in nearby Florida, the concept is late in coming to the Valdosta area. That gives Southern Landing the advantage of having the newest technology in building materials, environmentally sensitive infrastructure, the latest energy-saving homes and the trendiest activity centers.

There will be an indoor pool, spa, teaching center, activity and hobby rooms, old-fashioned front porches and a back-alley system that keeps garbage bins and garages away from

pretty streetscapes. While interest will center on community pools, an amphitheater and other developed amenities, Hayden knows residents will also put high value on wilderness areas offering bird-watching, fishing and 4.5 miles of wooded hiking trails.

Bob and Beth DeVan went online to research retirement havens after Bob retired from 20 years with Caterpillar Inc. in Peoria, IL. Tired of severe winters, sweltering prairie summers and high taxes, they wanted to take a closer

doctor, dentist and bank are just a minute away."

Beth, 66, adds, "The Sam's Club is handy too, and the supermarkets are wonderful. Best of all, our taxes are a third of what we paid in Illinois."

The DeVans see some downsides here, including seasonal gnat invasions and low wages. Their son had hoped to relocate with them but gave up the idea after finding that jobs paying \$17 an hour in Illinois offered only \$7 hourly in south Georgia. The

ment community. While researching another city, Bill was overheard asking about golf, and a bystander suggested he check out Valdosta, which hadn't been on the couple's radar at all. They sent for an information packet and were impressed that it contained a letter signed personally by the mayor.

Devoted Valdosta boosters now, Sandy, 67, works at the chamber of commerce while Bill, 70, is a starter and arranger at one of the area's golf courses. Stone Creek is a golf commu-



Downtown Valdosta offers dining and shopping in an inviting pedestrian setting.

look at Florida, Georgia and Alabama. They requested an information packet from Triple Crown Hometowns, came to see the area for themselves and were happily shocked to learn their house in Peoria sold soon after they left on their search for a retirement locale.

Suddenly their retirement dream was a reality and they needed a place to park it. They chose a three-bedroom home in a pleasant Valdosta subdivision and waded headlong into church and volunteer work, two senior clubs, travel to the area's historic sites and Learning in Retirement courses at Valdosta State University.

"Coming from a large city, we're delighted with how close everything is here," says Bob, 69. "Our pharmacy,

DeVans believe fulfilling part-time jobs for retirees are abundant, however. Bob found work in a local bookstore and also has taught a computer class at VSU.

"The university is experiencing tremendous growth, and that means employment opportunities at all academic and nonacademic levels," reports VSU spokeswoman Mary Gooding.

Career paths for Bill and Sandy Prentiss — she was a medical administrator and he was a national sales manager — took the couple all over the United States. After 13 years in Charlotte, NC, where they found winters longer and colder than they liked, they looked southward for a retire-

nity with a championship course; Kinderlou Forest Golf Club, surrounded by estate homes, hosts the South Georgia Classic golf tournament. The city also has a country club with a private golf course in a neighborhood of exclusive homes. The 18-hole Francis Lake Golf Club will be handy for residents of the new Southern Landing.

All three couples — the Prentisses, DeVans and Bleiers — looked for a community offering cultural advantages, and they found it in Valdosta. In addition to the university, with its outstanding music, fine arts and dance performances, the city is the home of the Peach State Summer Theatre, a professional summer stock company that performs in the VSU Fine Arts

VALDOSTA, GEORGIA

Population: 45,529

Location: Valdosta is in south-central Georgia, 228 miles south of Atlanta and 120 miles northwest of Jacksonville, FL.

Climate: High Low

January 62 38

July 92 70

Average relative humidity: 73%

Rain: 53 inches annually

Snow: Rare

Cost of living: Below average

Housing cost: The average sales price of single-family homes in Lowndes County was about \$107,000 during the 12 months ending in July 2008, according to the Georgia Multiple Listing Service.

Sales tax: 7%

Sales tax exemptions: Groceries and prescription drugs

State income tax: For married couples filing jointly, the rates go from 1% on the first \$1,000 of taxable income up to 6% on taxable income above \$10,000 (plus \$340). For single filers, the rates are graduated from 1% on the first \$750 of taxable income to 6% on taxable income above \$7,000 (plus \$230).

Income tax exemptions: In 2008, residents age 62 and older can exempt up to \$35,000 in retirement income; up to \$4,000 of that amount can be earned income.

Estate tax: None

Inheritance tax: None

Property tax: The rate ranges from \$24.95 to \$31.37 per \$1,000 of assessed value (or \$45.16 in the largely commercial downtown district), with homes assessed at 40% of market value. Property is revalued every Jan. 1. Yearly tax on a \$107,000 home would range from about \$1,068 to \$1,343 (or \$1,933 downtown), without any exemptions.

Homestead exemption: For owner-occupied primary residences, there is a \$2,000 exemption off the assessed value for some components of the property tax. Additional income-based exemptions may be available for those age 62 and older.

Personal property tax: Motor vehicles are taxed annually at the same tax rate as for homes, with vehicles assessed at 40% of fair market value.

Religion: The area has more than 200 churches representing Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths.

Education: Continuing-education courses are offered through Valdosta State

University, whose programs extend through the master's-degree level. Courses are also available at the Senior Citizens Center, the Center for the Arts, libraries, churches and South Georgia Medical Center.

Transportation: Public transit is being planned in Valdosta. Meanwhile, there are private taxi companies and Lowndes Transit, a personalized service for seniors, which is fee-based, with several rate and payment options. Atlantic Southeast Airlines, a Delta Connection carrier, flies to Atlanta three times a day from Valdosta. Jacksonville International Airport is two hours away. Valdosta has Greyhound bus service, and Jacksonville has an Amtrak station.

Health care: South Georgia Medical Center in the heart of Valdosta is a full-service hospital with 185 medical personnel and a total of 2,300 employees. Serving a wide area of Georgia and north Florida, the facility is the home of the Pearlman Cancer Center, Dasher Heart Center, a diabetes management center, extensive neuroscience services and more, including a newly reorganized emergency room with trauma center. Walk-in clinics are located downtown and on the city's south side. Out-patient services, now part of the medical center, will soon have its own building nearby. Smith Northview Hospital, on the city's fast-growing north side, has 31 private inpatient rooms, 24 private outpatient rooms, five operating rooms and four intensive-care units.

Housing: According to Pat Miller, an agent with Cooper Real Estate, the area offers a wide variety of housing, ranging from condos under \$70,000 to mansions for millionaires. **Southern Landing**, (888) 831-0101, is a new planned community for residents 55 and older located 15 minutes south of Valdosta. Homes are expected to start in the mid-\$200,000s. **Stone Creek**, marketed by Century 21, (229) 241-8817, is a gated golf community with about 300 homes built of 700 planned; prices range from \$219,000 to \$1.5 million, with available lots priced from \$63,900 to \$135,000. In the **Kinderlou Forest** gated golf community, (229) 219-2361, homes recently were priced from \$319,900 to \$989,000, with lots offered at \$40,000 to \$110,000. **Knights Mill**, sold by

area real estate agents, is a neighborhood of homes priced from \$218,900 to \$314,900 with lots available from \$42,500. **Branch Point**, where builders have purchased all lots, offers homes priced at \$120,900 to \$152,000. **Langdale Place**, (229) 247-4300, is a 107-unit rental develop-



ment offering independent-living suites, assisted living and respite care. West of Valdosta in Quitman, the **Presbyterian Home**, (866) 643-6191, offers all levels of retirement facilities ranging from independent living to skilled nursing care.

Visitor lodging: Each Valdosta exit off I-75 offers a choice of popular chain motels, including a pet-friendly LaQuinta Inn & Suites that serves a hot breakfast buffet and complimentary evening cocktails, \$105-\$170, (800) 531-5900. Three Days Inn locations are priced from \$40 or \$60, (800) 329-7466. At the Courtyard by Marriott, which is within walking distance of a large mall and multiplex movie theater, rates start at \$109, but weekend discounts may be available, (229) 241-1301. A new Hilton Garden Inn will open in late 2008, (877) 782-9444.

Information: Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce and Triple Crown Hometowns Retirement Development Partnership, 416 N. Ashley St., Valdosta, GA 31601 (for mail, P.O. Box 790, Valdosta, GA 31603); for the chamber, (229) 247-8100 or www.valdostachamber.com, and for the retirement program, (866) 738-4732 or www.georgiaretire.com. Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center and Tourism Authority, 1 Meeting Place, Valdosta, GA 31601, (800) 569-8687 or www.valdostatourism.com.

Building. The Valdosta Symphony Orchestra offers classical and pop concerts, and there are chamber music and choral groups.

The city's showplace, The Turner Center for the Arts is made up of six art galleries, a superb gift shop and rooms for cooking classes, free yoga sessions and art instruction. The center's auditorium is the home of an annual Presenter Series of Broadway-style shows. The Dosta, an original movie palace downtown, has been restored to serve as a home for Theatre Guild Valdosta. Year-round performances feature local players.

The city outgrew its historic Carnegie Library and built a new, full-service regional library, allowing the classical Carnegie building to be turned into a history museum. Indoors, it houses local and regional historical relics and records that attract an international audience of researchers interested in genealogical and Civil War history. Outdoors are displays that trace local history starting with a replica American Indian home site. Local history is depicted through artifacts and plants such as sawgrass, cotton and sugarcane.

"Kids love the museum, especially the bright red caboose and an old school bell they are invited to ring," says Lacy Adams Dixon, director of convention and tourism sales for the Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center and Tourism Authority.

Enthusiastic grandpa Carl Bleier agrees that Valdosta has plenty to keep kids busy. One of his grandchildren's favorite spots is a theme park, where seniors get a \$5 discount on the \$45 daily admission, but most locals buy season passes. For less than the cost of a one-day ticket at Walt Disney World, area residents buy a season "passport" at Wild Adventures that includes rides, parking and admission to big-name concerts. "It's a tremendous savings for local residents. They buy for themselves to take advantage of the concert series, then they get free admission when they're entertaining visitors," Dixon explains.

Continuing-education opportunities for seniors span the spectrum from credit and audit courses at VSU (including master's degree programs) to fee-based and free courses of all

kinds. The university's Learning in Retirement classes are open to members who pay \$45 per term to take as many courses as they wish. Three LIR terms are offered September through May, covering varied topics including computers, opera, creative writing and current events. Members also participate in field trips.

Taxpayers voted to provide county seniors with their own building, and the impressive Senior Citizens Center has a card room, hobby and crafts rooms, a library, billiards and a large, multipurpose hall used for everything from auditorium seating to dances. Outdoors, there is a walking trail, and a new swimming pool is expected to open in the spring of 2009. In addition to local activities, members book group trips and cruises worldwide.

Valdostans love spectator sports at the high school level, and they're downright rabid about the VSU Blazers, who were 2007 Division II NCAA national football champions. The university's tennis team was the national champion in 2006, and VSU's baseball, women's softball and basketball teams also bring honor to the city. The Bleiers have season tickets to all the games.

South Georgia's benign nature has attracted settlers since Colonial times when planters began looking inland from Savannah, which was settled in 1733. Many of the old cotton plantations are now private hunting preserves famed for quail, deer and duck. The Withlacoochee (With-lah-COO-chee) River, a favorite with anglers and paddlers, winds through the area and into Florida, where it empties into the Suwannee River. The area is laced with small lakes. Saltwater anglers are only two hours from the Atlantic and are even closer to the Gulf of Mexico.

Georgia's state park system, one of the nation's best, gives seniors a discount on admission and some fees. At Reed Bingham State Park, six miles from I-75 northwest of Valdosta, visitors see an abundance of wildlife, including gopher tortoises, turkey vultures, alligators, bald eagles, limpkins, herons and indigo snakes. Two nature trails wind through a cypress swamp and sandhill area, typical habitats in southern Georgia. A 375-acre lake offers boating, water skiing and fishing for bass, crappie, catfish and bream.

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, source of the Suwannee River and one of the nation's unique wilderness areas, lies just east of Valdosta. There are four public access areas, one of them Stephen C. Foster State Park, where visitors can launch a boat, hire a boat or canoe or take a ranger-guided pontoon boat tour. The park has campsites and rental cabins. Don't miss the museum, where exhibits explain pioneer life in the swamp.

In a hired boat, you also can visit Billy's Island, where a community complete with homes, schools and hotels thrived during the era when giant cypress trees were taken out of the swamp by train. Nothing remains except a cemetery where headstones remember four generations of one family who saw the swamp go from wilderness to logging boomtown to wilderness again.

The DeVans point out that historic treasures and other interesting places lie at all points of the compass from Valdosta. You'll hear about nearby Moody Air Force Base (a plus to military retirees who can take advantage of base facilities), Lake Park with its giant discount mall and quaint little Hahira (hay-HI-rah) with its yearly Honeybee Festival.

Besides Lowndes County, where Valdosta is the county seat, the Triple Crown Hometowns program includes Brooks and Lanier counties, where retirees will find smaller towns that offer quiet Sun Belt retirement life within easy reach of Valdosta's city amenities. Quitman is the seat of Brooks County, an agricultural area offering strawberries, blueberries, peaches and peanuts. Lanier County, where Lakeland is the seat, is an outdoors haven with lakes and a national wildlife refuge.

Jacksonville, FL, with its international airport, cruise port, world-class museums and lively nightlife, is two hours away.

"We were looking for nice people, a nice climate and no cold weather," emphasizes Bob DeVan. "We found all these here and much more. We plan to spend the rest of our lives basking in Southern hospitality." WJR

Janet Groene is a writer in Live Oak, FL.

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- ✓ **Task Force to Study the Impacts of School System Organization on Economic Development in Our Community**

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President Report:

Myrna Ballard

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Chairman's Report:

Walter Hobgood

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Next Meeting Date:

**Thursday, September 18th
10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
@ Country Inn & Suites**

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Meeting Adjourned