

GACCE

GEORGIA ASSOCIATION of CHAMBER of COMMERCE EXECUTIVES

■ DECEMBER 2009



Chairman's Corner

Chip Cherry, CCE
President
Greater Macon Chamber

What I love about the holiday season has nothing to do with gifts and good food. I love that we make time to spend time with our families and friends. We celebrate our blessings, and many of us find ways to help those who are less fortunate. In short we focus on what is right, rather than what is wrong.

I realize it has been a tough year for many of you and life sometimes throws us curve balls. My hope for you this holiday season is that you can focus on your blessings and look forward to a prosperous new year!

May God bless you, one and all!



Wayne County – The Chamber recently launched their Buy Local campaign to coincide with the holiday shopping season.

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EVENTS CALENDAR



GACCE Staff Clinic

March 16-18, 2010
Douglasville, GA

Don't miss this great training opportunity for your staff! Registration material will be sent in January.

December 3

Holiday Membership Breakfast
Carroll County Chamber

December 3

Holiday Business After Hours
Harris County Chamber

December 4 – 6

Christmas Parade & Tour of Homes
Hart County Chamber

December 5

20th Annual North Georgia Mountain
Christmas Parade, Chatsworth

December 10

Forward Carroll Sponsor Breakfast
Carroll County Chamber

December 10

Network Luncheon
Gilmer County Chamber

December 11

Small Business Boot Camp
DeKalb Chamber

December 12

Breakfast With Santa
Chatsworth-Murray County Chamber

December 17

Holiday Business After Hours
Camden County Chamber

December 23

The Night Before the Night Before
Hart County Chamber

PAST CHAIR ARTICLE

Thankful, Blessed, and Hopeful

Saralyn Stafford, Executive Director
Georgia Academy for Economic Development
2000 - 2001 GACCE Chair



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all my Chamber friends!

Once again, I've been given the wonderful opportunity to write the Past-Chair's article for December. This is such a treat because it makes me stop for at least a few minutes and think about why I am thankful, blessed and hopeful - instead of thinking about the next deadline, which probably sounds familiar to you as well.

First of all, I am so very *thankful* to still have a job. I realize this is not the case for so many people right now, so I'm also thankful to know that each and every one of you are working hard to help retain and create jobs in your communities with your existing business programs, retail promotional activities, small business education series and all the other amazingly creative ways that Chamber people find to help businesses prosper.

We are all *blessed* to live in Georgia. Among our many assets are dedicated leaders at the local, regional and state level. The natural beauty and variety of the State and the great people I'm privileged to work with are at the top of my blessings list as well. At the very top of my list are my husband and daughter, who love me no matter what and put up with my crazy schedule.

I am *hopeful* for the New Year and an economic recovery to get us back on the road to

prosperity. There are still some difficult days to come, but there are finally some signs that things may be turning around as well. (We need to get that sales tax revenue up, so invite all your out-of-state friends and relatives to shop in Georgia for the holidays!)

We all have a big opportunity this coming year, and that's the 2010 U.S. Census. Georgia has a lot to gain if we can achieve a complete count next year. Hopefully you are all involved in a Complete Count Committee at the local level. If you aren't, check out the U.S. Census Bureau website – www.2010census.gov – and look at the Partners tab to see what's involved. We have a State Complete Count Committee, appointed by Governor Sonny Perdue and co-chaired by DCA Commissioner Mike Beatty and Workforce Development Director Debra Lyons, and they have begun their work. Their website will be up and running soon at www.census.georgia.gov as another resource for you, and will have information on the committee members and what they have planned as well.

I am very hopeful that we'll do a better job of getting our population counted this coming year – and with your help, I know we will!

Blessings to you, your families and your communities.

Membership Retention & Sales Workshops

Chip Cherry, Greater Macon Chamber, and Pam Carnes, Cherokee County Chamber, are each hosting **Pete Woodham's Membership Retention And Sales Workshops** in early December.

These "nuts and bolts" sessions are designed to give you retention and sales programs that have been used successfully in other chambers.

The North Georgia sessions, hosted by Pam, will occur on **December 7 and 8** and the Central Georgia sessions, hosted by Chip, will be on **December 10 and 11**, at their Chambers.

Registration is only \$175 per session with discounts for multiple attendees and sessions. Lunch is included and features a "Best Practices" session.

Space is limited, so please contact Pete today for information or a registration form - peterwoodham@carolina.rr.com. (704)392-2569



■ CHAMBER FOLKS

New Staff Member Announced at Dalton-Whitfield Chamber

The Chamber/Joint Development Authority is pleased to announce the hiring of **Elyse Cochran, CCE**, as Senior Vice President of Economic Development. Elyse formally served as President/CEO of the Polk County Chamber/Development Authority, Cartersville/Bartow County Chamber and Department of Economic Development and Catoosa County Chamber/Economic Development Commissioner. She most recently served as President/CEO of the Gaston (NC) Regional Chamber. Welcome back Elyse!

New Executive for Okefenokee Chamber

Paula Amari has been named the new Executive Director of the Chamber.

Sandy Springs Chamber Executive Visits China

Chamber President **Sheri Wilburn** accompanied the City of Sandy Springs and a delegation from the business community on a economic development mission to China in November. The group traveled to Taicang City just north of Shanghai to meet with city officials and prominent business people with an interest in developing business relationships. During the trip the City of Sandy Springs confirmed their friendship city status with Taicang.

Resignation at Sylvester-Worth County Chamber

Hollie Jones has resigned as President of the Chamber effective December 1 due to her upcoming marriage and relocation to Florida. We wish Hollie all the best! Anyone interested in applying for the open position may contact the Chamber at (229) 776-7718.



■ CHAMBER UPDATES

Albany Area Chamber

Catherine Glover, President/CEO

The Chamber held a one-day phone-a-thon to add to the larger campaign underway to raise money for the Albany-Dougherty Economic Development Commission. It only took the 18 volunteer callers one day to surpass their goal of \$50,000, and they are still making follow-up calls. Current amount raised to date is \$52,575.

A delegation of 20 Chinese educators and administrators arrived in Albany in October to tour Albany Technical College, Andrew College and Darton College. The delegation was from Hangzhou, China, a city with a population of 7 million. The community school leaders and education administrators want to learn how their community schools can serve the community better, how to attract residents and businesses in the community to support the schools, and other issues regarding community and "technical" school management.

It was a slice of the good life as the Marines and civilians gathered in November at Doublegate Country Club to tee off for the semi annual Salty Sandbagger Golf Tournament. The tournament ended with a new twist ... a tie. The Marines will keep the trophy for the first half then follow-through with the plan and drive it over to the Chamber so they can proudly display the trophy.

The Chamber conducted three listening sessions for the Compass Project, a business-centric community outreach initiative. During the listening sessions small businesses owners, community leaders, and others were able to express their feelings and desires on important issues for the future growth of the area's business community. Through the listening session findings the Chamber hopes to holistically assess business needs in the region they serve and to retool programs and services the Chamber currently provides to best meet the needs of businesses throughout Dougherty County and beyond.

The Legislative Affairs Committee of the Chamber hosted the first bi-monthly Lunch with Leaders in November. The special guests/leaders for this inaugural event were County Commission Chairman Jeff "Bodine" Sinyard and the Mayor of Albany, Dr. Willie Adams. Both leaders answered numerous questions by attendees. The next Lunch with Leaders is scheduled for January, 2010.

Augusta Metro Chamber

Sue Parr, President & CEO

The Chamber announced the Small Business of the Year Award at their November Member



Albany – Twenty Chinese educators and administrators recently visited Albany.

Augusta Metro Chamber (*continued*)

Economic luncheon. This year's recipient is Cudos!, an awards, gifts, flowers, jewelry and stationery store in Augusta. The award is given annually to a Chamber member that exemplifies the success and commitment required to prosper in small business. Selection criteria include staying power, growth, creativity, response to adversity and contribution to the community. Senator Isakson was the guest speaker for the event.

Camden County Chamber

Christine Daniel, President

The Chamber's Annual Holiday Business After Hours sponsored and hosted by Sawyer & Associates is scheduled for December 17 and will be held at Laurel Island Country Club. The main event will again be the silent auction.

Carroll County Chamber

Daniel Jackson, President/CEO

The Chamber co-hosted the annual Farm-City Dinner honoring three local agricultural, business and community leaders. The program featured Tanner Health System's CEO, Loy Howard, who spoke on the importance of sustainable agriculture providing a local grown and marketed food source for our communities. Tanner is part of an initiative to develop a local food co-op to support the one million meals a year that it feeds its patients.

The Chamber's Women's Business Alliance recently named Kathy Yates, Georgia Power's west Georgia Area Manager, as 2009 Professional Woman of the Year.

The Chamber will host its annual Holiday Membership Breakfast on December 3 featuring the local Kid's Peace program which provides residential behavioral and mental health assistance to children and teens in crisis.

The Chamber will be honoring its Forward Carroll Sponsors, those members who provide the highest levels of support for Chamber programs, with an appreciation breakfast at Longhorn, December 10.

CEO PROFILE



Yulonda Beauford

President/CEO

Clayton County Chamber

Yulonda Beauford became the President & CEO of the Clayton County Chamber in August 2008. She formerly served as the Chamber's Vice President for three years. Prior to joining the Clayton Chamber, she was Director of Membership with the Hampton Roads Chamber in Norfolk, VA and Executive Director with the Greater Miami Chamber.

Yulonda currently serves on the Board of Directors for GACCE and the United Way of Clayton County. She is a member of ACCE, Regional Business Coalition, and the Rotary Club. She serves on the Executive Committee of the UGA/Clayton County Archway Partnership Project and the Clayton County Public Schools Superintendent's Executive Advisory Council. Yulonda has also been a member of the American Football Coaches Wives Association.

She was recently awarded the Outstanding Servant Leadership Award in Business by the Coalition of Clayton County Clergy.

She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Journalism at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, FL. She is married to Terry Beauford, Assistant Head Football Coach and Offensive Coordinator for Hampton University.

The Clayton County Chamber has a staff of five serving 600 members.

How did you get into the Chamber business?
My BS is in Journalism, and I interned at my hometown newspaper, the Miami Herald as well as the local newspaper in my college community, The Tallahassee Democrat. I covered various Chamber events at both newspapers and thought the Chamber business was interesting. A family friend was employed with the Greater Miami Chamber and informed me of an opening as an Account Executive. I thought it would be a great opportunity to learn more about the Chamber, and I applied for the position. I got the job and have been in the business ever since.

CHAMBER UPDATES

Catoosa County Chamber

Martha Eaker, President & CEO

The Chamber hosted a 2010 Legislative Briefing luncheon in November. Senator Jeff Mullis, Senator Don Thomas, Representative Jay Neal and Representative Tom Dickson presented a panel on issues that will be on the 2010 Legislative Agenda. From this presentation the Chamber Legislative Committee and Board of Directors will develop the Chamber's 2010 Public Policy statements.

Chatsworth-Murray County Chamber

Dinah Rowe, GCCE, President

The 20th Annual North Georgia Mountain Christmas Parade will take place December 5 and will feature the theme of "When Christmas Comes to Town."

The Chamber will be holding its annual Breakfast with Santa event, December 12. Kids attending the breakfast will get to have their photo made with Santa.

Dalton-Whitfield Chamber

Brian Anderson, President & CEO

Leadership Dalton-Whitfield is celebrating its 25th anniversary year. One of two themed celebration events was held in October. The theme was Denim and Diamonds and was a fun-filled event for those in attendance. The second themed event will be held in March, and it will honor the program Founders with a Founder's Ball. Twenty five years of developing community leaders is an incredible accomplishment.

DeKalb Chamber

Leonardo McClarty, President

In efforts to support small businesses in their 2010 preparations, the Chamber and the University of Georgia's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) will be offering an all day intensive Boot Camp. The sequence of seminars and workshops are designed to help entrepreneurs acquire the necessary skills to



Macon – The Chamber recently held a very successful Business to Business Expo.

DeKalb Chamber (continued)

manage their businesses during tough economic times, and prepare their businesses for an economic recovery. The Boot Camp will take place December 11 at the Porter Sanford III Performing Arts & Community Center.

The Chamber's 72nd Annual Meeting & Gala will take place January 28 at the Crowne Plaza Ravinia.

Gilmer County Chamber

Alan May, President

The Chamber's Network Luncheon is scheduled for December 10 at Harrison Hall.

Greater Columbus Chamber

Mike Gaymon, GCCE, President & CEO

NCR Corporation opened its new ATM manufacturing facility in Columbus, rolling out its first NCR SelfServ™ ATMs and bringing innovative manufacturing back to North America. In less than five months after announcing plans to build a domestic manufacturing facility, NCR was able to open the 350,000 square-foot facility and begin production of ATM machines for its customers.

Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle visited the area in September for an overview of BRAC and the BRAC facilities going up in Fort Benning. Col. Tom Macdonald, Garrison Commander, showed Cagle around the BRAC growth and briefed him on impact of BRAC on the region.

The Chamber's Second Annual Drugs Don't Work Symposium was held in October to celebrate National Drugs Don't Work Week, and Michael Thurmond, Georgia Commissioner of Labor, spoke to a very attentive audience about substance abuse in the workplace, how the Department of Labor is working to reduce the safety problem, and what employers can do to maintain a safe workplace.

Greater Hall Chamber

Kit Dunlap, President & CEO

Leadership Hall County and Leadership Troup County met together in Gainesville in November. The two leadership groups from Gainesville and LaGrange met for an educational program at the Featherbone Community in Gainesville. The partnership endorses life-long learning and pledges to share knowledge and expertise with each other.

The Chamber assisted in hosting the Leadership Georgia Class of 2009 for their November Graduation Program. Leadership Georgia participants enjoyed The Lodge at Lake Lanier Islands and the programs and venues in Gainesville / Hall County: The Chamber and Leadership Georgia alumni in Hall County helped coordinate the program.

■ CEO PROFILE

Yulonda Beauford

President & CEO
Clayton County Chamber

What do you like best about your job?

I enjoy working with all areas of the community and being a part of the growth within the County and the region. There is never a dull moment in Chamber work.

What's the biggest challenge you face in your community?

Losing our public school accreditation affected our economic development efforts and had a ripple effect on the quality of life in our community. Clayton County Public Schools recently regained accreditation on a probationary status. The Chamber is working diligently with our school system and various community partners to regain full accreditation status.

Who has helped you the most in becoming a successful Chamber Executive?

I credit my growth as a Chamber executive to various Chamber presidents that trained me along the way in my career. Those presidents included William "Bill" Cullom from the Greater Miami Chamber, Jack Hornbeck from the Hampton Roads Chamber and Shane Short former president of the Clayton County Chamber now with the Jackson County Area Chamber. They each afforded me the opportunity to learn all aspects of the business.

What piece of advice would you give to a new Chamber Executive?

Make sure you stay in tune and in touch with your membership and Board of Directors. As a Chamber Executive you must be visible and accessible in your community. This will keep you and your Chamber on the pulse of issues affecting membership and community at large.

As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up and why?

As a child I was hooked on the news and thought I would be a news anchor. I wanted to meet new people, cover interesting stories and travel. Well, working in the Chamber business has surely afforded me all those opportunities and much more.

■ JANUARY 2010 Newsletter

The deadline for the
JANUARY

GACCE newsletter will be
Monday, December 28, 2009.

■ CHAMBER UPDATES

Greater Hall Chamber (*continued*)

A two-day Human Resource Academy was sponsored by the Chamber in November. The eight hour seminar provided HR professionals and small businesses with current information on all facets of human resource needs. It was such a success, they will make this an annual event.

November featured the annual holiday Business After Hours for downtown Gainesville. This year's event, The Jingle Mingle, featured The Grinch and Santa, a wine tasting, carolers and Christmas music, special holiday foods, and special shopping with downtown retailers.

Greater Macon Chamber

Chip Cherry, CCE, President

The Chamber's First Annual Business to Business Expo held in November proved to be a success. Over 70 businesses participated, along with a few hundred attendees. An Expo pre-party was held the night before the event for the participating vendors, and guest speakers helped to draw in the crowd. They are excited for the potential of this growing event and have already begun the pre-planning for next year.

Educator for A Day was held in November. This event, in which the Chamber partners with the Bibb County Board of Education and over 60 community volunteers, gives members of the community the opportunity to shadow a teacher or principal for a day. This first hand opportunity lets people outside the education field get a feel for what happens in a school setting and see what they can do to contribute to education.

The Chamber's 2010 Advance, facilitated by Jim Lovett and Jimmy Patton, laid a strong foundation for the development of their Strategic Plan and Program of Work for the coming year. This two-day planning retreat allowed the Chamber to revise their Vision, Mission, and Core Values, and helped them narrow their focus as a Chamber.

The Macon Economic Development Commission and the Chamber hosted the Georgia Department of Economic Development Board Meeting. Board members enjoyed a day at the Brickyard Golf Club and toured the Music Hall of Fame, along with other historic sites in Macon. Their board meeting was held at Mercer University.

Harris County Chamber

Lynda Dawson, President

The Chamber's Holiday Business After Hours will be held December 3 at Meacham, Earley, Fowler & Andress.



Carroll – The Chamber's Women's Business Alliance honors Kathy Yates (center) as Professional Woman of the Year.

Hart County Chamber

Michele Dipert, President

The Christmas Parade of Lights will take place December 4, with the Hartwell Service League Tour of Homes taking place December 5 & 6. All the proceeds from the Tour of Homes go to fund a hardback book for every elementary child in Hart County.

The Night Before the Night Before is the Annual FREE Christmas Special at the Hart County Community Theatre which includes a Community Sing-a-long and Santa is scheduled to visit.

Henry County Chamber

Kay Pippin, President

Forty-one sophomores from Henry County's public and private high schools selected for the 2010 Youth Leadership Henry class recently participated in a series of YMCA team building activities as part of their inaugural class retreat. Counting this year's class, near 600 students have participated in the Chamber's Youth Leadership program since its beginning in 1995.

The infamous Maytag Repair Man made an appearance at the grand opening of the Whirlpool Corporation's regional distribution center in McDonough. He mingled with Chamber representatives who were on hand to celebrate the opening of the largest industrial build-to-suit in Atlanta history. The 1.5 million square foot facility will distribute Whirlpool, Maytag, Kitchenaid, Jenn-Air, Amana and Gladiator brand appliances to the southeastern United States and represents a \$75 million investment in Henry County.

As part of the Chamber's Small Business Council's Survive and Thrive 2009 Fall Series, four courses on Social Media and Technology were held in October and November. Over four weeks, businesses learned how these new marketing outlets and Search Engine Optimization can benefit their bottom line.

GACCE exists to provide exceptional services to its members in the areas of professional development, information, and networking opportunities, and to advocate the local chamber's role in economic and community development.

■ GEORGIA CHAMBER

Get Your Tickets Now – Annual Dinner and Eggs & Issues Breakfast

Number-one rated weekend television host and best-selling author Mike Huckabee will be the featured speaker at the Georgia Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting Dinner on **January 11** at the Georgia World Congress Center. Huckabee's good-natured personality, combined with his knowledge of important issues to the business community, will make this year's dinner a don't-miss event!

The following morning, **January 12**, the Chamber will host its popular Eggs and Issues Breakfast – your chance to learn about what's on tap for the upcoming legislative session. Governor Perdue, Lt. Governor Cagle, and Speaker of the House Glenn Richardson have all been invited to speak at this event.

To purchase tickets, visit www.gachamber.com/januaryevents.

Become a Member of GBAN

The Georgia Business Action Network (GBAN) is a great way to stay informed about the many federal and state issues that could have a strong impact on the business community - and with the upcoming legislative session approaching, now is the time to become a member!

GBAN, the Georgia Chamber's grassroots effort, was created to enhance our efforts to ensure Georgia is a place where business will grow and flourish. Members of GBAN receive alerts, updates, and calls-to-action throughout the year about issues important to the business community.

Becoming a member of GBAN ensures the voice of business is heard. To find out more information about GBAN and to sign up, visit www.gachamber.com/GBAN.



■ CHAMBER UPDATES

LaGrange-Troup County Chamber

Page Estes, President

The community has been featured in local, state, and national media with Kia Motors Manufacturing of Georgia rolling out the first car as production began in full swing in November.

Troup County now boasts three college campuses with the official grand opening of the Columbus State University satellite in West Point. The other two colleges acquired new presidents this year and both spoke at the chamber's November Early Bird Breakfast meeting about their plans for each institution.

The Chamber's annual trade show was the biggest yet with 60 vendors (capacity) drawing hundreds of people. The event included the "Taste of Troup" and Longhorn Steakhouse was voted the Peoples' Choice. They received a plaque to display and a \$250.00 award.

The LaGrange-Callaway Airport held a ribbon cutting to celebrate the completion of extensive renovations to their terminal.

Milledgeville-Baldwin County Chamber

Tara Peters, GCCE, President

To help keep retail dollars in the community, the Chamber is launching a new campaign called "3 On The 30th" that encourages local residents to shop at three local merchants on the 30th of each month. The promotion will also give shoppers the opportunity to win gift certificates valued at \$25 or more at each participating Chamber merchant. The program is open to all retailers who are members of the Chamber and will kick off with the traditional holiday shopping season.

Swainsboro-Emanuel Cty Chamber

Bill Rogers, Jr., President

Sixteen businesses and individuals took advantage of the Chamber's on-going small business development initiative when they gained valuable information on internet marketing. Presented by Calvin Close, the presentation was held at the Chamber building.



Henry County – The Youth Leadership Henry class recently completed their class retreat.

Swainsboro-Emanuel Chamber (cont.)

The presentation was offered at no charge and covered topics ranging from "why sell on the internet" to "advertising on the internet for free." The presentation covered the dramatic rise in the internet, the reasons shoppers use the internet, and was followed by questions and answers. The seminar will be held again early next year.

Wayne County Chamber

John Riddle, President & CEO

The Chamber and Industrial Development Authority have teamed up to provide a Business News section in the Press-Sentinel. The section will appear monthly and will be focused exclusively on news for the business community. Each issue will have a calendar of business related events for networking and training, as well as opportunities for involvement in the Chamber. It will also provide highlights on economic development efforts being made to increase jobs through the recruitment, retention and expansion of industry and business in the community. Residents will be seeing a new slogan a lot in the future: "Our business is helping your business." However, it's more than just a slogan... it's a commitment. A commitment to: promoting Chamber members; elevating the role of economic development in the success of our community; nourishing the entrepreneurial spirit; and helping create a better environment for business to thrive.

The Chamber has launched a "Buy Local" campaign aimed at encouraging citizens of Wayne County to shop at home first in an effort to help strengthen the local economy. The effort was organized in time for holiday shopping but will be an ongoing campaign to encourage hometown shopping throughout the year. A new logo was developed and unveiled on the Chamber lawn in October.

■ GACCE Membership Council

The next meeting for the **GACCE Membership Council** has been set for:

Friday, December 4, 2009

The meeting will be held from 10:00am to 2:00pm at the Greater Macon Chamber. Any GACCE member in good standing interested in Membership topics may attend. Lunch will be provided and the meeting is free of charge.

Contact **Beth Morrison** with the Dalton-Whitfield Chamber if you have any questions. You can contact Beth at morrison@daltonchamber.org or at (706) 278-7373.

■ GEORGIA TECH EII

Georgia Tech Helps Marietta Janitorial Company Land Government Contracts

In 1996, Toney Sellers, a 20-year veteran of the U.S. Navy, decided he wanted to start a janitorial company. Unique Cleaning Service, Inc. began with commercial clients, and by 2000, had branched into the federal arena. Over the past nine years, Unique Cleaning's government contracts have grown from one to more than 60, a feat Sellers attributes partially to Georgia Tech's Procurement Assistance Center (GTPAC).

GTPAC – part of the Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute – provides no-cost assistance with government procurement to any company licensed to do business in Georgia. Last year, GTPAC conducted seminars in Albany, Atlanta, Augusta, Carrollton, Columbus, Gainesville, Rockmart, Savannah and Warner Robins. The center assists companies with all aspects of federal, state and local government procurement processes, including solicitation analysis, proposal preparation, pre- and post-award counseling, and quality and accounting systems. Procurement counselors also analyze whether companies have the potential for participating in the government procurement process.

For more information on how Georgia Tech EII can help businesses in your area, please contact Nancy Fullbright at 912-963-2509 or nancy.fullbright@innovate.gatech.edu

■ Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education

Georgia Partnership Report Focuses on Middle, High Schools

The Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education has published a new report that describes the status of secondary education in the state, an issue which directly impacts the quality of our state's workforce. *Achieving Excellence in Secondary Education: Georgia's Unfinished Business* assesses where our middle and high school system currently stands and where it needs to improve.

For the thousands of students enrolled in Georgia's public secondary schools – and for their families, their communities, and their future employers – the value of a high school diploma cannot be understated. Signifying the seamless progression and success through the middle and high school years, the diploma opens the door to a lifetime of opportunity. High school graduates have not only the skills and knowledge necessary to enter college or the workforce, but also the educational foundation that will produce benefits throughout their futures.

Across the state and across sectors, leaders in Georgia recognize the importance of excellence in our public secondary schools and have refocused efforts to improve our secondary education system. In recent years Georgia has made great progress, as evidenced by the increase in the high school graduation rate of nine percentage points over the last five years.

Yet as we recognize the many miles Georgia has trod in a journey toward educational excellence, it is incumbent on all stakeholders to realize that our work has merely begun. Other states are working just as hard as Georgia is to improve. If we are

truly going to catch and surpass these other states to become the nation's leader in student achievement and secure our future as a competitive state in the global economy, then we must continue our collaborative and innovative work to improve the opportunities and outcomes for our students.

Writing in the report's foreword, Georgia Partnership President Dr. Steve Dolinger says, "The paradox of Georgia's public education is that despite the exemplary models of teaching and learning found in so many schools and systems, our state has been unable to shake its national reputation as a persistent laggard.

"The mounting frustration at our seemingly slow pace of progress has begun to chip away at community trust and support for public education. Our state's investment in public education is the most effective strategy we can use to guarantee the economic success of our communities and the lifetime opportunities of our citizens."

Please visit the Partnerships website at www.gpee.org to download a copy of *Achieving Excellence in Secondary Education* and read about the strategies that can help Georgia drive improvements in our public schools.



GEORGIA PARTNERSHIP
FOR EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION



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