

Upcoming Events

Board Meeting

DATE: January 25 at 10 a.m.

LOCATION: NARCOG Board Room - Decatur

EDAA Winter Conference

DATE: January 31- February 2

LOCATION: Montgomery, AL

Agency Contacts

Robby Cantrell
Executive Director
rcantrell@narcog.org

Kim Dove
Director of Administration
kdove@narcog.org

Justin Graves
Director of Aging
jgraves@narcog.org

Joey Hester
Director of Planning
jhester@narcog.org

Crystal Julien
Director of Finance
cjulien@narcog.org

Falguni Patel
Director of Transportation
fpatel@narcog.org

ON THE WEB

www.narcog.org

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook:
facebook.com/narcogal

LinkedIn:
linkedin.com/company/narcogal/

Craft Days with Seniors

North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments (NARCOG) has partnered with participating senior centers for crafts and activities during December. NARCOG initially held a craft day at the Turner-Surles Senior Center in November to create ornaments for the NARCOG-sponsored Enchanted Forest tree in Decatur, Alabama. This event had roughly 25 par-

ticipants making ornaments.

Because of the event's success, NARCOG Aging Director, Justin Graves, reached out to the Region to see if senior centers would be interested in participating. Multiple centers created ornaments either for themselves or to add to their center's tree. Roughly 125 seniors participated in crafts in Hanceville, Holly Pond, Fairview, West Point, Col-

ony, and Cullman.

Seeing these events' success, NARCOG will continue to host activities for all 22 senior centers in the Region in 2023. The plan is to visit three senior centers, one from each county, a month. Different activities will be held, including seasonal and holiday crafts, paintings, and games. The overall goal is to improve participation in the senior centers.



SCSEP Changes Senior's Life

Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is a community service and work-based job training program for seniors. SCSEP provides part-time community service training positions to low-income individuals 55 and older. Participants work an average of 20 hours a week or more and are paid the

highest federal or state minimum wage.

NARCOG has received grants for this program for many years through the Alabama Department of Senior Services and the Center for Workforce Inclusion, Inc. (the Center). NARCOG's SCSEP Coordinator, Daffney Harris, works tirelessly to help

35 SCSEP participants, 27 on a federal grant and eight on a state grant, find self-sufficiency through work. This program can be life-changing, and one particular story stands out.

Continued on Page 3

Robby Cantrell | Executive Director

North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments | PO Box C • 216 Jackson St. SE • Decatur, AL 35602
256-355-4515 | rcantrell@narcog.org

Public Transit Interest Survey

NARCOG Transit strives to provide reliable transportation to the Decatur community. It's understood that reliable and safe transportation is essential for individuals to stay independent and healthy in their community.

Currently, NARCOG Transit serves the Decatur urban area. Rides can be scheduled at least 24 hours

in advance through the Transit office, and fares are \$2 for a one-way trip. NARCOG is continuously looking for new ways to improve transportation for our community.

NARCOG Transit has created a Public Interest Survey for the general population in Decatur. The community's feedback on this survey is essential to better under-

standing what services this community may need. Some examples of community needs include weekend transportation, online booking, online payment, and fixed routes, buses operated over a set course on a regular schedule. To view and complete the survey, [click here](#) or scan the QR code.



'Tis the Season of Giving

NARCOG recently completed its Annual Holiday Drive, providing homebound seniors with blankets and NARCOG goodies. The original goal was to collect enough blanket donations for 423 individuals by November 30th, 2022. Beginning in the middle of October, email blasts and social media posts were sent out to the community introducing the Annual Holiday Drive. Many schools in the Region chose this initiative as their Christmas service project, a factor that made this drive successful.

With the support of the communities throughout Cullman, Lawrence, and Morgan counties, NARCOG collected over 800 blankets! The drive officially ended on November 30th with a final count of 754 blankets. However, donations continued

trickling throughout December, pushing the goal number into the 800s. Blanket bags were created on November 30th for NARCOG Case Managers to take with them during home visits in December with the help of many team members around the office. The goodie bags included blankets, pens, calendars, Area Agency on Aging pamphlets, and the insulated bags themselves. In addition, socks, nightlights, slippers, and other items were added to bags by Case Managers for different client needs. After making blanket bags, there was still an abundance of almost 400 blankets left to be used. Many of the extra blankets were distributed to nursing home clients and Hands Across Decatur in preparation for the below-freezing weather during Christmas weekend.

Spare blankets are being held in Medicaid Waiver storage for current clients in need or future clients.

Additionally, Home Instead Inc. provided several of NARCOG's Medicaid Waiver clients with holiday gifts. Home Instead offers personalized home care services for senior citizens. This organization holds a gift-giving initiative called Be a Santa to a Senior. Seniors can fill out a wish list for specific gifts they want or need, and their list is put on a tree at specific locations. Then, individuals around the community can choose a senior from the trees and fulfill their wish list. The Home Instead Huntsville branch included over 70 of NARCOG's Medicaid Waiver clients in Be a Santa to a Senior.

Over \$750,000 in CDBG Funds Awarded

The Town of Garden City and The Town of Colony in Cullman County were recently awarded Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Funds are awarded by Governor Kay Ivey and administered by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA). Garden City was awarded

\$389,800 for sewage improvements consisting of the replacement of three existing floating aerators, along with the associated electrical components, the replacement of two baffle curtains, and the replacement of the emergency generator, along with the modernization of the associated electrical systems.

The sewer lagoon is located at 1304 Old Hwy 31, Hanceville, AL 35077.

Colony was awarded \$399,827 for street improvements consisting of the rehabilitation of approximately 8,565 feet of paving along with patching and asphalt overlay on Johnson Circle, Ward Hill Road, and sections of Colo-

ny Road. The total square yards to be paved is 14,888. The roads do not have adequate ditching along the side of the streets. There will be 8,705 linear feet of ditching required in the project area to remove water from the roadway surfaces.

FROM PAGE 1: SCSEP Changes Seniors Life

Ms. K started her SCSEP journey homeless, disabled, and with low employment prospects. At the start of her journey, Ms. K had recently moved to Alabama and worked in housekeeping at a local apartment complex until she was deemed disabled and began receiving Social Security Disability Insurance. Due to unforeseen circumstances, Ms. K also was evicted from her residence and was forced to live in her car, where she stored all her belongings. She was referred to the SCSEP Program by a Host Agency, The Link of Cull-

man County. Ms. K completed orientation and onboarding work on June 7th, 2022 and was assigned to The Link of Cullman County as an office administrator on June 8th, 2022.

While working in the program, Ms. K worked 29 hours a week to save money and received rotator cuff surgery in July. Relentless for a new life, she returned to work the day after surgery while still living in her car and completing physical therapy. Ms. K was attempting to locate housing during this time and applied with

the Housing Authority. Unfortunately, she was unaware of an outstanding balance making her ineligible.

In September, Ms. K secured a room to rent, in which she had her own bedroom and bathroom with shared spaces in the living room and kitchen. Then, in October, Ms. K called Daffney Harris and wanted a different career path. Not that she didn't enjoy her time with The Link, but her overall health improved, and she was looking to work full-time. Daffney advised Ms. K to contact the Cull-

man Career Center, a Host Agency, for assistance. The goal of the SCSEP program is for job seekers to get unsubsidized employment.

Ms. K completed an application with a local temporary agency Atco. She was hired the same day with a next-day start date. Ms. K is currently assigned to Topre Manufacturing in Cullman, Alabama, working 40 hours weekly with a pay rate of \$18 an hour. After three months, she can be considered for permanent placement with the company.

NARCOG Continues to Grow

NARCOG is continuously growing. With the multitude of services more in demand, more room is needed for new personnel. That said, the main office has run out of space.

NARCOG's Regional Planning Agency (RPA) has moved out of the main office and is now located on 2nd Ave SE. The RPA team includes the Director of Planning, a Planner/GIS, a Grant Specialist, and an Economic Development Specialist. These four have been in the new office since August. The office was recently completed with new furniture and a new

sign on the building.

NARCOG Transit has moved out of their old office further down 2nd Ave SE back to the main office. In partnership with the Morgan County Commission, the transit vehicles are stored at the former location owned by the County. The drivers, dispatchers, and administrative assistants work collectively to ensure Transit runs as smoothly as possible.

Lastly, the Med Waiver team is moving across the street to the Albany Executive Building off Gordon Street. The NARCOG Board of Directors approved this

move in early December. The office space is being renovated with new paint and new office furniture. Med Waiver is set to move into the new building at the end of January.

Although the NARCOG team has spread out from the main building to accommodate new team members, the entire team still works as a whole to positively impact the lives of individuals and the community. Different teams having the space they need ensures that our teams perform at the highest possible level.



Farmers Market Vouchers Opening Soon



Mark your calendars! Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) applications will open sometime in mid-January.

The Alabama Farmers Market Authority allows qualifying seniors to purchase fruits and vegetables at local farmers markets with an SFMNP voucher. Seniors will receive a booklet with five vouchers totaling \$30 to buy fresh fruits, herbs, vegetables,

or locally harvested honey.

Qualifying seniors must be at least 60 or older and have a certain income level. NARCOG's Aging and Disability Resource Center can help local seniors apply over the phone at 256-355-4515.

If an individual has used this program in the past, they will need their card number from the year before to re-apply for

the vouchers.

These vouchers can be used at any local farmers market. This does not include local grocery stores such as Piggly Wiggly, Walmart, or Foodmart. These vouchers must be used by November 25th of the calendar year they are received.