

### Upcoming Events

<https://www.narcog.org/news-meetings-events/meetings-events>

NARCOG Christmas Lunch

**DATE:** December 3

**LOCATION:** Decatur, AL

Morgan County Senior Lunch

**DATE:** December 6

**LOCATION:** Hartselle, AL

Cullman County Senior Lunch

**DATE:** December 18

**LOCATION:** Cullman, AL

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# 2024 Annual Holiday Drive



NARCOG is thrilled to announce the incredible success of its Annual Holiday Drive, an initiative to support our Medicaid Waiver clients. This year's drive exceeded all expectations, demonstrating the generosity and kindness of our community during the holiday season.

Our goal was to collect 452 blankets, and thanks to the outpouring of support, we gathered over 780! In addition to blankets, we received monetary donations and thoughtful holiday items like fuzzy socks and crafts, all of which will bring warmth and cheer to our clients.

We are deeply grateful to every-

one who contributed—whether through donations, volunteering, or helping spread the word about the drive. While we wish we could thank every individual and organization personally, we want to extend a special shoutout to Hatton High School, Cullman High School, and Welti Elementary School. These schools made our Annual Holiday Drive their holiday initiative, inspiring their students and communities to come together for this meaningful cause.

Thanks to your generosity, our clients will feel the warmth of a blanket and the care and support

of a compassionate community. NARCOG appreciates their partnerships in making this holiday season brighter for those in need.



**Robby Cantrell | Executive Director**

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# Thank You To Our NARCOG Veterans

This past Veterans Day, we want to take a moment to say a big thank you to the amazing veterans in our organization. Your hard work, sacrifice, and service mean so much to us and have made a big difference in our team and community.

We're grateful to work alongside you and are committed to supporting you in every way we can, both at work and in your personal life.

Thank you for everything you've done and continue to do!

Our veterans include Renae Reynolds (Air Force), Howard Williams (Marine Corps), Jerry Barnette (Army), Brenson Parks (Army), and Justin Graves (Army).



**Renae Reynolds**  
Air Force



**Howard Williams**  
Marine Corps



**Jerry Barnette**  
Army



**Brenson Parks**  
Army



**Justin Graves**  
Army

## November Anniversaries

**Denise Balentine**  
Receptionist  
2 years of service

**Latrice Smith**  
Case Manager  
3 years of service

**Cathleen McCulloch**  
Executive Assistant  
8 years of service

# Tools of the Trade Career Fair

Over 1,600 eighth graders from North Central Alabama had the opportunity to explore various career paths during the Tools of the Trade event at Wallace State Community College.

Students from Blount, Cullman, and Winston counties participated in the event, which involved hands-on activities and demonstrations that explored fields such as nursing, welding, construction, and government services.

The event was a collaborative effort between the Cullman Economic Development Agency and the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce. It featured participation from numerous local busi-

nesses and organizations eager to inspire the next generation of workers.

NARCOG was proud to participate in the event, showcasing its wide range of resources and programs to support individuals and communities across the region. The Alabama Cares Robotic Pets at the NARCOG table drew significant interest from students, who discovered how these innovative tools benefit individuals with dementia. While exploring the robotic pets, students also learned about the many other valuable services NARCOG provides.

Joey Orr, president of the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce, highlighted the impor-

tance of exposing young students to a broad spectrum of career possibilities.

"A lot of times as an eighth grader, you see what your parents are doing or what your parents' friends are doing, and that's really where it stays for [students'] imagination and where they want to go. So this is the opportunity where they can see not only what their parents do but what jobs, what careers, what industries make up the communities that they live in," Orr said.

Thanks to the efforts of the college and local organizations, students were introduced to 80 different professions.



# Lawrence County Health Fair

The Shelton Education Center at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church hosted this year's Senior Health Fair on Tuesday, November 19, from 9 to 11 a.m.

Organized annually by the Lawrence County Interagency Council, the fair brought together a

variety of agencies that provide social, senior, and low-income services throughout the county. "Our goal is to inform people about where they can get help when they need it. As a group, we can connect each other to the people who need our help. A lot

of people don't realize how many resources we have in Lawrence County," said Angela Percle, a fair organizer from the Alabama Department of Public Health.

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## Director of Planning Presents at Alabama A&M

NARCOG’s very own Joey Hester, AICP, Director of Planning and Development, recently had the honor of serving as a guest presenter at Alabama A&M University. This opportunity allowed him to share valuable insights and expertise with the next generation of planners and community developers.

Joey delivered a presentation titled “The Role of NARCOG in Project Site Design and Graphics” to undergraduate students in the

Urban Studio UPL 317 course, “Site Design and Graphics.” His talk centered on NARCOG’s planning initiatives, highlighting the organization’s role in supporting local communities through project design and grant development for community and economic growth in the region.

The session was enriched by the participation of graduate students from Alabama A&M’s Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program. To the

students’ excitement, representatives from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) joined the class as surprise visitors, adding further depth to the discussion and providing a broader perspective on regional planning and development.

Joey’s invitation to speak came from Dr. Ouf, a professor in Alabama A&M’s Undergraduate and Graduate Planning programs, who recognized the value of showcasing NARCOG’s impactful

work to inspire and educate aspiring planners.

This event reflects NARCOG’s commitment to fostering education, collaboration, and professional growth within the field of planning and development. Joey’s engagement with these students highlighted the organization’s contributions and underscored the importance of partnerships in creating thriving communities.

## New Hires



**Pertha Laster**  
Case Manager



**Christina Bowsher**  
Case Manager



## FROM PAGE 2: Health Fair

The event featured 25 tables set up by local healthcare providers and community organizations, lining the gym’s walls inside the education center. Seniors visited each table to collect information and learn about available services.

Vendor participants included Lawrence County Medical Center, My Care Alabama, Lawrence

County Extension, NARCOG, and more. Groups offering services like public transportation and support for the visually impaired were also present.

Over 150 seniors attended, many of whom were bused in from senior centers across the county. Along with valuable health resources, attendees enjoyed a patriotic dance per-

formance by the Hazlewood Elementary Dance Troupe and participated in prize raffles, making the event both informative and entertaining.



# Tennessee River Rescue Cleans Up 440 Pounds



The Tennessee River Rescue team made an incredible impact recently by removing approximately 440 pounds of trash from the banks of the Tennessee River in the Lock A/Wheeler Reservoir area of Lawrence County, Alabama. This remarkable effort not only beautified the riverbanks but also contributed to the health of the local ecosystem and the broader Tennessee River watershed.

mitment to preserving one of our region's most valuable natural resources. By clearing the area of waste, they are helping to protect the river's aquatic life, improve water quality, and ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy the beauty and benefits of this cherished waterway.

The team's dedication and hard work demonstrate a deep com-

Thank you, Tennessee River Rescue team, for taking the time to care for and restore this beautiful area.



# Hartselle To Open Free-Standing Emergency Room

Hartselle is preparing to open its highly anticipated free-standing emergency room, which will transform healthcare access in the area.

The new facility will include ten treatment rooms, such as a trauma room and a secure space for patients facing mental health crises. It will also feature an ambulance bay and a helipad to handle emergencies efficiently.

State-of-the-art diagnostic services will be available, including MRI, CT, ultrasound, and X-ray capabilities. Additionally, a 24/7 pharmacy and laboratory will ensure around-the-clock support for patients.

Hartselle Mayor Randy Garrison expressed the importance

of the new ER to the community. "In an emergency, you know, seconds make a difference, and the fact that someone could go here and get sick if they've had a stroke or heart attack, car accident, you know, we've got several plants here...if you had an accident there, those ten minutes it'll take you to get to Cullman or Decatur could make a big difference in somebody's living or dying or having long term health problems," he said.

Although it is free-standing, officials confirm that the emergency room will deliver the same level of care as a hospital-based ER.

The facility is scheduled to open its doors in January 2025.



The North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments, or NARCOG, is your local elected officials and community leaders working together to make your community a better place to live, work, play, and do business. The compassionate team at NARCOG is continuously searching for new ways to positively impact the quality of life for individuals and the vibrancy and livability of communities with the three-county region of Cullman, Lawrence, and Morgan Counties.

## AGING SERVICES

The Area Agency on Aging is part of a nationwide network of aging services under the direction of the U.S. Administration for Community Living and is funded through the Alabama Department of Senior Services (ADSS). This partnership with ADSS, working under the authority of the Older Americans Act, is to plan and carry out a comprehensive, coordinated service delivery system to address the needs of people over 60, or persons with disabilities of any age, and help them maintain their independence. Services include:

- In-Home Services
- Prescription Drug Coverage
- Caregiver Support
- Long-Term Care Advocacy
- Senior Legal Assistance
- Senior Employment (55+)
- Food Assistance
- Nutrition Options
- Health Promotion Activities
- Wellness Programs
- Medicare and Medicaid Counseling
- Hospital-to-Home Transitions
- Referral Help and Support Services (any age)
- Fraud Prevention
- Home and Community Based Services

## IMPACT GIVING

The NARCOG Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that assists older adults or disabled clients to meet the unmet needs of other programs or services. 100% of the funds or items donated are used for client assistance. The Foundation can help retrofit homes, including wheelchair ramps, steps, handrails, grab bars, purchase AC and heat resources, and provide batteries for a power scooter with monetary donations. Several different types of donations are accepted, including:

- Monetary donations
- Cleaning Supplies
- Personal Hygiene Items
- Canned or Shelf-Stable Food
- Kleenex
- Bath Tissue
- Incontinence Supplies
- Mobility Aids
- Adult Diapers
- Group and Individual Volunteering

## PLANNING SERVICES

The NARCOG Planning Department provides community and economic development planning services for our member governments and municipalities. These services support developmental efforts in our three-county region. Services include:

- Comprehensive Planning
- Downtown, Corridor, and Trails Planning
- Grant Technical Assistance and Preparation
- Grant Administration
- Geographic Information System (GIS) Mapping
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
- Rural Planning Organizations (RPO) - Rural Transportation Planning
- Zoning Ordinances and Maps
- Subdivision Regulations

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The NARCOG Transit Agency operates an urban public transportation system within the Decatur Urban Area. The purpose of this service is to provide mobility opportunities to individuals of all ages and abilities in collaboration with the City of Decatur and the Federal Transit Administration.

- Call 256-580-2088 to schedule a ride at least 24 hours in advance
- Wheelchair-accessible vehicles are available
- Each one-way ride costs \$2
- Connect Cards (prepaid punch cards) can be purchased at the main office or on a transit vehicle for \$20
- Ride Operations are Monday through Friday from 7 AM to 5 PM
- Ride Scheduling is Monday through Friday from 7:30 AM to 4 PM

## BUSINESS LOAN FINANCING

The NARCOG Accelerate Business Growth Fund is a local lending resource to support business start-ups, or expansions that result in job creation, leverage private sector investment, and reduce unemployment in Cullman, Lawrence, or Morgan Counties.

- Traditional or Microloan Funding Options
- Competitive Interest Rates
- Business financing used to purchase or renovate real estate, machinery, equipment, inventory, or working capital
- Business loan requirements must be met for consideration
- Loan amounts from \$10,000 to \$250,000