

Upcoming Events

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

Priceville Career Fair

DATE: April 9

LOCATION: Priceville, AL

Cullman Strawberry Festival

DATE: April 25

LOCATION: Cullman, AL

Lawrence County Job Fair

DATE: April 29

LOCATION: Moulton, AL

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NARCOG's Commitment to Regional Growth Highlighted at Statewide EDAA Conference

At NARCOG, we are dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of Cullman, Lawrence, and Morgan Counties. Our work—partnering with elected officials and community leaders—strengthens communities, drives economic development, and creates a better place to live, work, and do business. Recently, NARCOG Executive Director Robby Cantrell had the privilege of serving as a panel host at the 2025 Economic Development Association of Alabama (EDAA) Winter Conference in Montgomery. This prestigious event is one of EDAA's two annual gatherings, drawing economic development leaders from across Alabama and beyond. Robby joined an esteemed panel alongside Senator Greg Albritton of Fairhope and Jeremy Nails, President/CEO of the Morgan County Economic Development Association (MCEDA). Together, they discussed the critical role that Alabama's Regional Councils play in advancing economic initiatives and how strategic partnerships with these councils have led to successful projects statewide.

The Power of Regional Councils in Economic Growth

NARCOG is one of 12 regional councils that make up the Alabama Association of Regional Councils (AARC). While each council operates independently to serve local communities, their collective collaboration through the AARC creates a unified, influential voice on statewide issues and programs. The AARC, a public nonprofit organization, represents municipalities and counties across Alabama through its regional council membership. Its mission is clear:



“To expand and strengthen the capabilities of Regional Councils to serve local governments and the citizens of Alabama.”

The impact of regional collaboration was a key focus of Robby's discussion at the EDAA Winter Conference. By leveraging the strengths of the Regional Councils, Alabama communities gain access to resources, expertise, and coordinated strategies that drive meaningful progress.

Economic Development Leadership in Action

Senator Greg Albritton, a longtime advocate for economic growth, has been a steadfast supporter of Alabama's Regional Councils. Elected to the Alabama Senate in 2014 after previously serving in the Alabama House of Representatives, he now chairs the General Fund Committee, where his leadership plays a pivotal role in advancing economic initiatives.

Jeremy Nails, as President/CEO of MCEDA since 2005, oversees operations that promote business investment and industrial development in Morgan County. His

expertise in site selection, financial management, and promotional efforts has contributed significantly to regional economic expansion.

About the Economic Development Association of Alabama (EDAA)

The EDAA is a statewide network of over 500 economic development professionals, local leaders, and industry partners committed to fostering Alabama's economic growth. Through advocacy, networking opportunities, and professional development, EDAA helps shape policies that enhance business investment and job creation. Economic development is about more than attracting businesses—it's about building strong communities and ensuring Alabama remains a competitive, thriving state for industries and residents alike. As a key advocate in this mission, NARCOG remains committed to regional progress and economic vitality.

For more updates on our initiatives and impact, visit www.narcog.org or follow us on social media.

Robby Cantrell | Executive Director

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Ronette Gravitt - Nutrition



Linda Jones - Program Admin



Jeffrey Adams - Program Admin

Annual Nutrition Awareness Month - March

March is National Nutrition Month, a time to highlight the importance of making informed food choices and maintaining healthy eating habits. At NARCOG, we take this mission to heart by providing nutritious, well-balanced meals to seniors in our community. Our 22 senior centers serve hot lunches Monday through Friday, ensuring older adults have access to meals that support their health and well-being. Additionally, our home-

bound meal program delivers essential nutrition to those who may have difficulty preparing meals on their own, while our picnic meals offer a convenient option for seniors to enjoy a balanced meal on the go.

Unfortunately, each year, a growing number of seniors face food insecurity and lack access to adequate nutrition. Many older adults struggle to afford or prepare healthy meals, putting them at risk

for malnutrition and related health issues. At NARCOG, we are committed to addressing this critical need by providing meals that not only nourish the body but also support independence and overall well-being. This National Nutrition Month, we recognize the importance of fighting senior hunger and reaffirm our commitment to ensuring no senior in our community goes without a nutritious meal.

Planning Department Events and Deadlines

March 28, 2025

ADECA CDBG Public Hearing in Montgomery, AL

April 1, 2025

EDAA Legislative Reception in Montgomery, AL

April 8, 2025

AARC Legislative Reception in Montgomery, AL

April 17, 2025

Decatur State of the City in Decatur, AL

May 2, 2025 - May 3, 2025

Strawberry Festival (Lawrence County Tennessee RiverLine Community Engagement Event) in Moulton, AL



Annual State of the State Luncheon

NARCOG attended the Cullman Area Chamber of Commerce's annual State of the State Luncheon on February 14, where local legislators shared updates on key issues impacting the region and state.

Alabama Senate President Pro Tem Garlan Gudger, new Director of Constituent Affairs Randall Shedd, and Representatives Corey Harbison and Tim Wadsworth discussed legislative priorities, including proposals to grant immunity

to law enforcement officers and a tort reform package to encourage industry growth. Mental health and community well-being were also central topics.

SB2 was highlighted as a bill aimed at tightening regulations on electronic nicotine delivery systems, including new permit requirements and vending machine restrictions. The CHOOSE Act, an education initiative passed in 2024, was also discussed. While it provides financial

assistance for private school tuition and homeschooling, concerns remain about its potential impact on public school funding.

Prison reform efforts focus on addressing overcrowding and funding the construction of two new correctional facilities, though financial challenges persist. Workforce development initiatives, including the Working for Alabama package, aim to address labor shortages through public-private partnerships and

childcare tax credits.

Legislators are also considering pharmacy benefit management reforms to ensure fair reimbursement for pharmacies, especially in rural areas. Competing bills seek to eliminate pricing structures that harm independent pharmacies.

NARCOG remains engaged in these discussions, recognizing their impact on economic growth, public services, and community well-being.



Amy Proctor

Brittany
Yarbrough

Carlie Morrison

Christina
Bowsher

Conley Bush

Courtney Nolan
Beasley

Crys Minter



Dana Dobson



Davitta Phillips



Destiny Miller



Frances Palmer



Heather Lee



Hope Griffin



Jacklyn Bing



Jan Kennedy



Jana Gourley



Jordan Studdard



Julie Campbell



Julie Nalbach



Katie Hernandez



Lesley Mason



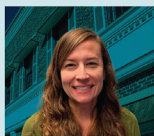
Lesli Price



Leslie Flores



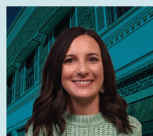
Michael Bolden



Monica Shannon



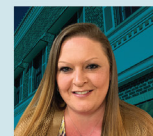
Neal Nash

Nicole
Compagner

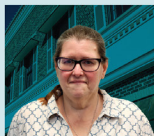
Perth Laster



Seketa Shaw



Sheree Tanksley

Tammy Madison
Ryberg

Teresa Keene



Warren Taylor


NARCOG
 POSITIVELY IMPACTING
 PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES

Social Work Appreciation Month

March is Social Work Month, a time to recognize and appreciate the incredible dedication and compassion of social workers who make a difference in the lives of others every day. At NARCOG, we are incredibly grateful for our Medicaid Waiver Team, whose hard work and commitment ensure that individuals receive the care and support they need to live independently and with dignity. Their efforts go

beyond just services—they provide advocacy, guidance, and a compassionate presence for those navigating complex healthcare and social systems.

Medicaid Waiver Division Manager Davitta Phillips comments, "I count it both a privilege and an honor to work with such a great group of Social Workers and Case Managers. Their hard work and intentional care for the community

we serve is refreshing and I appreciate their dedication to this team."

To our Medicaid Waiver Team, thank you for your tireless dedication, empathy, and positive impact in our community. Your work does not go unnoticed, and we appreciate the meaningful difference you bring to the lives of those you serve. This month, and every month, we appreciate you!

NARCOG Begins HSCTP Plan Update

The NARCOG Planning Staff is excited to announce the update of the Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan (HSCTP) for our three-county region. This important effort will include refreshing service area maps, updating demographic data, reviewing funding sources, and gathering the latest transit provider information. Additionally, we

will assess current challenges and opportunities in transportation to develop strategies that address unmet transit needs and enhance mobility for our communities.

Public input is a vital part of this process, helping to shape the future of coordinated transportation in our region. To ensure strong community engagement, Public Involvement

Meetings will be held in conjunction with the annual RPO Committee Meetings this summer. We encourage all transportation stakeholders to join us—meetings will take place in Cullman on June 5th and in Hartselle and Moulton on June 11th. Your input is invaluable, and we look forward to seeing you there!

March Anniversaries

Davitta Phillips
 Medicaid Waiver Division
 Manager
 1 year of service

Lesley Mason
 Case Manager
 2 years of service

Teresa Daniel
 Program Admin Assistant
 3 years of service

Atul Patel
 Transit Driver
 3 years of service

Falguni Patel
 Director of Transportation
 5 years of service

Daffney Harris
 SCSEP Coordinator
 11 years of service



Celebrating Our Team: Special Lunch in Appreciation

At NARCOG, we know that our incredible team's dedication and hard work drive our success. To show our appreciation, we recently hosted an Employee Appreciation Lunch to celebrate and thank each staff member

for their commitment to serving our community. It was a wonderful opportunity to take a break, enjoy great food, and recognize the daily efforts that make a difference.

For lunch, we enjoyed a de-

licious meal from Chick-fil-A, sharing good food and even better company. It was a small token of gratitude for the big impact our employees make. Whether through direct service, behind-the-scenes work, or

team collaboration, every role at NARCOG plays a vital part in improving the lives of those we serve. We are truly grateful for our team's dedication and look forward to continuing our mission together!

Hartselle State of Public Schools New Hires

On February 25, 2025, Hartselle First Methodist Church hosted the annual State of Our Schools address, bringing together parents, educators, business leaders, and community members to discuss Hartselle's current state and future of education.

District leaders provided updates on educational programs and ongoing initiatives aimed at enhancing student outcomes. Key topics included school funding, teacher retention, and the importance of collaboration between schools and local organi-

zations. The discussions emphasized how schools are preparing students for success and the vital role of community involvement in supporting educational efforts.

Attendees were encouraged to support the schools through various means, such as volunteering and advocacy. The address also highlighted the impact of education on the local workforce, underscoring the connection between quality education and community prosperity.

Future plans for the district were discussed, including infra-

structure improvements like a partial roof for Hartselle Junior High School and ongoing work at Hartselle High School. These developments reflect the district's commitment to providing quality facilities that support effective learning environments.

Overall, the event served to inform and inspire Hartselle community members, fostering a shared commitment to the continuous improvement of Hartselle's educational system.



Destiny Miller
Case Manager



Teresa Keene
Case Manager



Jordan Studdard
Case Manager

State of Morgan County Forum

On February 27, 2025, NARCOG attended the annual State of Morgan County Forum hosted by the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Decatur Riverfront. The event gathered over 280 attendees, including community leaders and stakeholders, to discuss the county's progress and future initiatives.

Morgan County Commission Chairman Ray Long, along with District Commissioners Jeff Clark (Dis-

trict 1), Randy Vest (District 2), and Matthew Frost (District 3), provided comprehensive updates on various county initiatives from the past year. A significant highlight was the \$7.1 million Morgan County Event Center currently under construction in Cotaco, reflecting the county's commitment to enhancing community facilities.

Additionally, plans for a new agriculture center adjacent to the event center were discussed, aiming to bolster the county's agricultural

community. The announcement of a new senior center in Falkville underscored efforts to support the well-being of the county's senior residents.

The forum also emphasized the county's strong economic health, with leaders expressing optimism about current developments and future prospects. The event served as a valuable platform, highlighting the collaborative efforts that contribute to Morgan County's ongoing success.

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