

Upcoming Events

NARCOG Board Meeting
DATE: Jan. 26 at 10 a.m.
LOCATION: NARCOG Board Room - Decatur, AL

RPA Calendar

Rebuild Alabama Act (RAA) grant applications are due Jan. 14

Economic Development Administration (EDA) American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant applications are due March 31

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Information ON THE WEB

www.narcog.org

SOCIAL MEDIA

facebook.com/narcogal

E-Center Pop-up Shop events a success

New circuit helping promote local small business, rural tourism

Local entrepreneurs are getting opportunities to showcase their wares in the Region's down-

towns.

The Decatur-Morgan Entrepreneurial Center (E-Center) debuted its Pop-up Shop Circuit this fall with a pair of successful events. The first event of the series was hosted by Cross Ties Coffee Company in downtown

Falkville, and the second was held in downtown Hanceville in conjunction with the Hanceville Downtown Merchants Association, Nolan Bradford, and the Mud Creek Festival.

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Accelerate Business Growth Fund



Accelerate making an impact

The excitement of zip lines with a scenic lakefront view sounds like a perfect vacation.

And, if you live in North Alabama, this vacation destination will not require a long



road trip.

A new outdoor adventure business is coming to the

beautiful shores of Smith Lake, in Cullman County:

Adventures at Smith Lake Zip Line Tours.

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North Courtland drainage project to prevent flooding

An infrastructure project in North Cortland, funded by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), is underway.

The project on Davis Street is helping save some residents from hardships endured from

flooding whenever heavy rainfall moves through the Tennessee Valley.

North Courtland was awarded a \$347,600 grant from the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) to help pay for this

project.

The grant application was prepared by the North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments (NARCOG) Regional Planning Agency.

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Robby Cantrell | Executive Director

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Cullman County awarded RTP grants for Stony Lonesome

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) has awarded the Cullman County Commission nearly \$525,000 in grant funds to help with renovations and equipment at Stony Lonesome OHV Park.

The two Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants, which were prepared by the North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments (NARCOG) Regional Planning Agency, awards the Cullman County Commission \$524,937 in funds for an \$840,299 total project. The Cullman County Commission will provide \$315,362 in local matching funds.

"These two RTP grants from ADECA will allow us to do much needed upgrades on bridges and trails at Stony Lonesome OHV Park," Cullman County Commission Chairman Jeff Clemons said. "By getting these grants, Stony Lonesome will continue to upgrade its facilities and be one of the premier OHV parks in the Southeast."

The first RTP grant will replace two bridges to allow vehicle ac-



cess across the creek, rehabilitate eroded or deteriorated trails, and install reflective signage and solar lighting along the trail to allow night usage while improving overall trail safety at the OHV park.

The second of the two RTP grants addresses trail construction and maintenance equipment needs, and will assist in purchasing an excavator and a four-wheel drive backhoe for use at the OHV park. "We're excited about the work

that's being done at Stony Lonesome," Cullman County Parks and Recreation Director Doug Davenport said. "These upgrades that are being done, thanks to this grant, will help the park as it continues to grow."

FROM PAGE 1: Accelerate

Assisted by an Accelerate Business Growth Fund loan from the North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments (NARCOG), this new local business is in the process of being developed, with plans to become operational in 2022, at a site on County Road 385 near Smith Lake Park.

Smith Lake Zip Line Tours is a new business that has partnered with Historic Banning Mills and Scream-

ing Eagle Aerial Adventures, which is located in Whitesburg, Ga., and is billed as the world's largest zip line adventure park.

Smith Lake Zip Line Tours is just one of many local businesses that has utilized the NARCOG Accelerate Business Growth Fund to help boost tourism and the economy within Cullman, Lawrence and Morgan counties.

Through the Accelerate Business

Growth Fund program, NARCOG has provided local businesses with loan funds totaling \$1.7 million since January 2020, leveraging an additional \$4.4 million, creating or retaining approximately 180 jobs across the region.

Loan funds are secured through the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA), Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) U.S. Depart-

ment of Agriculture (USDA) and Alabama State Bonds.

NARCOG also helped 10 local businesses secure more than \$600,000 in loans from the EDA Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES).

The EDA CARES Loan Fund was established in 2020 for existing businesses and is available through June 2022, or until funds are exhausted.

FROM PAGE 1: North Courtland

"This area is on a downhill slope, and whenever there is heavy rain, all the water drains down the slope and impacts the homes on this street," North Courtland Mayor Riley Evans said.

"Getting this grant was a blessing. This will help us direct the water back out and clear out the standing water that is creating problems for citizens."

Evans said this project was long

overdue.

"We probably needed this done when the town was incorporated back in 1981," Evans said. "The flooding is bad enough at times that it gets into people's base-

ments.

"When this subdivision was developed, there wasn't a drainage plan. But now we have a plan, and we're in the process of correcting the issue to help our citizens."

Downtown Courtland 'Heading to new heights'

North Alabama artist completes mural as downtown grows

Historic downtown Courtland has a new motto:

"Headed to new heights."

On a day when Lockheed Martin debuted a new 65,000-square foot facility at its Courtland location with a dedication ceremony, the aerospace and missile defense corporation also unveiled a new downtown mural that it commissioned.

The mural, which was painted by Huntsville artist Jessie Andrews, celebrates Courtland's rich history in U.S. Army fighter pilot training during World War II, along with Lockheed Martin's advancement in the missile defense industry.

The mural reads "Headed to new heights," and is located on the corner of Tennessee Street.

North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments Director Joey Hester was involved in the planning process



leading up to the mural's commission.

Courtland mayor Linda Peebles said the mural will be featured on the North Alabama

Mural Trail, which is promoted by the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association (AMLA), and should generate additional foot traffic downtown.

The North Alabama Mural Trail promotes a self-guided tour of more than 125 murals in Alabama's 16 northernmost counties, according to AMLA. Details about each mural and their locations can be accessed online at www.NorthALMural-Trail.org.

"We've got such a beautiful little historic town, and this just adds to the beauty of it," Peebles said.

For Courtland, the mural's motto is fitting.

New local businesses are coming to the downtown area.

Peebles said the mural is painted on a building that will eventually house a new restaurant, Daddy's Place. The new restaurant is expected to open in early 2022.

According to Peebles, another downtown business, Ms. Jane's Antiques is expected to open at full capacity once the building is refurbished.

Peebles also plans to open an eclectic gifts and souvenir shop in the former Tennessee Valley Bank building in early 2022.

FROM PAGE 1: E-Center

The Pop-up Shop Circuit is part of the Project Rebound Initiative, which the North Central Alabama Regional Council of Governments (NARCOG) helped the E-Center fund through the assistance of an \$86,880 USDA Rural Business Development Grant.

Through Project Rebound, the E-Center will coordinate with rural communities in Cullman and Morgan counties to provide special small business events intended to promote small businesses and tourism in rural small towns

Both Pop-up Shop events held this fall saw a steady flow of foot traffic from consumers who were purchasing products from local entrepreneurs.

E-Center Director of Operations Donna Whitten said more Pop-up



Shop events are being planned for this spring. These events will be held in different small towns throughout Cullman and Morgan counties.

"Our first two events were a success," Whitten said. "Having these events creates a great opportunity for our entrepreneurs to promote

their products in the community. Right now, we have some locations and potential dates that we're working on. We hope to host several more as the weather begins to warm up and people start to get outdoors."

The Pop-up Shop Circuit is a new concept that was created through a collaborative effort from the E-Center and the NARCOG Regional Planning Agency. Through the USDA grant, the E-Center purchased 10 tents to be used by local small businesses as pop-up shops.

"When we originally applied for this grant, the idea was to not only help local businesses, but also help local economies in small towns by creating foot traffic," NARCOG RPA Planner Daniel Yurcaba said. "So far, I think we've been successful in what we set out to do."