

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY NEWS

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"I'd like to take the opportunity to thank both of Chatham County's Congressmen, Representative Jack Kingston and Representative John Barrow for their help in obtaining this grant," said Pete Liakakis, Chairman of the Chatham Area Transit

Authority. "This money will go a long way in helping to enhance our public transportation system which will benefit the citizens of Chatham County."

The Federal Transit Administration provides financial assistance for transportation services planned,

designed, and carried out to meet the transportation needs of eligible low-income individuals and reverse commuters. The program requires coordination of federally-assisted programs and services in order to make the most efficient use of Federal resources.

Excellence Fund to Sponsor Forum on Charter School Models

The Savannah Fund for Excellence in Public Education will host a public forum entitled, "Charter School Alternatives: Assessing the Criteria" on Tuesday, August 19, 2008 from 4:00 – 5:30 p.m. in the auditorium of the Savannah Morning News at 1375 Chatham Parkway.

In sponsoring the forum, The Excellence Fund hopes to provide citi-

zens with an overview of and information about different models of public charter schools. Presentations will include an overview of important charter school criteria by Superintendent Lockamy, specific information on the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) and Imagine Schools plus an update on local attempts to establish charter schools in

Savannah and Chatham County.

Excellence Fund President Bill Lovett of Hussey, Gay, Bell & DeYoung said, "This forum is intended to provide information on the criteria, challenges and opportunities that may be available to our community." Presentations will be followed by Q & A.

The event is free and open to the public.

Step Up Savannah Gets Additional Funding to Support Low-wage Workers

Step Up Savannah gets additional funding to work with local businesses and government employers to improve work supports for low-wage workers. Families and Work Institute awards Savannah a second grant as part of its "Supporting Work Project"

Step Up Savannah, Inc. was notified this week it has been awarded a grant to move forward in its work with local employers to increase the number of low-wage employees enrolled in publicly funded work supports.

The Supporting Work Project, under the direction of Dale Carlson-Bebout in 2007-08, worked with the Hyatt, IKEA, Dollar Tree, St. Joseph's/Candler, Memorial Health, City of Savannah, Chatham County, The Mansion, Westin, and Goodwill Industries. She conducted almost 800 benefits screenings at these companies to assess employees' eligibility for PeachCare, the children's health insurance program, food stamps, and the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, among other benefits.

Carlson-Bebout said

that 67 percent of employees surveyed at these locations reported they did not have enough money at the end of the month to make ends meet—or had just enough money—despite working full time.

Employees surveyed also reported that inadequate transportation and childcare are the top reasons they have to miss work from time to time.

At the same time, local employers raised transportation and childcare as the top challenges to retaining front-line workers. Further, the employers reported they were unaware that their workers ran out of food regularly or had to make choices between eating regular meals and paying bills.

The Families and Work Institute, with funding from the Ford Foundation, is supporting phase two of the "Supporting Work Project" for the next 15 months. In this next phase, Step Up will focus on longer term changes, such as partnering with social service agencies to simply procedures to apply for benefits, and advocating for pre-tax bus passes.

Step Up received \$140,000 for phase one of the Supporting Work Project, one of 10 organizations in as many cities. It will be awarded \$115,000 for this next phase.

The Families and Work Institute is a nonprofit center for research on the changing workforce, changing family and changing community. Its Supporting Work Project is enabling business and governmental leaders to establish partnerships within communities to increase the number of employers that help their lower-wage employees access publicly funded work supports. These work supports can increase the spending power of workers and enable them to better support their families.

For more information about the Work Supports Project, please contact Dale Carlson-Bebout at 656-3641, or via e-mail at dcbebout@stepupsavannah.org

For more information about Step Up Savannah, Inc., please contact Daniel Dodd, director, at 644-6420 or danieldodd@stepupsavannah.org.

Savannah City Mission Creates Blog

If there were ever an easy opportunity to learn more about one of Savannah's most influential non-profit organizations, it is now. Old Savannah City Mission has created a blog, which features Executive Director Revered Jim Lewis.

"This is simply a way to make it easier for those who are interested to learn more about the Mission," Reverend Lewis explains.

"Readers can play an active role in the Mission from the comfort of their own home. This a technologically advanced way for us to get to know the community, and for us to get to know them."

Lewis says the blog is very easy to navigate. Bloggers start by going to the official Mission website www.oscm.org. In the left hand column is the "Blog" link. From there, readers can learn about everything the mission has to offer.

The blog includes The Mission's latest news, prayer requests and scriptures and much more. Plus, some portions are written in both English and Spanish. Also on the blog, Lewis specifically asks for community involvement, stating, "While you are here, give your ideas on how we can better serve the homeless and hurting in our community. We welcome your thoughts on how better to serve and if you can help us with creative fund raising, we would appreciate your input."

Lewis addresses the needs for funds because the

Mission is a privately funded non-profit organization. Many of its needs are met through local resources, so community volunteers and donations are crucial to the mission's efforts.

Lewis says, "The whole idea of the blog is to help with our visibility in the community. People can learn more by reading and participating, then they'll hopefully take the next step by making a visit to the mission to see, first hand, what we're doing and how they can help."

Old Savannah City Mission aspires to be „Savannah's Five Star Gospel Rescue Mission" with high standards, strong boundaries and clear direction. Its mission is to change lives through proclaiming the Gospel, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, rehabilitating the addict, and restoring the ex-offender. In 2007 the mission provided 122,074 meals and more than 27,000 shelter beds without one dime of tax payer funds.

The Mission is a Savannah based non-profit organization, works with a



Rev. Jim Lewis

staff of just seven employees, however, there are hundreds of volunteers who deliver services to the community's most vulnerable and needy citizens in a highly cost effective way. To learn more, log on to www.oscm.org or call Jim Lewis or Connell Stiles at 912-232-1979.

OPEN ENROLLMENT

The Odum Learning Academy

is Accepting Applications

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For additional
information, contact

Mrs. Dawn Washington
912-233-8213 ext. 25

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roosteral@peoplepc.com
or call 912-660-6106.

Deadline for Entries to Youth Songwriting Competition is Sept. 1

Sept. 1, 2008 is the deadline for entries to the third annual Youth Songwriting Competition at the Savannah Folk Music Festival. Start now with original compositions and compete for \$1,000 in prizes!

The 19th Annual Savannah Folk Music Festival, presented by the Savannah Folk Music Society and the City of Savannah's Department of Cultural Affairs on October 10, 11 and 12, 2008, will feature the finals of a Youth Songwriting Competition. The purpose of this competition is to encourage young people from Savannah-Chatham County to develop their skills in musical and lyrical expression, promote the time-honored method of storytelling by song, and recognize outstanding achievement in these efforts.

Any resident of Savannah or Chatham County who has not reached his or her

twentieth birthday by the conclusion of the competition, October 11, 2008, is eligible to participate. Only those who have won first place in the previous years of competition are ineligible to participate. Those wishing to participate must submit a song (original words and music), written in the acoustic folk ballad tradition, by September 1st, 2008 on cassette tape or compact disk. The songwriter may accompany him or herself or have one or more other individuals provide instrumental accompaniment. By "acoustic folk tradition" the competition includes story-song ballads. No percussion or backtracks, please! Only one entry per person per year.

From those entries submitted by the September 1st deadline, a panel of judges will use common criteria to select a group of finalists. These finalists will be notified and required to perform their com-

positions at an event, open to the public, at 2:00 PM on October 11, 2008. At this event, judges will select the top three submissions. Third place will receive a \$200 gift certificate from AMR Music (either Waters Avenue or Broughton Street location). Second place will receive a \$300 gift certificate to AMR Music. The first place winner will receive a \$500 gift certificate to AMR Music and will be invited to perform the winning composition the next day, October 12th during the Festival's final event, "The Concert at Grayson Stadium," along with major folk performers like Jesse Winchester.

Those interested in participating or having questions may contact Hank Weisman at the Savannah Folk Music Society by calling 912-786-6953 or writing to SFMS at 1111 B Bay Street, Tybee Island, GA 31328.





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