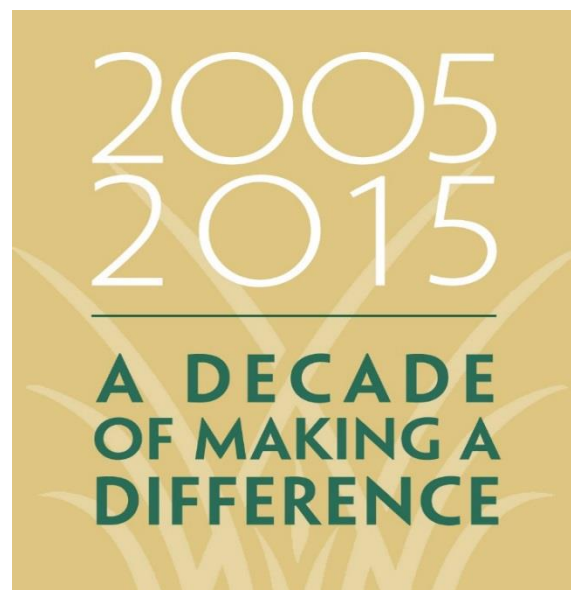


COMMUNITIES OF
COASTAL GEORGIA FOUNDATION
Summary of Findings

DRAFT FOR REVIEW ONLY



December 2, 2015

Community Needs Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To better inform its grantmaking, the Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation recently completed a community needs assessment which encompassed several exercises in data collection and analysis. Over a period of months, considerable secondary data from Camden, Glynn and McIntosh counties were reviewed and three Focus Groups were convened. While the Focus Groups sought to include representation from all three counties, none of the participants were from Camden County. As such, the qualitative perspectives represent primarily those of Glynn and McIntosh residents.

Recognizing the limitations of the qualitative data, the needs assessment provides useful insights and several priorities and themes emerge:

- Residents are “content” with their communities and feel comfortable and secure in their lifestyles. That said, there is a general sense that needs exist across the region and “more” could be done to help children, the elderly and families living at the margin.
- The data reflect communities which have greater poverty, less education, and more at-risk characteristics as compared to the state average. The challenges are exacerbated when income and education data are removed for the census tracts which represent the Islands.
- Focus Group participants identified the need for integrated educational and workforce development services for at-risk youth and their families or guardians.
- Focus Group participants identified the need for applied training in life skills, financial literacy and workforce education across all populations.
- Participants underscored the importance of information and referral services, along with transportation, to assist residents in accessing the services and jobs which are available.
- Through data and interviews, the need for economic development, to provide jobs and improve the status of young people and families, is clear and consistent.

BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

To prepare for its 2016 discretionary grantmaking cycle and to inform the work of the newly convened Coastal Georgia Partners in Philanthropy, the Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation structured two processes in the fall of 2015 to collect data on community attributes and needs. The last substantive needs assessment of the three county area (Camden, Glynn and McIntosh) had been conducted in 2009, by the Fanning Institute of The University of Georgia. That needs assessment, funded by the St. Marys United Methodist Church Foundation, was conducted on behalf of a partnership which included the Community Foundation and United Way of Coastal Georgia, United Way of Camden County, Family Connections-Glynn, and the Georgia Center for Non-Profits.

The 2009 Needs Assessment gleaned its findings from objective, secondary data (e.g., socio-economic, education, health) combined with primary data collection from two surveys, one administered to the general population and one administered to interested participants across all three counties. Responses totaled nearly 1,600 for both surveys. Findings from the needs assessment reflected differing demographic and socio-economic characteristics among the three counties, but a common interest in education, work ethic among youth, economic security, health care, and government and law enforcement. At that time, respondents listed the area’s natural beauty and small-town values as key attributes for the region.

In 2015, the Foundation took a more limited approach to its needs assessment. The Foundation, with the assistance of an intern from the College of Coastal Georgia, collected secondary data for all three counties on key quality of life indicators. (See page 7.) In early October, the Foundation hosted Matt Hauer, head of the applied demography program, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, at the University of Georgia, who presented to the Coastal Georgia Partners in Philanthropy on the characteristics of the communities. In that meeting, the 40-plus participants provided qualitative input on areas of concern which were highlighted by the data. Finally, the Foundation convened three focus groups, during the months of September, October and November with employees from Sea Island Acquisitions, LLC and King and Prince Seafood. Twenty-five employees, of varying levels and tenure, participated in those focus groups and provided both qualitative and quantitative data for use in the needs assessment.

DATA AND OBSERVATIONS

An initial set of secondary data, compiled through the Georgia Statistics System hosted by the University of Georgia, was presented in March to the Executive Council of the Coastal Georgia Partners in Philanthropy and shared with the Foundation's Board of Directors. (See page 7.) From that data, stakeholders identified key concerns in the following areas:

- Adult and Juvenile Crime, and Homicide Rates in Glynn County
- High rates of Poverty and dependency on Transfer Payments, particularly in McIntosh and Glynn Counties
- Low rates of Educational Attainment across all three counties
- High rates of Teen Pregnancy and Births to Unwed Mothers in Glynn and McIntosh counties
- An Aging Population, with percentages of persons 65 and older greater than the state average in Glynn and McIntosh

These data were eye-opening to board members and stakeholders, prompting a more thorough review of quality of life indicators at a larger gathering of Partners in Philanthropy in early October 2015.

Matt Hauer, director of the Applied Demography Program at the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, presented a wide range of population, education, economic, health and environmental data. His presentation is posted on the Foundation's website, and may be accessed at:

<http://files.ctctcdn.com/b378f82a001/60e1a552-e6b6-4d98-b100-fc02c6e72e45.pdf>

The data shared by Hauer, all secondary and all available via the Georgia Data link at the www.cviog.uga.edu website, mirrored earlier observations and expanded perspectives. Some 40 Coastal Georgia grantmaking stakeholders attended the meeting and reflected on concerns framed in the data, namely:

- Population growth has slowed in the three counties in recent years. For Camden and McIntosh, their population growth depends on natural increases (e.g., births); in-migration since the Great Recession has been negative in these counties. Through out-migration, wealthier "earners" are leaving Camden and McIntosh counties, which reflects a pattern of limited employment and economic options. Glynn's population and net income gains reflect retiree in-migration.

- In all three counties, the rate of growth for residents 65 and older is higher than all other age groups and higher than the state/national average. Camden, however, remains a fairly “young” country while McIntosh is the 5th “oldest” county in Georgia.
- Though still a relatively small portion of the region’s population, Hispanics and Other Races/Cultures are growing at a greater rate than either the White or Black populations.
- The region experiences high rates of births to unwed mothers, with Glynn and McIntosh well exceeding the state rate.
- Educational attainment rates are a source of concern, with none of the three counties reaching the state’s very low benchmark of 18% of the population with a bachelor’s degree or higher.
- Consistently, the region has had higher unemployment statistics than other metropolitan communities across Georgia. A particularly worrisome statistic for Glynn County is the 22% percent of youth (ages 16 to 24) who are neither working nor in school.
- Childhood literacy, a core focus of the Foundation for the past five years, is an area of interest. Regrettably, the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (the primary source) is more than 10 years old, 2003. Those data reflect Glynn and Camden performing better than the state, with McIntosh performing worse. Overall, somewhere between one-fifth and one-eighth of the population function with a lower than baseline level of literacy.
- Environmental data, presented from a recent CVIOG study of social vulnerability in the event of natural hazard, highlighted access, transit and economic limitations across Glynn County.
- In reviewing health care access and outcomes, the data underscore the challenges of a finite physician workforce combined with chronic diseases and socio-economic factors which negatively influence health outcomes.

From the presentation, breakout groups prioritized issues for future discussion and identified additional data needs. The groups had overarching concerns about:

- employment opportunities and workforce capacity;
- adult and childhood literacy;
- births to unwed mothers and child-rearing in fractured homes;
- youth unemployment;
- child care, quality and availability;
- crime; and
- balanced, sustainable growth to protect the environment.

The groups also highlighted opportunities which could result from broader coordination and collaborative efforts (among both funders and service providers), public-private partnerships, faith-based initiatives, school to work programs, and prioritization of focus.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus Groups were convened at the request of the Foundation by the human resources leaders at the two participating corporations, Sea Island Acquisitions, LLC and King and Prince Seafood. The Foundation requested that participants represent a full range of job classes, longevity, diversity and geography.

Participants were invited by the company, advised of the focus group opportunity, assured of anonymity, and offered complimentary lunch and time away from work.

The sessions, held on the dates noted, include participants as follows:

- September 19, 2015, 11:30am to 1:00pm, The Cloister, Sea Island – 8 participants
- October 29, 2015, 11:00am to 12:30pm, King and Prince Seafood, Brunswick – 9 participants
- November 6, 2015, 11:30am to 1:00pm, The Lodge, St. Simons Island – 8 participants

The characteristics of the 25 Focus Group participants were:

GENDER	16 Female (64%)		9 Male (36%)
RACE	9 African American (36%)	11 White (44%)	5 Other/NR (20%)
LATINO OR HISPANIC	5 Yes (20%)		20 No (80%)
COUNTY OF RESIDENCE	19 Glynn (76%)	4 McIntosh (16%)	2 Brantley/Wayne (8%)
COASTAL GEORGIA NATIVE	15 Yes (60%)		10 No (40%)
CHILDREN/GRANDS AT HOME	15 Yes (60%)		10 No (40%)

Participants represented the follow age groups: 6 (24%) were born in the 1950s, 8 (32%) were born in the 1960s, 4 (16%) were born in the 1970s, and 7 (28%) were born in the 1980s. They reported having lived in Coastal Georgia for anywhere from 1.5 years to 64 years. The total number of years of residency was 739.5, making for an average of 30 years. As noted, the majority considered themselves Coastal Georgia natives even though some might not have been born in the region.

The participant numbers were too small to allow for analysis below the aggregate level. The primary goal for the Focus Groups was to gather qualitative data; all discussion questions were open ended with no required answers. Regrettably, the Focus Groups included no residents of Camden County which speaks, in part, to the distinctive employment patterns across the region.

Participants were asked to identify the greatest strength of their communities. Most reflected that the small-town values, the climate, the environment, and Coastal lifestyle are significant pluses. People have a sense of knowing their neighbors and being safe and supported. Participants highlighted very generous communities and the importance of the faith-based networks which enhance their quality of life and provide support to those less-fortunate. In general, Focus Group participants expressed general happiness with their own home and work lives and the communities in which they lived.

Participants were asked to identify challenges in their communities. Here, the attendees spoke to their observations about the challenges faced by those less fortunate in the communities. Interestingly, the themes were fairly consistent across the three focus groups. Poverty was identified as a key challenge along with lack of transportation options, to access either employment or services. Single parent (or no parent) households are recognized concerns with particular attention on children and adolescents who are receiving little mentoring, support and discipline. Many of the participants express fear about the status of at-risk youth and frustration about the lack of clear solutions to the problems.

Participants felt that there were generous people and many services across their communities, but almost all participants felt that people did not know what services existed or how to access them. The need for a referral “guide”, service network or hotline along with some system of marketing and distribution was identified in each of the three groups. Transportation was noted as a key barrier, impacting access to employment, training and health and human services.

When asked about solutions, almost all participants reflected on the importance of K-12 education, workforce training, and development of applied skills like financial literacy and interviewing. Participants felt that educators, employers, businesses and service providers all could do a better job in helping people with life skills and communications.

Another topic which garnered considerable attention was providing services to multiple generations simultaneously. Participants noted that programs might be available to train a single mother or to engage at-risk youth, but those programs were rarely offered together. Each focus group advocated for more integrated programming to support parents/mothers/fathers/grandparents and their children in education and employment activities.

Other areas of need which the groups identified were:

- Services and supports for the elderly
- Quality, affordable day care
- Safe and walkable spaces for children to play
- Scholarship opportunities for youth, possibly offered through employers
- Homelessness
- Food insecurity
- Economic Viability and the Need for Jobs

A final exercise with the groups offered participants the opportunity to direct their own “imaginary” philanthropy into a service or field that they thought would be particularly beneficial to the community. Many of participants prioritized programs to serve children and youth, ranging from day care, parks and recreation, and educational experiences and tutoring. Several discussed ways to engage businesses in high schools to support workforce development and seamless transitions into employment. A number of participants suggested funding some type of co-located services (e.g., a family center) that would support mothers in job training while supporting their children with tutoring and education. Several participants suggested summer activities which would expose underserved children to the cultural and natural resources across the region. More programming for children and youth was a consistent theme.

Other philanthropic priorities for the Focus Group participants were: mental health services for children and families, animal welfare programs, services and supports for the elderly, faith-based services for all families, and oral health services. All groups suggested that economic development was very important, with particular interest expressed in the need to bolster Downtown Brunswick. Even residents of the Islands felt that Downtown Brunswick should have the investment necessary to become an economic asset for the region.

In addition to the qualitative findings, participants also were asked to complete a survey instrument which included questions which were identical to those asked in 2009. The tool, using a Likert scale, seeks to gauge respondents' priorities on issues that should be addressed by community leaders and/or influence quality of life. Top issues are those that two-thirds or more (17 of 25, or greater) of the respondents felt were "Extremely Important" for community leaders to address. Those were:

- Dropping out of School
- Effectiveness of the School System
- Crime
- Affordable Health Care
- Lack of Jobs
- Gang Activity
- Motivation of Our Youth

In considering a range of factors which would influence the respondent's decision to stay in the community, only medical care and housing were ranked as extremely important by a majority of respondents. Most offered that environment, education, churches, community activities, and even jobs were important but were considered within a balanced and broader perspective.

CONCLUSION

Despite the sense of an idyllic community, the data clearly highlight significant portions of the population in need, particularly children and youth. One Focus Group participant opined that residents live in a "Fool's Paradise," where those with resources see only natural beauty and a prosperous worldview when beneath the surface are crime, poverty, limited economic opportunity, and poor health outcomes.

One key asset, made clear through the Focus Groups, is the civic spirit of area residents. To a person, Focus Group participants had great insights about their communities and excellent ideas for addressing individual and family needs, in part through impactful philanthropic investment. In general, the quantitative and qualitative data prioritize the importance of education and workforce development for children and young adults while promoting a safety net of services for the elderly and at-risk populations.

Focus Group input was limited, in part, due to small numbers and the lack of input from residents in Camden County. The data reflect a slightly different experience for Camden County residents. However, feedback from local education officials and services providers reflect a need for parenting support and developmental programs for those children and families most-in-need.

Private business capacity and governmental services cannot fully address the myriad needs of the region. The non-profit sector is critically important for advocacy and service provision. Philanthropy is needed to ensure the viability of the non-profit sector, but investments need to be made wisely with a focus on efficacy and long-term impact. The Foundation's 2015 Community Needs Assessment has identified key areas of need and several priority investment opportunities. In future years, a more comprehensive needs assessment supported by a range of funding and service partners could assist in better identifying assets and deficiencies, while targeting investments and goal-setting to maximize outcomes.

COMMUNITIES OF COASTAL GEORGIA FOUNDATION
 DESCRIPTIVE DATA BY COUNTY AND STATE

Compiled Spring 2015

VARIABLE	STATE	CAMDEN	GLYNN	MCINTOSH
Arrests, Total Rate per 100,000, 2011	1084.5	1106.9	1899.6	980.9
Total Index Crime Rate per 100,000, 2011	3715.3	3206.1	5354.1	3071
Juvenile Courts, Total Commitment Rate per 1,000, FY2013	1.97	0.48	3.2	n/a
Median Household Income, Total, 2011 Model-based Estimate	\$45,886	\$50,207	\$44,238	\$34,787
Per Capita Income, 2011	\$35,979	\$32,058	\$36,619	\$23,235
Per Capita Income, % of Georgia Total, 2011		89.1%	101.8%	64.6%
Below Poverty Level, % of All Persons, 2011 Model-based Estimate	19.2%	14.7%	19.6%	21.7%
Below Poverty Level, % of Children <18, Model-based Estimate	26.6%	20.4%	31.1%	35.5%
Transfer Payments, Receipts as Percent of Total Personal Income, 2011	17.8%	18.2%	21.4%	33.3%
SAT, Average Total Score, 2010-2011	947	1026	975	819
Educ Attainment, Persons Age 25+, % Bachelors Degree or Higher, 2007-2011	17.7%	12.2%	16.1%	9.6%
% Uninsured, <65 Yrs. Of Age, All Income Levels, 2011	21.7%	17.0%	22.6%	22.5%
Housing Units, Mobile Homes, % of Total Units, 2007-2011	9.6%	15.3%	11.2%	37.3%
Hazardous Waste Sites, Number, 2013	630	2	14	2
Total Population, Estimate, 2012	9,919,945	51,402	81,022	13,839
Total Population Projection, OPB, 2020	11,326,787	63,336	89,307	16,644
Veterans, Population, 2013	774,464	7,218	7,973	1,433
Population, Rural, Total %, 2010	24.9%	31.4%	20.6%	74.3%
Population, % Age 65+, 2012	11.5%	10.2%	16.3%	20.3%
Median Age, Total Population, 2012	35.7	31.6	40.0	46.4
Child Abuse, Maltreatment Victims, Rate per 1000 Children, 2012	6.9	6.8	7.4	7.4
Child Welfare, Children in Child Care, Monthly Average, FY2012	92,980	337	849	27
Food Stamps, Monthly Avg Recipients, % of Population, FY2012	19.0%	15.5%	20.0%	18.9%
Low Weight Births, Total Rate Per 100 Live Births, 2011	9.4	7	12.1	4.8
Births to Unwed Mothers, Total Rate Per 100 Live Births, 2011	45.1	31.9	56.1	63.5
Teen Pregnancies, Total Rate Per 1000 Females 10-19, 2011	25.5	20.3	63.5	31.4
Suicides, Total Rate Per 100,000, 2011	11.6	13.9	12.4	n/a
Homicides, Total Rate Per 100,000, 2011	6.3	n/a	8.7	n/a
Source: Georgia Statistics System, University of Georgia, 2015				