

## **ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation Receives Funding from the Verizon Foundation**

The ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation recently received a \$15,000 grant from Verizon. Grant funding will be used to support existing county government led youth programs and implementing new Georgia Civic Awareness Program for Students (GCAPS).

### **Georgia Civic Awareness Program for Students (GCAPS)**

The Georgia Civic Awareness Program for Students (GCAPS) was developed by ACCG staff and county officials to address the need for increased civic involvement and awareness among our state's youth.

Georgia, like every state, has a need to establish in its youth an interest in civics and a desire to serve in the public sector. GCAPS provides a pathway for counties to address this need at the local level so that our state will produce a more informed and involved citizenry.

The objective of GCAPS is simple: to educate young citizens about the importance of being actively conscious of their local government and the opportunities available in the public sector.

The primary messages that GCAPS participants should take away from the program include:

- Understanding that county government provides diverse programs and services
- Understanding how county government works so that they can take an active role in their community's future
- Knowing the importance of being actively engaged in local government by voting, attending public meetings, monitoring government activities through the media and other informational networks and by volunteering
- Knowing that by getting involved in county government, every individual can make a difference in the community

GCAPS provides civic education by exposing high school students to the role that local government plays and by introducing them to the leaders who make local governments work. Youth are offered the opportunity to gain knowledge about their local governments through hands-on learning activities and experience the decision making process firsthand.

Not only do youth become engaged in their communities and become better informed citizens, they also learn valuable leadership skills and have the opportunity to create and implement civic awareness projects.

## **GCAPS Program Details**

Each of Georgia's 159 counties is unique, which is why ACCG has created a flexible program that can be easily modified to accommodate the demographic, geographic, socioeconomic and financial diversity of the county offering a GCAPS program.

GCAPS starts by identifying a youth development professional to serve as the Program Manager. This individual accepts "ownership" of the program and is responsible for all components necessary for its success, including the recruitment of reliable and dedicated volunteers to serve on an Advisory Committee. The Program Manager works to meet all the needs of the delegation and to make GCAPS a successful initiative in the county.

Volunteer adult advisors aid the Project Manager by organizing the program and in guiding and selecting the student participants. The Advisory Committee is composed of members of the community who have a shared interest in youth development, education and civic involvement. These individuals aid students with procedures and projects and help the GCAPS Program Manager run the program.

The program's target audience is high school students. Interested high school students who either live in the county or go to school in the county are asked to submit an application that includes essay questions. Homeschooled students are also encouraged to participate.

Once the GCAPS participants are chosen, the students spend a year in the program receiving pertinent leadership training and learning firsthand about their local and state government. Throughout the course of the program year, an emphasis is placed on three training components. The first component is a lesson on the GCAPS mission, history of the program and its goals. The next component of the program is a combination of leadership training and teambuilding. The final component to which the students are exposed is civic education. This is the component on which students spend the most time and is most critical to accomplishing the goals of GCAPS. The delegates meet and participate in hands-on activities that expose them to different aspects of government. Sample activities include: attending a board of commissioners meeting, shadowing county officials, touring county facilities, holding a mock board of commissioners meeting, hosting a county department head forum and visiting the Georgia State Capitol.

In addition to training and learning activities, students have the opportunity to create and implement civic awareness projects throughout the year for their fellow peers. A past successful project is a countywide recycling campaign where GCAPS participants lead an effort to reduce the amount of electronic waste in their particular county. GCAPS students educated their peers on the elements of electronic recycling and gathered used cell phones and computers that would have otherwise been thrown away. After completing a year in the program, GCAPS participants are recognized in an informal "graduation" ceremony.

To date, five counties have active GCAPS – Dougherty County, Effingham County, Grady County, Oconee County and Macon-Bibb County. The Chatham County Youth Commission is a GCAPS affiliate program. Stewart County and Jones County are in the process of implementing a GCAPS program. Youth ranging in age from 15 to 18 have engaged in government related activities in each of the counties. Post-program evaluations show that 100% of the students agreed that their experience was rewarding and that they had a clear understanding of the role local and state government play in the community.

## **Grant Funding Available:**

The available funds will be distributed through a competitive application process. Counties who want to start a new GCAPS program as well as counties who have county led youth programs already in place are eligible for funding.

New GCAPS program selection criteria will include: identification of a youth development professional to serve as the GCAPS program manager; demonstrated strong interest in GCAPS program implementation; accessibility to resources to allow the program to continue beyond the grant funding period.

Once a county has been selected to host a new GCAPS program, ACCG will provide technical assistance to make sure the program gets off to a successful start. Regional conferences and the ACCG Annual Conference also are an opportunity for the youth and program leaders to experience peer to peer exchanges. ACCG can offer onsite trainings and visits with the program manager and other necessary individuals.

Existing GCAPS initiatives or other county government led youth programs can apply for funding. The grant funds for existing youth/ GCAPS programs should not be used as “general funds” but for a specific purpose.

The grant selection committee reserves the right to adjust the request grant application amount when awarding.

## **ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation**

The Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) is a nonprofit instrumentality of Georgia’s county governments. Formed in 1914, today ACCG serves as the consensus building, legislative action and training organization for all 159 county governments in the state.

ACCG actively pursues opportunities to develop educational initiatives for Georgia citizens to help enhance their understanding of the roles, responsibilities and purpose of government at a local level. To broaden these opportunities and ignite greater civic engagement in this state, ACCG has created a foundation.

The ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation was created in 2007 and has been recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. The ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation is organized to support initiatives in the areas of civic education, leadership training, historic preservation and community improvement. The Georgia Civic Awareness Program for Students (GCAPS) is a program financially supported through the ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation.

## **CONTACTS**

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**APPLICATION:  
NEW GCAPS PROGRAM**

**Use this application if your county is interested in creating a new  
Georgia Civic Awareness Program for Students (GCAPS).**

The following components are needed for a successful GCAPS program:

- Strong support from the local Board of Commissioners
- Strong relationship with the local school system (public and private)
- Ability to designate a youth development professional to serve as the program manager
- Desire to promote civic awareness to youth

If the criteria above describe the setting in your county, we ask that you briefly answer the following questions.

1. Why are you interested in promoting civic awareness amongst the youth in your county?

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2. In what ways do you believe your county would be a good candidate to host a GCAPS program?

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3. The grant funding should be considered startup funds. In light of this, how would you plan to sustain the GCAPS program beyond the funding period?

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By signing below you are signifying that you have notified either the County Chairman or the County Administrator/Manager of your interest in receiving grant funding to implement GCAPS in your county.

**Application Submitted by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
TITLE / COUNTY

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Application should be returned to ACCG by mail or email:**

ATTN: Kathleen Bowen  
191 Peachtree Street, Suite 700  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
[kbowen@accg.org](mailto:kbowen@accg.org)

**\*Application Deadline: Friday, December 1, 2017 \***

**APPLICATION:  
EXISTING YOUTH PROGRAM**

**Use this application if your county has a current county government led youth program in place.**

**Contact Information:**

Youth Program Point of Contact:

Point of Contact Name / Title / Phone Number / Email Address:

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**Organization Information:**

What is the name of your current county led youth program?

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What year was your youth program created?

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Youth Program Description:

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In what ways is the county government involved in the youth program?

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**Proposal Information:**

The grant funding should be used for a specific purpose. How would your youth program use the grant funds?

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**Financial Information:**

Requested Amount:

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By signing below you are signifying that you have notified either the County Chairman or the County Administrator/Manager of your interest in receiving grant funding from the ACCG Civic Affairs Foundation.

**Application Submitted by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
NAME (Printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
TITLE / COUNTY

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

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