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## [County Leaders Graduate from The Georgia Academy for Economic Development](#) [1]

On 16 May, 2018



***Pictured above (l-r): Mickey Daniell, Georgia Power, Debbie Griggers, Larry Griggers, Tres Herin, Lauren Ryals, Richard Smith and Araina Reaves, Georgia EMC. (Not pictured: Nickie Muzafarov)***

The Board of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development announces Toombs County graduates from the 2018 Region 9 Multi-Day Training Program. Class participants represented a number of professional and non-professional economic development fields, including elected officials, public servants, business leaders, educators, and social service providers from 17 counties in Middle Georgia. The Academy provided each of the graduates an opportunity to gain a unique understanding of the complexities of economic and community development on the local, regional,

and state levels.

***Toombs County graduates at the May 16, 2018 ceremony included: Debbie Griggers, Larry Griggers, Tres Herin, Nickie Muzafarov, Lauren Ryals, Richard Smith***

Created in 1993, the Academy assembles a cross section of economic development professionals and resources to provide this training in all twelve service delivery regions in Georgia. The Board of Directors of the Academy represent public and private economic development organizations and agencies from across Georgia. Since its organization, the Academy has provided training for thousands of professional and non-professional economic developers around the state, and since 1998 the Academy has been offered annually in all twelve regions of the state. Georgia EMC and Georgia Power provide facilitators for the program, and the Georgia Department of Community Affairs provides staff support to this important program.

Georgia EMC's Vice President, Community and Economic Development (CED), Pat B. Merritt, CECD says, "Our Community Development team is proud to partner with and provide facilitation and presentation services on behalf of Georgia's electric membership cooperatives. Involved since its inception, the team's work with the Academy graduates has enhanced levels of leadership capacity and community development preparedness for continued economic development progress throughout the Region." In Region 9, CED cooperative members are Altamaha EMC, Canoochee, EMC, Excelsior EMC, Middle Georgia EMC, Ocmulgee EMC, Oconee EMC and Satilla EMC."

"Georgia Power has historically played a major role in the State's economic development. The Academy has formalized the opportunity to bring together stakeholders to share best practices, leverage expertise, and build relationships among our communities with the same goal in mind: ensuring economic growth and prosperity for our state. We are proud of the strong partnership that delivers this program in each of our regions every year," says Georgia Power Company Community Development Manager Johnna Robinson, chair of the Georgia Academy board.

"One of the goals for the multi-day regional Academies is to encourage multi-county cooperation," says Corinne Thornton, Director of the Georgia Academy for Economic Development. "Many times the participants discover the issues facing their community are the same as those facing other communities in their region, and can then combine limited resources to address the issue."

The Academy's multi-day program, taught one day a month over a four-month period, includes training in the basics of economic and community development, plus specialized segments on business recruitment and retention, tourism product development, downtown development, planning, and other essentials for community success. In addition, the curriculum features specific leadership skills such as consensus building, ethics in public service, collaborative leadership and other segments needed for effective community leadership in economic development. Local elected officials may receive certification training credits through the Association County Commissioners of Georgia and the Georgia Municipal Association for completion of this program.

The next Region 9 Georgia Academy for Economic Development will begin in February 2019. For more information on this, please contact Lynn Ashcraft at (478)484-0321 or by email at [lynn.ashcraft@dca.ga.gov](mailto:lynn.ashcraft@dca.ga.gov).

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