

THE ATHENS LAND TRUST NEWSLETTER



AUTUMN 2009 ♦ VOLUME 12, ISSUE 1

A HOME OF OUR OWN AT LAST!



685 North Pope Street, ALT's new home.

On September 9, ALT moved into our own home! As we reported in our last newsletter, **EMMANUEL EPISCOPAL CHURCH** donated the historic cottage at 685 North Pope Street to ALT for use as our office home. The cottage required extensive renovation and expansion to make it water and energy efficient, ADA-compliant, and to modernize its systems, all while meeting historic district guidelines. The building is now beautiful, and EarthCraft certified, thanks to the work of contractor **MIKE TODD** of **BAR NONE CONSTRUCTION** and ALT's **HEATHER BENHAM**. And ALT is very pleased that the large water oak next to the cottage is now designated as a Landmark Tree, thanks to **NEW URBAN FORESTRY**, who donated tree preservation work.

Owning our own office home has long been a strategic goal for ALT. It will allow us to increase our financial stability and devote more of our resources to our programs. The cottage's location is convenient for our housing and conservation clients, and we are thrilled to have such a beautiful and historically significant structure to call home.

We are now in the midst of a capital campaign to cover

the costs of renovating the cottage. The renovations included, among other things, replacing the roof, several walls, and most of the flooring; repairing the foundation; installing new wiring and plumbing; and adding an ADA-compliant bathroom. The total cost of the renovations is \$275,000. As of October, we have raised \$64,221 in donations and pledges, and we are planning to raise the remainder during the next three to five years. Read on for more about how you can help!

POPE STREET COTTAGE 103RD BIRTHDAY PARTY

Over 100 well-wishers attended a celebration marking the 103rd birthday of the Pope Street Cottage on June 12. We are grateful to the local businesses who provided refreshments, including **CECILIA VILLEVECES' CAKES**, **TERRAPIN**, and **MARTI'S AT MIDDAY**. Many party-goers brought birthday presents, in the form of donations – and one bluebird house! – for which we are very grateful. If you missed the party, it's not too late to send a belated gift! You can use our Gift Registry, which is posted on our Web site at www.athenslandtrust.org/ahomeofourown.htm#wish, for an idea of the kinds of expenses that your gift will cover.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

ALT recognized **EMMANUEL EPISCOPAL CHURCH** with our **DONOR OF THE YEAR** award for their generous gift of the Pope Street cottage at the annual GreenFest Environmental Awards ceremony on April 17 (see **GREENFEST**, page 3.) Thanks also to **DEV AND GENE WEEKS** for hosting a reception at their home, and to the **NEWLAND FAMILY FOUNDATION, R.E.M., WINTHROP FOUNDATION**, and all the donors listed on pages 6-7.

SAVE THE DATE!

ALT will host our **ANNUAL MEETING** on Sunday, Dec. 6 from 2-5 p.m at 685 North Pope Street. The meeting will also be a "Housewarming" at our new office, with entertainment and refreshments provided.

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CONTACT INFO

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www.athenslandtrust.org

MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

Our monthly meetings are held on the third Monday of the month at 7 pm in our offices and are open to the public.

FIND US ON FACEBOOK

at <http://www.facebook.com/athenslandtrust>

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Athens Land Trust is to promote quality of life through integration of community and the natural environment by preserving land, creating energy-efficient and affordable housing, and revitalizing neighborhoods.

BOARD & STAFF NEWS

HELLOS...

ALT is very pleased to have three new homeowners serving on the Board.

NIESHA BLASINGAME, a stylist at Great Clips for Hair, lives in a one of ALT's new EarthCraft homes.

SHIRLEY SMITH lives with her two daughters in another of ALT's new EarthCraft homes.

REGINALD WILLIS owns an ALT home built in partnership with Habitat for Humanity. Reggie works for the Clarke County School District, and sings with the Athens Voices of Truth.

... AND GOODBYES

ALT is grateful to our departing Board members who have served for many years. Thank you for your commitment and support!

BRENDA CRAWFORD joined the Board in 2003 when she became ALT's first homeowner, and stepped down when she recently sold her home to the next income-qualified buyer.

LATITIA FRANKLIN, a Board member of People of Hope, has provided an important perspective to ALT's Board for many years.

CLEO AND ANTWON GIVENS, ALT homeowners, are stepping down after several years of service.

BETH BLALOCK ALLGOOD, an attorney specializing in environmental issues, recently moved to Savannah to serve as Coastal Georgia Land Manager for the Georgia Conservancy.

BETH GAVRILLES, a long-time board member, has stepped down but continues to remain involved as a volunteer.

Photography in this issue courtesy of Allyson Mann, Laura Hall, Cathianne Watkins, and Beth Gavrilles.

AND THANK YOU TO...

Volunteer **DYAN HOLT** for her expert help and countless hours on our conservation projects.

Volunteer **CLAIRE COENEN** who helped in numerous ways this summer.

Volunteer **JOE O'BRIEN** of the U.S. Forest Service for his professional expertise.

JACK HUDSON for assistance with our construction projects.

ROBIN LINCK for accounting help.

Volunteers **KATE BLANE**, **DAN EVERETT**, and **PHILIP JURAS** for help with our computer needs.

Volunteers **JENNIFER MESSER** and **DAVID FAIRBAIRN** for help with our capital campaign.

QUICK FACTS: ALT PROGRAMS

LAND CONSERVATION

- 814 acres permanently protected by 20 ALT conservation easements
- 557 acres of working family farmland
- 257 acres of forest, wetlands, neighborhood open space, and scenic vistas

HOUSING

- 281 individuals currently in affordable ALT housing
- 126 permanently-affordable housing units owned or developed by ALT

HOMEOWNERSHIP PROGRAM

- 32 single-family properties (homes and lots)
- 25 residents currently ALT homeowners
- 21 residents lease-purchasing homes

FOURTH STREET VILLAGE

APARTMENTS

- 233 low-income residents
- 96 affordable units
- 24 market-rate units

HOUSING COUNSELING

- 124 individual participants in 2009

CONSERVATION NEWS

ALT NOW HOLDS EASEMENTS IN BARROW, WALTON, AND HENRY COUNTIES

ALT now holds a conservation easement on 84 acres in Glynfield Park, located in Henry County, near McDonough. The tract is mostly pasture land with forested areas along two small creeks and provides a scenic view from a county road.

Since our last newsletter ALT has completed an easement in Barrow County and two in Walton County, protecting a total of 200 acres.

These easements are ALT's first in these counties. The Walton County easements protect 168 acres of farmland owned by Dale Wiley.

(See **GREENFEST CONSERVATION EASEMENT DONOR OF THE YEAR**, below) The easement in Barrow County was donated by Dr. Jagdish Sheth and protects 31.5 acres of hardwood forest with a small creek, wetlands, and a portion of Burton Lake.



Glynfield Park in Henry County.

SECOND HOUSE FARM EASEMENT PROGRESSING

ALT is working with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Oconee County, and landowners Rickey and Kay House to protect another 42 acres of prime farmland. The House family is donating an easement on 13 acres to be protected. They will be paid for the development rights for 29 acres with NRCS Farm and Ranchland Protection Program and Oconee County land conservation funds.

MORE EASEMENTS IN THE WORKS

ALT is working on several easements that will protect 250 acres in Jackson, Wilkes, and Walton Counties. Keep an eye on our website for photos of these soon-to-be protected properties.

GREENFEST

ALT again participated in the 2009 GreenFest Environmental Awards ceremony on April 17, held this year at the Terrapin Brewery. Even at this larger venue, it was standing room only for this increasingly popular celebration of the community's environmental achievements. ALT presented two awards this year. Emmanuel Episcopal Church received the Donor of the Year award (see page 1) and Dale Wiley was our Conservation Donor of the Year.

CONSERVATION DONOR OF THE YEAR: DALE WILEY

Dale Wiley protected his 168-acre farm in Walton County with agricultural conservation easements to ensure that it remains farmland forever. Dale grew up on this farm, which his family has owned since 1919. Dale protected 50 acres of the farm with an easement purchased using funding from the USDA's NRCS Farm

and Ranchlands Protection Program and the Georgia Land Conservation Program. Dale then donated a conservation easement on the farm's remaining 118 acres. Upon receiving the award, Dale said that he has found truth in the old saying, 'If you take care of the land, the land will take care of you.'

GREENSPACE USER GROUP

ALT is part of the Athens-Clarke County Greenspace User Group, which makes recommendations to ACC about properties for the SPLOST 2005 Greenspace Acquisition Program. Nine tracts have been protected since the program began, including eight by fee simple purchase and one easement purchase. These acquisitions protect riparian areas, farmland, and other green infrastructure that contributes to a healthy environment.

HOUSING UPDATE

NEW HOMEOWNERS

On a freezing cold day in January, about 50 people gathered to celebrate with **SHIRLEY SMITH** and her daughters as they moved into their new EarthCraft certified home at 818 Waddell Street. ALT also hosted an open house at 124 Dallas Street, another EarthCraft certified home. Built by **SHANE DEKLE** of **TRADITIONAL SOUTHERN HOMES**, the two houses feature foam insulation, Energy-Star appliances, HardiePlank siding, and other "green" features. On June 26, **NIESHA BLASINGAME** became the new homeowner of 124 Dallas Street.



Commissioner George Maxwell, Mayor Heidi Davison, and ALT's Heather Benham look on as Shirley Smith and daughters Stasia and Shara prepare to cut the ribbon on their new home at 820 Waddell Street.

GLORIA BIZZLE purchased 219 Colima Street in March. The house was built by the **ATHENS HOUSING AUTHORITY** and is now permanently affordable through Athens Land Trust.

August was a banner month for the housing program, with three families closing on their homes and construction beginning on two new homes. On August 14, **CLEO AND WILLIE GIVENS** closed on their home at 215 Colima, and **DELREEY FAISON** purchased the home at 640 Hancock, marking ALT's first resale. **PAT SMITH** closed on her new home at 130 Andrea on August 28.

ATHENS FIRST BANK & TRUST worked with ALT to provide mortgages for the homeowners mentioned above. **JEFF BISHOP** and **JOE NEMETZ** at **ATHENS FIRST** worked through red tape during these difficult economic times to make these mortgages happen.

Thanks to **ATHENS FIRST BANK & TRUST** for their commitment to affordable homeownership!

NEW EARTHCRAFT HOMES UNDERWAY

ALT acquired three properties during the past few months. 868 Waddell, 872 Waddell, and 289 Evans Street were dilapidated, but will soon become EarthCraft homes for first-time, income-eligible homebuyers.

Construction of a new home in the Forest Heights neighborhood began in September. Architect **LORI BORK** designed the contemporary ranch-style home to fit the topography of the lot and to meet EarthCraft standards. The contractor is **LEVIN MCDUGALD** of **MCDUGALD CONSTRUCTION**.

Other local architects are donating their time to design ALT's infill houses. **PAUL CASSILY** is working on plans for 868 and 872 Waddell and **CHRIS EVANS** with **DSI** is designing houses for our lots on Old Winterville Road. Thank you **LORI, PAUL, and CHRIS!**

CDBG AND HOME FUNDS

ALT received an allocation of \$146,600 of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding from the Athens-Clarke County Commission for the fiscal year of July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010. ALT also received an allocation of \$185,302 in HOME funds that were not used by another organization and set aside for Community Housing Development Organizations, a designation by HUD. With this CDBG and HOME funding, ALT plans to increase homeownership opportunities for low-to-moderate income families and sponsor empowerment activities at Fourth Street Village. These federal funds are administered by the **ATHENS-CLARKE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (HED)**.

MOVE TO IMPROVE FESTIVAL

This year's Move To Improve Festival took place in the Waddell Street neighborhood on June 26, with a cookout, face painting, and a moonwalk. The dunking booth was especially popular as the temperature was well into the upper nineties! Highlights included an inspiring vocal performance by ALT Board member and homeowner Reggie Willis, and the ribbon-cutting

Funding made available for these affordable housing projects by Athens-Clarke County Department of Human & Economic Development (HED) HOME and CDBG Programs of the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County, an Equal Opportunity Employer.



for Niesha Blasingame's new home at 124 Dallas Street. Move to Improve is a celebration of National Homeownership Month, hosted by ALT and **ATHENS AREA HABITAT FOR HUMANITY, ATHENS HOUSING AUTHORITY, ATHENS-CLARKE POLICE DEPARTMENT, EVANS STREET NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, and HED.**

HOMEBUYER EDUCATION

ALT's Homebuyer Education Program, under the direction of Cathianne Watkins, is now a HUD Approved Housing Counseling Agency. ALT is an Affiliate of the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, a newly designated HUD Housing Counseling intermediary. ALT's housing counselors continue to help prospective purchasers of ALT homes prepare for homeownership. Thank you to **OCONEE STATE BANK** and **BANK OF AMERICA** for sponsoring this effort!

In 2009, ALT awarded 49 certificates of completion to participants in four eight-hour Homebuyer Education programs. Homebuyer programs were sponsored by the **GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS (DCA), WACHOVIA FOUNDATION, BB&T, and FIRST AMERICAN BANK & TRUST.** Thanks to **AUBREY MILLER, UGA PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION INTERN, JENNIFER JONES, UGA HOUSING AND CONSUMER ECONOMICS INTERN, and class speakers PATTY FREEMAN-LYNDE and GABRIELA CARDENAS.** Our classes also benefited from presentations by **HEATHER McELROY, PRUDENTIAL BLANTON REALTY; JOE WYRICK, ROBINS FEDERAL CREDIT UNION; JEFF BISHOP, ATHENS FIRST BANK & TRUST; CICI MERCER, TIMMONS, WARNES & ANDERSON; FAUSTO SARMIENTO, BANCO DE LA OPORTUNIDAD; FRANK HILL, FIRST AMERICAN BANK & TRUST; LARRY FORT, FORT REALTY; JACKIE DALLAS, UGA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION; REBECCA SHAH, ERA CLASSIC CITY REALTY; JOANNA STUCKEY, BB&T; JANIS ELLIS, KELLER WILLIAMS REALTY; TERRY BERDING, WELLS FARGO HOME MORTGAGE; and LAURIE LUNSFORD, LUNSFORD LAW OFFICE.** Classes were held at **FOURTH STREET VILLAGE APARTMENTS, EL BANCO DE LA OPORTUNIDAD, GOODWILL CAREER CENTER, and the ATHENS-CLARKE PUBLIC LIBRARY.**

Over the summer, ALT focused on credit repair, offering four **CREDITSMART CLINICS** and organizing a credit workshop led by the **CREDIT UNION MANAGEMENT CLASS** in collaboration with **DR. MELENIE LANKAU** of **UGA'S TERRY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS.** Seventy-five people benefited from these opportunities to understand their credit report and how to improve their credit. The **CREDITSMART CLINICS** were sponsored by the **WACHOVIA FOUNDATION, ATHENS FIRST BANK & TRUST, and DCA.**



ALT Intern Jennifer Jones leading a Homebuyer Education class.

Intern **AUBREY MILLER** played a big role organizing and teaching these clinics with help from volunteers **WILL FISHER, PATTY FREEMAN-LYNDE, and MARY O'TOOLE. KERRI HAMMOND, CYNTHIA STEPHENSON, and JUSTIN KRAUS** of **ATHENS FIRST BANK & TRUST** assisted with the clinic held in their beautiful new headquarters building. **ALICIA BATTLE** and **STACY ROZIER** of **GOODWILL CAREER CENTER** helped with the clinics there. ALT especially thanks **CATHIANNE WATKINS** for her dedication to the program and for volunteering many hours to ensure its success!

NATIONAL CLT CONFERENCE

ALT is the local host for the **NATIONAL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST NETWORK** conference **GROWING SUSTAINABLY: FROM THE ROOTS UP.** Over 150 representatives of CLTs from across the country will converge for workshops, trainings, tours, and other events from October 27-30. The keynote speaker for the conference is **SHIRLEY SHERROD, U.S.D.A.** Director of Rural Development for Georgia. Shirley helped to start the first community land trust in the U.S. near Albany, Georgia. The **NATIONAL CLT NETWORK** provides training, public policy support, and resources for the 200 CLTs throughout the country. ALT staff will co-lead several workshops on addressing land conservation and affordable housing.

STATEWIDE GATHERING OF NONPROFITS

ALT, along with 11 other nonprofits, gathered at **KOINONIA PARTNERS** in Americus on June 24 to share information and resources. The meeting was hosted by **HEIFER INTERNATIONAL, GEORGIA COMMUNITY LOAN FUND, and GEORGIA LEGAL SERVICES PROGRAM.** More information can be found online at www.GACLF.org.

SECOND ANNUAL HARVEST MOON DINNER

The Second Annual Harvest Moon Dinner took place on September 5 on the grounds of our new home at 685 North Pope Street. Renowned chefs **HUGH ACHESON** of **FIVE AND TEN** and **THE NATIONAL** and **PETER DALE** of **THE NATIONAL** prepared a four-course family style dinner for 120 guests. The delicious dinner included fresh locally-grown ingredients, paired with fine wines selected from the portfolio of **NORTHEAST SALES**. The setting was designed by **EPTING EVENTS** to evoke the turn-of-the-century period of the cottage's construction. Over 30 volunteers helped prepare for and host the event, which raised \$10,000 toward our capital campaign to fund the cottage's renovation.

Harvest Moon was conceived to celebrate ALT's accomplishments and to highlight, in a very tangible way, our mission of integrating land and community. With the harvest moon breaking through the clouds over our new home in the historic Boulevard neighborhood, the Second Annual Harvest Moon Dinner was an evening to remember!



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PRESENTING SPONSOR: EPTING EVENTS
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Many, many thanks to event coordinator **TONY EUBANKS** and volunteer coordinator **LARA MATHES!**



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GEORGIA SHARES

ALT is now part of the **GEORGIA SHARES** workplace giving program! Employees of participating businesses and institutions can designate a portion of their after-tax earnings to go to one or more of 37 Georgia Shares member agencies. Participating employers include UGA and other state and federal agencies, as well as private employers. If you work for the state or a participating private sector employer, you can support ALT through Georgia Shares by checking **#194072** on the enrollment form. If you work for the federal government, check **#60107** on the Combined Federal Campaign form.

THANKS TO A HOME OF OUR OWN CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DONORS, CONTINUED

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We welcome new supporters and thank all the individuals and organizations who have supported our work over the years. Your support is critical to our continuance. We greatly appreciate all donations of time and money. Please use this form to join or renew your membership.

PLEASE CHECK ONE OF THE FOLLOWING LEVELS:

- FOREST \$1,000+** **NAME** _____ **NEW** **RENEWAL**
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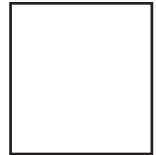
*Please make checks payable to **Athens Land Trust, Inc.** ALT is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation. All donations are tax-deductible as provided by law.*

OTHER WAYS TO JOIN OR DONATE:

ONLINE USING PAYPAL: Go to www.athenslandtrust.org and click on the **JOIN Us** or **DONATE** link.

GEORGIA SHARES WORKPLACE GIVING: for state and private sector employees, select agency # **194072**.

For federal employees participating in the Combined Federal Campaign, select CFC # **60107**.



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ATHENS, GEORGIA 30601-2331

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FAX: 706.613.0143

WWW.ATHENSLANDTRUST.ORG

COMING IN DECEMBER!

RENAISSANCE HOLIDAY DINNER AND CONCERT
to benefit ALT and the Athens Area Homeless Shelter, Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 12 and 13, 6:30-9:30 pm at Earthsong, just west of Athens. Featuring hot wassail and local fare, and a troupe of merry musicians dressed in early 16th century costume, this dinner is something you won't want to miss! Seating is limited. Tickets are \$50 per person. To purchase tickets and for more information see <http://renholiday.ticketjunior.com> or call Kate Blane at 706-248-8057 or Tina Tinsley at 770-725-2667.