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U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, CHARLESTON DISTRICT





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Partners of USACE

In this edition, we highlight a few of our many partners from across the state who help us deliver our vital missions in civil works, military construction, regulatory and interagency and international support. We would not be successful without your continued collaboration and trust. We are grateful for all of you.



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The Corps does very little on its own. We work with many partners, customers and cost share sponsors to solve the nation's toughest engineering challenges, and it has been a privilege to develop relationships with you.

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ime has flown by, and I can't believe I have been in command for a year now.

It has been a whirlwind, and I have learned so much from my team and from you. My predecessors told me I had hit the jackpot and that this assignment would be a highlight of my career. I agree, and what makes it great is the amazing people with whom I work. That includes not only the members of my team in the District, who are phenomenal, truly dedicated public servants striving to give their best every day, but also our great partners.

The Corps does very little on its own. We work with many partners, customers and cost-share sponsors to solve the nation's toughest engineering challenges, and it has been a privilege to develop relationships with you. This issue is dedicated to you. We are only able to highlight a few of our partners, but please know we appreciate each of you. It is a huge honor to serve you, especially as we move into this busy fourth quarter.

We are about to hit the peak of hurricane season, so please make sure you have a plan in place for your family. You will enjoy reading about SCEMD director, Kim Steanson, (pg 34) and how his team keeps South Carolina prepared for hurricanes and any disaster that comes our way. My fingers are crossed (while I knock on wood) that we can escape impacts from Mother Nature this season, but rest assured that the Corps is ready to respond under our authority and help FEMA if needed. We have participated in several hurricane exercises this season, including the Governor's exercise earlier this year. I hope you were able to see my appearance on Lowcountry Live last month. Along with my emergency management director, Mike Hind, we covered some tips to help folks safely prepare.

The biggest construction project in the District's history, the Charleston Harbor Post 45 Deepening Project, will wrap up this fall, and we will celebrate its completion with the new South Carolina Ports Authority CEO, Barbara Melvin (pg 18). She took the helm in July, and I look forward to seeing her lead one of the state's biggest economic engines.

We just completed a 4-year study investigating coastal storm risk on the Charleston Peninsula in partnership with the City of Charleston. Recently, Lt. Gen. Scott Spellmon, Chief of Engineers, signed the Chief's Report, marking a formal recommendation to Congress for project authorization. The final Feasibility Report/Environmental Impact Statement, which details the four-year study's findings and analyses, was published in the Federal Register on July 1 and can be viewed at www.sac.usace.army.mil/charlestonpeninsulastudy. If authorized and appropriated by Congress, the study may move to the next phase, which is pre-construction, engineering and design, or PED. Dale Morris, the City's chief resilience officer, (pg 22) was with us every step of the way.

More water fatalities occur during the warmer months, so please consider these safety tips. Taking a boating safety course, learning to swim well, swimming and boating with a buddy, learning how to identify a drowning victim, and knowing what you can do to rescue them may save a life this summer. The most important thing you can do while recreating in or around the water is to wear a life jacket and encourage others to wear theirs too.

Before I close, I want to especially thank my "everyday partner" and "national treasure," the District's senior civilian, Lisa Metheney. While the commanders come and go every two years, it is the continuity of her leadership and the strong relationships she has with you that make this District World-Class, according to the federal employee viewpoint survey that is conducted every year across the federal government. Our state is lucky to have her.

Happy Fall! Stay World Class!

Andrew Johannes, PMP PE PhD
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army
Commander and District Engineer

A LIFE OF PUBLIC SERVICE, JASON WARD PROUDLY SERVES THOSE OF DORCHESTER COUNTY

By Dylan Burnell

Jason Ward, who sits at the helm of the Dorchester County government as county administrator, has helped shape the area's significant growth since assuming the role at an uncommonly young age: 31 years old. In his twenty-year tenure, Ward has helped nearly double the county's population, consolidate public services and provide clean water to rural communities.

Today, with nearly 170,000 residents spread across more than 500 square miles, Dorchester County is one of the largest and most populous areas in South Carolina. The county is also ranked among the nation's fastest-growing relocation destinations.

As county administrator, Ward is responsible for coordinating all departmental activities, studying administrative procedures and organization, and recommending changes to improve the operations of county government. He is responsible for effectively implementing all decisions, policies, ordinances, and motions made by the County Council.

Growing up in Tallahassee, Florida, Ward developed an appreciation for education and public service at a young age. His father worked in the local government and the two often ate lunch together at city hall. His mother was an avid supporter of their community, being involved in almost every aspect.

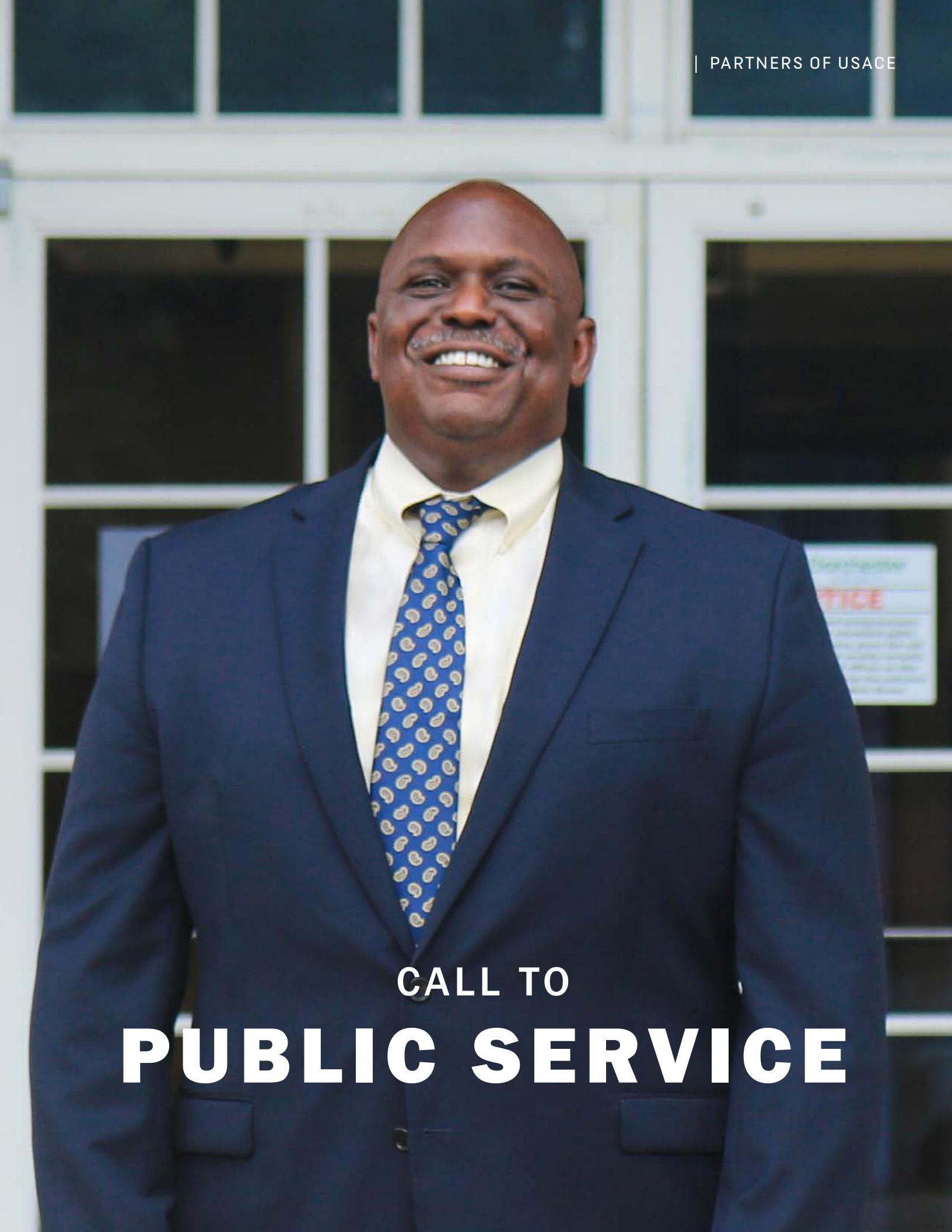
"We were always involved in the community," Ward said. "Whether through Boy Scouts, a community car wash, or supporting the local band and athletic departments. For my parents, it was really important to be active members of the community, so public service is second nature to me."

In college, Ward pursued a degree in sports broadcasting and found himself a natural in the recording booth. While working at his campus radio station, he announced basketball and football games, recorded a few commercials and was even offered an internship at the then New Jersey Nets. However, Ward realized that a commercial he aired during his radio broadcast was calling him back to public service.

"When I was working for the campus radio station, I used to play a public service announcement for the graduate feeder program at Florida A&M University. I would listen to this on my show repeatedly," he said. "Finally, I decided to investigate the program and ended up going to the University of Kansas to study public administration."

After receiving his master's in public administration, Ward went to work for the government of Hampton Roads, Virginia. Only in his mid-twenties at the time, he assisted with budget preparation and oversaw 11 of the sprawling city's 33 departments.

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of the community, so public
service is second nature to me.**



CALL TO
PUBLIC SERVICE



Three years later, in 2002, 30-year-old Ward applied to serve as the Dorchester County deputy county administrator and was selected. He excelled in his role and less than two years later applied to be county administrator. The city council recognized he would be an excellent fit, and just before his 32nd birthday, Ward assumed the role of county administrator.

"When you are given an opportunity at such a young age, there's a lot of pressure," Ward said. "People would say, 'why'd you hire that young guy? Does he have enough experience? Is he the right person for the job?'"

Today, Ward has helped increase the county's population — from 96,000 to over 160,000 residents — and streamlined vital public services, including opening three Dorchester County Fire Rescue departments and several state-of-the-art medical facilities.

He and his staff frequently interact with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to accomplish county objectives. One of the organizations' top collaborations is extending the Lake Marion Regional Water System. Since 2008, the partnership has brought reliable, clean, potable water to rural parts of Dorchester County. The project has also enabled the development of the Ridgeville Industrial Campus, which houses a new three million-square-foot Walmart distribution center that will create more than 1500 jobs.

"I remember the first time my boss told me we don't have clean water. I said, 'what do you mean we don't have clean water?' That was a realization for me, but I recognized that we could change that with the Lake Marion project. Working with the Corps, we were able to provide clean water. That allowed us to install fire hydrants, new parks and recreation. We landed Walmart!" Ward said.

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I see Dorchester County as a place where residents' quality of life will only continue to improve. I think about the exciting things happening now with libraries, media centers and expanding broadband. People will have access to all of the modern amenities.

Over his tenure with the area's substantial expansion and development, one of his top priorities has been how to manage and prepare for growth. He and his staff created a master plan for the county and hope that the growth continues over the next twenty years.

"I see Dorchester County as a place where residents' quality of life will only continue to improve. I think about the exciting things happening now with libraries, media centers and expanding broadband. People will have access to all of the modern amenities," Ward said.

His goal is to provide residents with a better quality of life and a more robust sense of community. From experience, Ward knows how vital involvement in your community can be and how much it means to families.

"In the past, you might have needed to drive more than an hour each way for opportunities. Now, people can wake up and be on the job in 15 minutes," Ward said. "When you get that time back, it means you can take the dog to the park, coach little league and simply spend more time with those you love. That's when you start to see a true sense of community."

LORIANNE RIGGIN, A LIFELONG STEWARD OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN SC

By Jackie Pennoyer

Now at the helm of the state's program responsible for stewarding natural resources, Lorianne Riggin has been an advocate of natural resources and the great outdoors since sending a handwritten note to the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources in eighth grade.

"I sent the agency a letter, asking what they did, which kinds of jobs they had available. I still have my envelope and the brochure they sent me. From that point on, I knew I wanted to be a biologist. I knew I wanted to study nature and make a difference."

In her current role as director of SCDNR's Office of Environmental Programs, Riggin and her team review hundreds of permit applications across the state every year and actively strive to minimize impacts to the environment through best management practice recommendations to the regulatory agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory Programs.

"It's a balancing act," she said. "We encourage public use of the landscape and support responsible development while also trying to minimize the public's footprint and ensure we don't lose sight of taking care of our streams, rivers and all the critters that live in and around these places."

In addition to evaluating permit applications, Lorianne's program serves as a voice for natural resources in hydroelectric relicensing and compliance, offshore energy development and natural resource remediation efforts.

Lorianne's career in natural resources began with an internship at Riverbanks Zoo in Columbia while she

pursued a bachelor's degree in wildlife and fisheries biology at Clemson University. During the internship, Lorianne learned how to care for animals from across the world.

"I was able to work closely with so many different animals, learn their behaviors and how best to care for them. Plus, everyone was so passionate about the work. It was such a great introduction to the field."

After graduating, she continued to work at the Zoo for a year until she took her first job at SCDNR as an hourly employee and worked her way up to the agency's state-level aquatic education coordinator. As a lead outreach specialist, Lorianne launched several programs to drive awareness of surrounding ecosystems and promote outdoor activities among South Carolina youth and communities, including bass fishing clubs, family fishing clinics, a certified DNR fishing instructor volunteer program and trout in the classroom training.

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STEWARDING THE
ENVIRONMENT

"I went from trying to support global conservation with zookeeping to stewarding nature in my own backyard," said Lorianne, a South Carolina native.

As SCDNR began an internal review process for overhauling freshwater fishing regulations, Lorianne developed a strong fascination with the regulatory review process and the critical role policies play in natural resource conservation.

"I loved the nitty-gritty details of environmental policies in college and when the freshwater fishing regulations overhaul began, I started reviewing legislation, pointing out errors and areas where language could be written less ambiguously. I worked with the Freshwater Fisheries Section and compiled a giant regulations guidebook to help inform SCDNR officers and the public of all the new policy changes for implementation once the General Assembly put them into law."

This process ultimately led Lorianne to be interested in a position in the Office of Environmental Programs in 2015, where she later accepted the role as the section's director in 2017.

Since that time, Lorianne has become one of the agency's most public and active spokespeople, serving as the "point person," as she puts it, and voice for the agency in various public settings.

"I am able to be a champion for the resource and interact with other agencies on a larger scale to move the needle to make things better — not just for the natural resources, but for all of us."

Over her seven-year tenure in the Office of Environmental Programs, Lorianne believes her greatest accomplishment so far is the shepherding of the Crab Bank Seabird Sanctuary project. She worked alongside many DNR staff to develop the project from an idea to a complete project, expanding habitat for threatened migratory shorebirds.

"Crab Bank is totally number one," she said. "It was a huge accomplishment and a huge conservation win. I remember seeing the first video of dredge material arriving on the island. I got teary-eyed and totally didn't expect to get choked up because of sand coming out of a pipe."

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District helped make the restoration of Crab Bank possible by beneficially using 66,000 dump trucks of compatible dredge material from the ongoing Post 45 harbor deepening project, adding 32 acres of prime nesting habitat for shorebirds to the island.

According to Lorianne, much of the project's success, as well as other agency collaborations with Charleston District, boils down to great partnerships and committed people.

"Whether it's working in an interagency review team, asking tough questions about a permit, or tackling a monster project like Crab Bank, it's relationships with the people who make up the Charleston District that make the difference. They're simply top notch."

Reflecting on her early passion for natural resources, Lorianne believes her 16-year career at SCDNR has given her opportunities to explore both the scientific and creative aspects of the job.

"I took an aptitude test when I was in middle school that suggested I pursue a career as a mechanic or farmer," she said. "I think the farmer piece is the land ethic, a love of the land and wanting to share that connection with others. From the mechanic standpoint, I have a general love of working with my hands and solving problems. In this job, I get to roll up my sleeves every day and try to find solutions."

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ENSURING THE BEST FOR OUR NATION'S VETERANS, DAVID OMURA LEADS THE COLUMBIA VA WITH ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AND CARE

By Dylan Burnell

Dr. David Omura leads the Columbia Veterans Affairs Healthcare System and the Williams Jennings Bryan Dorn Veterans Affairs Medical Center into the future, one patient at a time.

As director and CEO, Omura oversees a healthcare system that serves over 87,000 veterans, staffs almost 3,000 employees, and has an operating budget of \$840 million. The healthcare system provides services to over two-thirds of the state's veterans at its Dorn medical center in Columbia and nine locations throughout the midlands and upstate.

Omura grew up with nine siblings two hours north of New York City in the Catskills area. His father, whose parents were originally from Japan, lived in Hawaii before the start of World War II. At its onset, he enlisted in the U.S.

Navy as a fighter pilot. Inspired by his father's service, Omura decided he wanted to help people. He takes pride in helping the state's veterans and giving back to the community that has given so much, just as his dad did. His family has a long history of military service.

Omura holds an undergrad and a master's degree in Physical Therapy from Boston University and a master's in health care administration from the University of Florida. Omura then went on to receive his doctorate in physical therapy at the Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professionals.

His first jobs after college allowed him to experience both private and public healthcare systems. This exposure was invaluable as he learned the differences in how each type of healthcare system operates.

He became the associate director and chief operating officer for the Columbia VA in 2012. That role meant he worked in almost all facets of the facility, including budgeting, human resources, engineering, safety, privacy, logistics, and the business office.

At the Columbia VA, what you find may not be what one expects from a government-run hospital. There are not long lines and outdated machinery but innovative and modern approaches to health care that rival many private facilities.

"We have become a leader in innovation and in quality care. We're focused on providing the best healthcare possible for veterans," Omura said.

Recently renovated portions of the hospital will soon be home to a piece of the future, the da Vinci machine. This robotic surgery machine looks like something from science fiction, but its applications are genuine. Using a surgical system that uses a minimally invasive surgical approach, it cuts with incredible precision and accuracy. The da Vinci machine can see an area ten times smaller than the human eye is capable of seeing.



LEADING FROM THE
FRONT

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**It's a great honor
and privilege to be
able to take care of
our nation's heroes.
Working here, you
are part of a family,
part of a team;
nothing is done in
isolation.**



Omura refers to another portion of the facility as the "war room." At first glance, it looks just like any other office, but step inside and you'll find it houses what might be the facility's most precious resource, data. Here, data from every hospital department flows into computers, where the team analyzes it.

On a wall lined with floor-to-ceiling televisions, the data team analyzes up-to-the-minute information like wait times, appointments and the status of operations. Another computer screen displays a map of the state showing areas color-coded by vaccination rates which changes every time a veteran receives a vaccination from the VA. That information is used to determine where mobile vaccination centers should be sent. Using this critical data provides ways to increase the quality of care for veterans through pinpointing bottlenecks and effectively managing resources.

Across the United States are 171 VA healthcare facilities. Each works to provide top-level care for the nation's veterans. Omura says that to run a healthcare system of this magnitude, you must try to be the best, not for bragging rights, but for each veteran.

"If the Columbia VA strives to be the best in the nation; if every leader at every VA wants their VA to be the best in the nation- wow, think what a wonderful VA healthcare system we'll have," Omura said.

To be the best, Omura stresses the importance of partners like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Charleston District, who provide construction services for the facility. The director and the Corps work closely to ensure our nation's veterans receive the care they deserve.

"The experience has been very positive working with the Corps. I've been very happy with our engagement and the thoughtfulness," Omura said. "Because of partnerships like the Corps, we magnify the hands that help our veterans."

As Omura walks around the 97-acre campus of the Dorn VA Medical Center, one thing stands out; there is not a single person he does not say hello to or recognize. With a smile, he ensures everyone from nurses, patients and janitors are taken care of. He personifies the 'lead from the front' mentality and never forgets how fortunate he is.

"It's a great honor and privilege to be able to take care of our nation's heroes. Working here, you're part of a family, part of a team; nothing is done in isolation," said Omura. "It's not about trying to make a profit. It's about recognizing and taking care of those that have put their lives on the line for our country and have preserved our freedom."

When you speak with Omura and walk with him through the campus, it is difficult to grasp the sheer size of the operation he is running. When he smiles and offers a helping hand to everyone he sees, you can't help but think, 'how does he do it?' Walk with him for a little longer, and you will know the answer. He does it with pride, he does it with care, and he does it with love, all for the men and women who, like his father, put their lives on the line for our great country.



**SOUTH
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PORTS**



**SOUTH
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AS THE SC PORTS AUTHORITY'S NEW CEO, BARBARA MELVIN HAS TWO GOALS: TAKE CARE OF HER PEOPLE, AND KEEP THE CONTAINERS MOVING

By Glenn Jeffries

Driven. Strategic. Others use these words to describe Barbara Melvin. The word she uses to describe herself: Tenacious.

These words fit perfectly with Melvin's new position as President and CEO of the South Carolina Ports Authority and the path she took to become the only female CEO of one of the nation's top ten container ports.

Serving in several different roles over the past 20-plus years at the port, each of Melvin's promotions has led to more responsibility. Her new role as the sixth leader of the port comes as she succeeds Jim Newsome who retired at the end of June.

Her job is to keep freight moving through the port and their intermodal facilities in Dillon and Greer.

That is a tall order considering the Ports' 15 consecutive months of record cargo growth, supply chain challenges and an uncertain global economy. Melvin plans to trust her instincts, continue building and nurturing vital relationships and look at each new endeavor as an opportunity to continue learning.

She credits her decision to move from her government relations role to the operations side of the house in 2015 as pivotal to her career. First, she served as the senior vice president of terminals and operations. Three years later, she became the port's first chief

operating officer.

"I learned everything from the ground up. I gained a deep understanding of what we do, how our port works and all the amazing people in our maritime community who keep freight moving for our supply chain," said Melvin. "Operations truly gave me the foundation I needed to step into the role of CEO."

Initiating her "Care for our Port Team Members and Maritime Teammates" as a strategic priority in her first month is telling of her leadership focus. Arriving at the port's headquarters office by 7 a.m., after a 3:30 a.m. workout, she first checks in with her team and looks at terminal stats. Soon after, she heads to the terminal to see maintenance work their magic or checks out one of the Ports' new ship-to-shore cranes work in action.

"Our days are fast-paced, exciting and challenging. Every day is different, but the goal is always the same: keep freight moving and take care of my people."

Finding innovative solutions to mitigate congestion, including adding gate hours for motor carriers, prioritizing vessels, deploying new chassis, and hiring an additional 150 people in operations, has also helped relieve some of the pressure of her first month in charge.

"No one part of the supply chain can do it on their own. We are all dependent on one another and have to work together," she said. "Relationships are key, and I will spend about 50 percent of my time nurturing and building relationships."

The port's relationship with the Corps, elected officials, business leaders, the maritime community and logistics partners have ensured that the Port of Charleston works well and that the supply chain remains fluid.

Being directly involved with the Corps of Engineers' project delivery team for the Charleston Harbor Post 45 Deepening Project gave her great insight into one of the most significant infrastructure projects in the state's history.

"The new 52-foot depth this project provides has already proven to be the right path forward," she said. "We have handled more cargo than ever before over the past year. The influx of cargo, growth in container ship sizes and the ongoing supply chain challenges require a deeper, wider harbor that makes it easier for ships to navigate any time, any tide. Enabling the port to compete on a global scale has attracted more port-dependent businesses to the state, ultimately creating more jobs and bringing more investments to South Carolina."

As the non-federal sponsor for this project, she encourages others working with the Corps to get to know the people they are working with, to do their homework, challenge the process and get creative to achieve their goals.

"Engineering work has lasting and meaningful impacts on our communities today and into the future, and the relationships with your partners are critical to their success," Melvin said.

Drawing inspiration from her dad, who taught her not to be concerned with any boundary that society puts

in her way, serves her well. She is hopeful that her role as "first female" CEO in the industry will present opportunities for others.

"I typically do not look at things from a gender perspective. It is not my default," said Melvin. "I celebrate the awesome honor of being the first female and will leave the door open behind me."

Prioritizing health and fitness, fishing in the Florida Keys with her husband and playing with her two dogs keep her busy when she is not thinking about port operations.

"The pandemic has made 'supply chain' a household term and people now understand that ports are vital to keeping the supply chain fluid," she said. "I hope this awareness instills a deep gratitude for all those behind the scenes to ensure our hospitals have medical supplies, our store shelves are stocked for families and our manufacturing plants have the parts they need to operate. SC Ports is proud to keep freight moving for our communities. My team loves what they do, and it keeps me going every day, along with the positive impact we have on the state's economy."

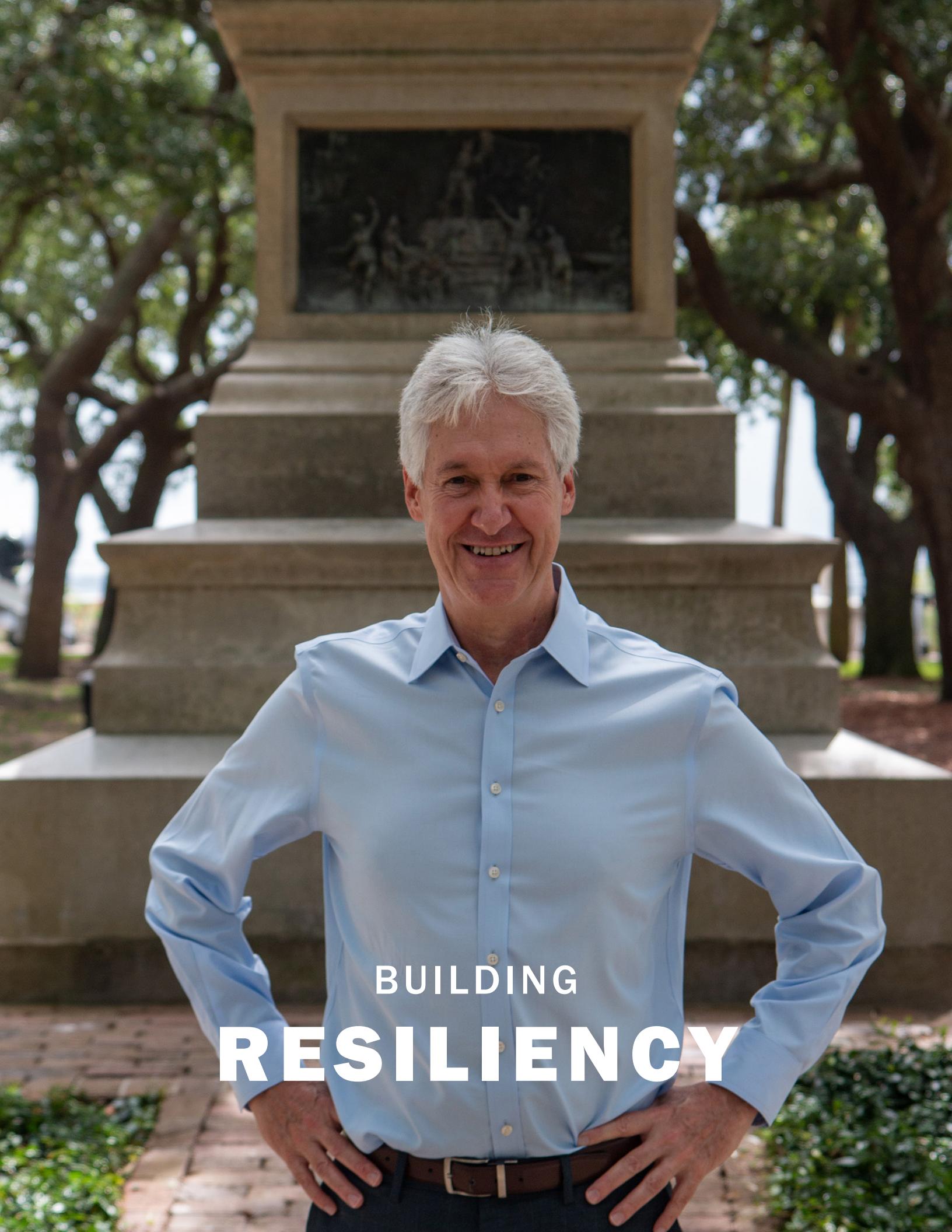
Drive, strategic thinking, and tenacity will undoubtedly help her achieve her vision with SC Ports to yield economic benefit to our state for generations to come.

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Our days are fast-paced, exciting and challenging. Every day is different, but the goal is always the same: keep the freight moving and take care of my people.



DRIVEN, STRATEGIC, AND
TENACIOUS



BUILDING
RESILIENCY

DALE MORRIS: DEFINING RESILIENCY ACROSS THE NATION, AND NOW IN CHARLESTON

By Jackie Pennoyer

What is coastal resiliency, and how do cities swiftly and effectively cultivate it?

That is the leading question for Dale Morris, chief resilience officer for the City of Charleston, who has devoted nearly two decades to studying and shepherding groundbreaking flood risk management techniques for cities like New Orleans, Galveston, Houston, Norfolk, and other flood-prone communities across the globe.

To accomplish resiliency, Morris believes communities must embrace interdisciplinary collaboration, creative problem-solving and an uncanny commitment to open-mindedness. Fundamentally, it takes a whole-of-government approach.

An emerging, dynamic field, a career in resiliency does not offer a standardized academic or professional path. Instead, resilience officers must glean from the field's limited but growing aggregate knowledge and their varied backgrounds to address some of the nation's most gripping, complex challenges.

Morris holds a master's degree in international law, economics and theory and brings unique leadership experience in public policy and economics to his resilience role. His career, which began in the U.S. Air Force, quickly pivoted to Capitol Hill, where he worked as a legislative director and press secretary. Morris then dedicated more than two decades to shaping fiscal policy as the congressional liaison and senior economist at the Netherlands Royal Embassy.

In his role at the Royal Embassy, Morris was introduced to a career in climate resilience.

"I was a senior economist doing macroeconomic tax, trade and budget work. Then Hurricane Katrina happened, and the Dutch government asked, 'how can we help?' They came to me, 'why don't you run with it?' I'm not an engineer, but I knew about zoning and planning, so I was invited to try."

Seven weeks after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast, Morris traveled with a Dutch team of flood mitigation experts to New Orleans to assist local and federal agencies with post-disaster redevelopment. For Morris, witnessing the destruction and the city's vulnerabilities illustrated the urgent demand for proactive, effective resiliency.

"It was a moment where I felt a shift in my career. From this point on, I transitioned from solely looking at economic policy to leveraging my economic background to work on climate change, adaptation and flood risk mitigation."

With the support of the "world's best minds" in urban water management, Morris studied and designed integrative strategies tailored to the city's complex flooding challenges. The effort — now known as the Dutch Dialogues — attracted the attention of other cities across the country, including Charleston.

"It was an interesting development in the diplomatic world. We were pulled into so many cities, and it became very clear to the Dutch that not only could they teach something about their approach, but they could also learn something from America's extremely dynamic conditions."

Since taking on the job as Charleston's second chief resilience officer last year, Morris has leveraged his experience co-founding and leading the Dutch Dialogues and helping to create and later working at the water planning nonprofit, The Water Institute of the Gulf. He began tackling the city's most formidable flood risks, including storm surge, sea level rise, and tidal and stormwater flooding. The job, which puts him at the heart of these challenges, has strengthened his passion for the work.

"When you work at the city level, you really get to know the people and see flood impacts on neighborhoods. You're not in a helicopter. You're on the ground. You see increasing vulnerability because of climate change and sea level rise. The impact on drainage systems, tidal systems, stormwater, streets, people's lives, and people's homes motivates you to do something."

Among Morris' top projects is the Charleston Peninsula Coastal Storm Risk Management Study, a four-year study led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that has closely examined coastal storm risks on the peninsula. The study, scheduled to formally conclude this year, proposes several key features to reduce storm surge risk, including a perimeter storm surge wall, nonstructural measures and living shorelines. The project may progress to the next phase, known as pre-construction, engineering and design, if it receives congressional authorization and appropriation.

"How can we — the Corps, city and our design staff, and possibly some outside consultants — work together through the design process to develop the best solution for the city while ensuring the project works within federal regulations? That's the puzzle," said Morris. "The Charleston District staff have been

open, and they've listened. They know this place, and they live here, and that's extremely valuable for projects like this."

In addition to partnering on the federal feasibility study, Morris is also forging the city's first-ever comprehensive, integrated water plan, which analyzes localized flood risks throughout the city and identifies tailored solutions. The 18-month initiative formally kicks off this August.

"The plan will help us understand flood-related risks and identify opportunities where gray and green investment will be needed over the next 25 years. The analysis will also help us better understand nature's water management systems and discern opportunities where Mother Nature can help us along."

While water is one of Charleston's most pressing challenges, it is also one of the region's most defining qualities, Morris said, making the city a special place worth preserving.

"My favorite thing about Charleston is the water. When I drive across the bridges, through neighborhoods, or over the marshes, and the sun is coming up or going down, and the sun is reflecting over the water, it's aesthetically soothing. There aren't many places more beautiful than this."

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The Charleston District staff have been open, and they've listened. They know this place, and they live here, and that's extremely valuable for projects like this.



PRIDE, PROFESSIONALISM, AND FUN - AMY BLIZZARD

PLANS THE FUTURE OF FORT JACKSON

By Dylan Burnell

Amy Blizzard brings a vast array of experience, education and a lifelong career in planning as the community planner at the Fort Jackson Army Garrison outside Columbia. At an Army base that trains over 50 percent of incoming recruits and over 60 percent of incoming female recruits, Blizzard could not be prouder of what she does.

Born in Miami, Blizzard found herself moving around the world. Her father worked in telecommunications during the early days of long-distance calling and computer chips. Their travels took her to New York, Georgia, Australia and all over the South Pacific.

Her family finally settled in Greenville, North Carolina, where she finished high school before heading to Eastern Carolina University. Blizzard received a bachelor's degree in Urban and Regional Planning and, in 1999, returned to get her Ph.D.

From a young age, Blizzard always had a passion for architecture and city planning. Initially, she was eyeing a degree in either language or art history, but it wasn't until looking through a college catalog that the school's planning degree caught her eye.

"I have always enjoyed architecture, history and how cities are designed, even from an early age," Blizzard said. "So, pursuing a planning degree was a perfect marriage of everything I liked: preserving historic buildings, integrating modern design, and even the sci-fi element of planning cities so far into the future."

Blizzard's first job was as a redevelopment director and building inspector. Since then, she's been a consultant, territory planner, grant manager and project manager over her 30-year career. In addition to these roles, Blizzard worked as a part-time radio DJ on National Public Radio for six years.

"When I was in graduate school, I was always a big supporter of NPR, so I'd volunteer at their fundraisers,"

Blizzard said. "I was talking with the person who was the station manager at the time, and he said, 'Do you want to go on air?' I thought, sure, this should be fun. Being a DJ was so fun and rewarding because it can teach you timing and how to multitask."

After living the life of a local celebrity, Blizzard hung up her headphones and returned to what she truly loved, community planning. Since she had the privilege to travel around the world and live in different places as a child, she wanted to give her kids the same life-changing experience.

In 2007, she took a risk and applied for a position as a territorial planner for the American Samoa Department of Commerce. What was supposed to be two years, turned into ten.

"We decided to take a chance and go out to American Samoa. It gave my kids an experience I couldn't replicate in eastern North Carolina," said Blizzard. "I had the opportunity after a tsunami in 2009 to work for the Department of Education, helping rebuild schools there. The people were wonderful, and we loved it."

When her family returned stateside, it only took her a couple of years to find her way to Fort Jackson.

"Everything I did up to this point prepared me for my current job at Fort Jackson. The job has a steep learning curve, so I was glad to have the tools and experience to jump in and try new things," Blizzard said.

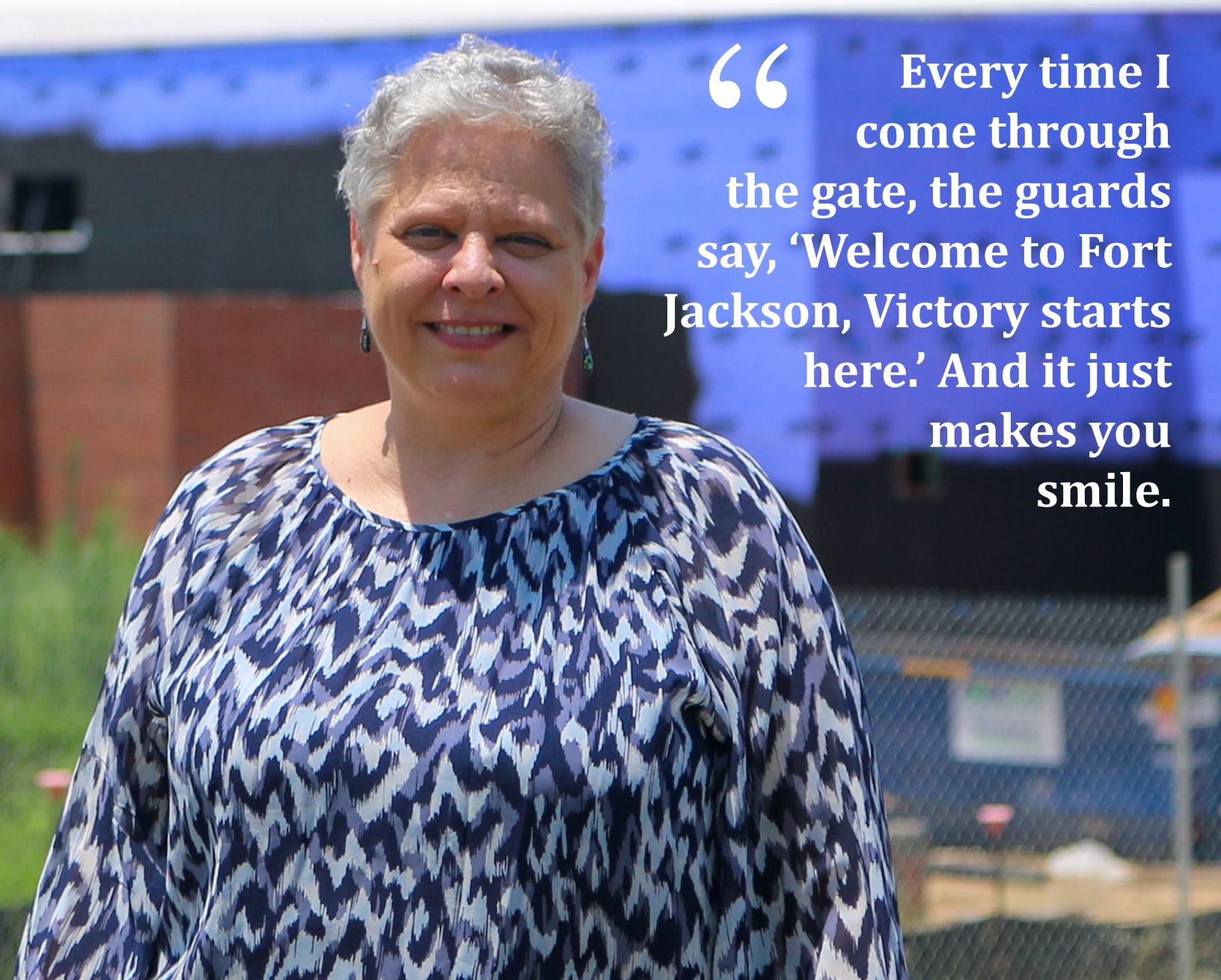
As the community planner for Fort Jackson, Blizzard has her hands full with numerous projects. She plays a significant role in seeing projects through to completion, whether it's a basic training complex, dining facility or reception battalion. To do this, she relies on the critical partner responsible for construction at Fort Jackson: the US Army Corps of Engineers, Charleston District.

"My experience working with the Corps of Engineers has been fantastic," Blizzard said. "The Corps has a great diversity of talent in engineering, architecture, and construction management. They do things on such a larger scale, and I've learned a tremendous amount from them."

Overseeing plans for a 53,000-acre, 100-year-old Army base that supports over 45,000 soldiers every year comes with many challenges. According to Blizzard, every week, when she sees a new group of soldiers graduating, followed by another set just arriving, it makes it all worthwhile.

"Above all, I'm very honored to be here," said Blizzard. "Every time I come through the gate, the guards say, 'Welcome to Fort Jackson. Victory starts here.' And it just makes you smile."

A lifelong journey around the world led Amy Blizzard to South Carolina. Every day she enjoys coming to work and can't be more excited or humbled about what she does. She shared two pieces of advice that she uses every day: always tell the truth and never lose your sense of humor. So far, they've led her to success.



“ Every time I come through the gate, the guards say, ‘Welcome to Fort Jackson, Victory starts here.’ And it just makes you smile.

RETURNING TO HIS HOMETOWN, HARRY LIGHTSEY

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE OF SC

By Dylan Burnell

Harry Lightsey has returned to his hometown of Columbia, S.C., with a wealth of knowledge and experience, which he hopes will benefit South Carolinians. Lightsey, a little over a year into his role as Secretary of Commerce for South Carolina, has worked at several fortune 500 companies, including General Motors and AT&T, and witnessed transformational changes in those industries over the last 40 years. Now in his new role, Lightsey plans to use that experience to bring the same transformational change to industries in our state.

Ironically, Lightsey's office sits directly across from the state house, less than three miles from where he grew up and attended high school.

After high school, he headed to Princeton University to receive his bachelor's degree with his eye set on law school after graduation. Lightsey returned to Columbia in 1978 to attend the University of South Carolina School of Law.

He had a particular interest in practicing international law, which led him to Dallas, Texas, to work for a company called Southwest Bell. Over the next 20 years, he would work his way up the corporate ladder, experiencing several changes to the company's structure. He worked on several mergers and buyouts, the last of which transformed Southwest Bell into what is now a modern household name, AT&T.

During Lightsey's time in the telecommunications industry, he saw the emergence of wireless companies and modern-day cellphones, which were very different from wall-mounted landlines.

"It went from literally a phone plugged into the wall and a fully rate-regulated monopoly to a highly competitive business built on the wireless phone, the wireless device, and not just voice, but data," Lightsey said.

Lightsey accepted a position with General Motors in 2012. Directing federal governmental affairs and working on emerging technologies like electric vehicles, Lightsey found himself part of another industry amid colossal transformation.

The automobile industry hasn't seen a change like this since the Model T.

"It's the biggest change in that industry since Henry Ford. I was very fortunate to be there and see how that kind of transformational shift impacts the organization, business makers, and business decisions," said Lightsey. "Working for companies going through change makes it possible for me to relate to the business leaders, talk to those thinking about locating in S.C., and explain why it makes sense to be here."



EMBRACE THE
FUTURE

Appointed Secretary of Commerce in 2021, he quickly learned the importance of the mission of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regulatory division.

"I've only been here a year, but I quickly saw the importance of our relationship with the Corps," Lightsey said. "What they do is significant, and by working with the Corps, we've produced win-win situations for the environment and economic development."

Lightsey says he has seen South Carolina drastically change since he was a kid. In the 60s and 70s, he saw a state built on the textile industry lose the business to overseas competition. Many wondered what the future held with mills closing and people losing their jobs.

Fifty years later, the industries of tomorrow are here in South Carolina. Global companies such as Boeing and BMW moved to S.C. for its pro-business environment

and immense talent pool. Innovative companies like Mercedes and Volvo base their research and production plants in the area as they tackle the auto industry's next frontier, electric cars.

Lightsey says many difficult but necessary changes will need to occur for the betterment of those living here as the technologies of the future become a reality.

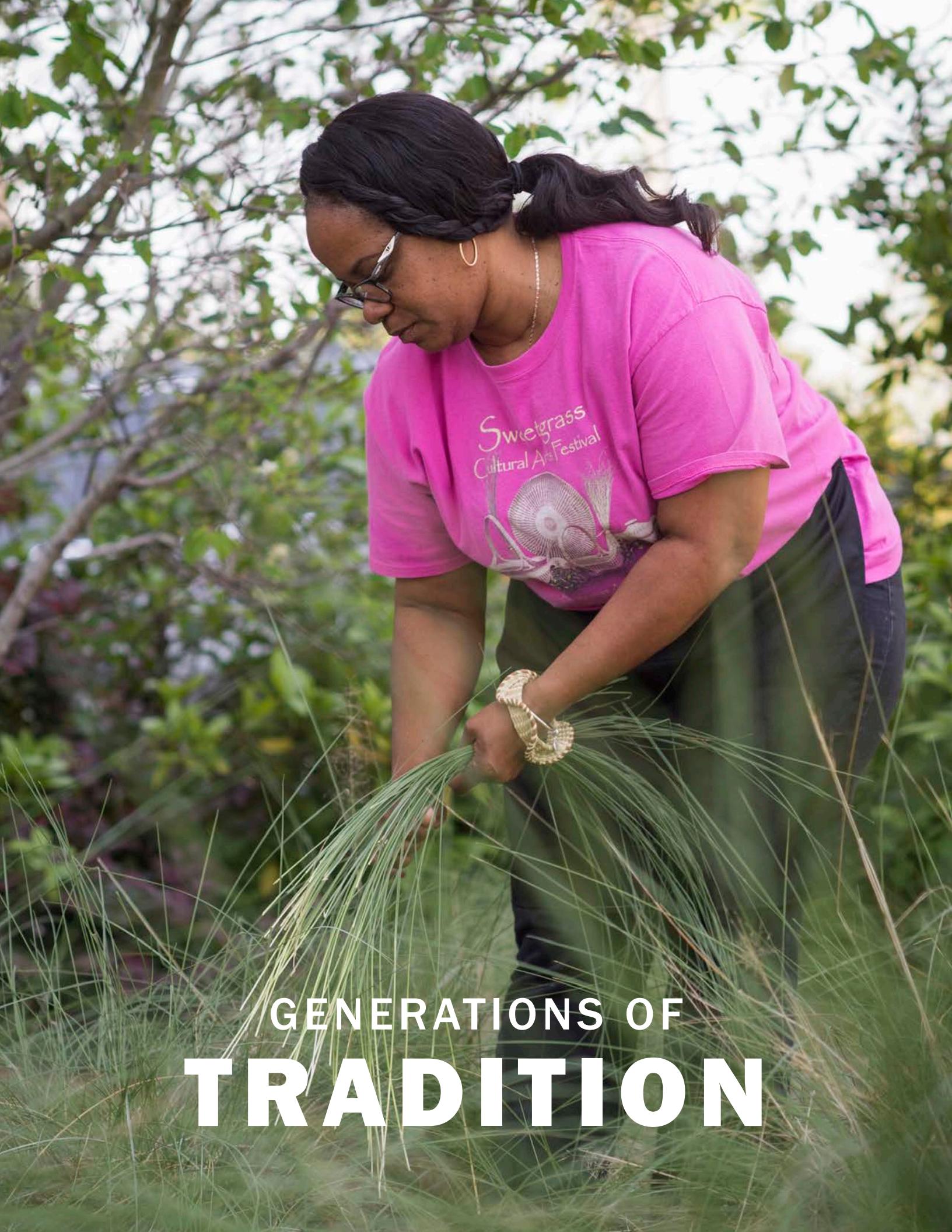
"It's a risk to change, and there is a certain comfort level in the status quo. We've seen repeatedly that if we get too comfortable with the status quo, we miss out on the future," Lightsey said. "The one lesson I would say we've got to keep in our mind every day is to embrace the future. We have to think of it as a tremendous opportunity."

A tremendous opportunity indeed, and Lightsey will be ready.

“

The one lesson I would say we've got to keep in our mind every day is to embrace the future. We have to think of it as a tremendous opportunity.





GENERATIONS OF **TRADITION**

ROOTED IN GENERATIONS OF FAMILY, LYNETTE YOUSON CARRIES ON A TREASURED TRADITION

By Glenn Jeffries

We all have family traditions we want to pass on to the next generation because it keeps our family's past alive. These traditions become storytellers and allow us to share our culture and beliefs. They help our children gain knowledge of their heritage; letting them live it, preserve it and enrich it.

When you think back to your childhood, what memories do you cherish? For Lynette Youson, that is easy. Youson remembers being five years old and sitting for hours with her great-grandmother, learning the art of basket weaving.

Youson is a very accomplished sweetgrass basket artisan, with her work being displayed in the Smithsonian Museum. She has spent her entire life dedicated to this unique art form which dates to the 1700s and is one of the country's oldest Western African art forms. When enslaved people were brought to South Carolina, they brought the tradition of weaving baskets from sweetgrass with them.

These baskets are weaved differently than most because they are made in the West African tradition of coiling, not twisting or plaiting, which is more typical in other parts of the world. Dried sweetgrass is bundled together and coiled in circles. Often, bulrush, pine and palmetto fronds are added to the mix as seen in Youson's Gullah Rice Fanner basket, one of her most famous pieces. The baskets were originally designed as a tool to help the slaves collect rice before the tradition evolved into a nationally recognized art form.

Another piece she is extremely proud of now hangs in her son's home. She created a unique design for a cross that was carried in former President Barack Obama's inaugural parade.

"Being asked to create a cross with such deep-rooted ties to our African American ancestors for the country's first black president was a tremendous honor," said Youson.

Youson has been weaving with her mother, Marilyn, for over 50 years and has learned a great deal from her over the years, as she has perfected her own technique. Her daughters, LaNeikqua and Kimberly, and granddaughters, Mi'Ryell and Allace, are also weavers.

"It is a way of transferring our culture from one generation to the next," says Youson. "It helps give meaning to our history

and preserve our cultural identity. When we teach children about our past, we make a connection to our ancestors." She has taught members of her own family this art form and hundreds of others, from kindergarten to seventy-year-olds, in after-school programs and adult weaving classes. She has traveled all over the country to save this art form from dying.

She often fears technology may be endangering the basket weaving tradition. Youson worries that young people spend so much time on screens and won't spend the time required to perfect the technique. Yet, when she starts to worry about the potential loss of the art form, a young person will contact her with keen interest, relieving her concerns.

Youson partnered with the Corps over 10 years ago while we looked for someone with her expertise to advise us about the naturally growing sweetgrass discovered at the Cooper River Rediversion Project in St. Stephen, SC.

Soon after the partnership began, an annual "Sweetgrass Pulling" day was created, allowing weavers to come and pull sweetgrass, a resource that has become increasingly more difficult to find, for no charge. Coastal development has dramatically hampered the supply.

"The grass at the CRRP is very fine, which is great for the intricate details the weavers often use on their baskets," according to Youson. "The sweetgrass community gets excited every time they have an opportunity to get some of the grass from that property. Being able to provide the weavers with a fantastic grass source has been one of the best things about my partnership with the Corps. I look forward to continuing to spearhead this win-win for the community and the district."

Summer pulls are scheduled for July 15 and later in August. If you are interested in learning more about sweetgrass, consider attending the Sweetgrass Cultural Arts Festival, which takes place every summer at the Sweetgrass Pavilion in Mount Pleasant. Youson is a past chairman of this cultural event.

Sweetgrass basket weaving is embedded in Youson's DNA. Once she begins weaving, she enters her "own" world where she has nothing to worry about and a sense of calm and peace overtake her. What more could you ask for from a tradition you love?

SUCCESSFUL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT?

KIM STENSON POINTS TO PLANNING AND PARTNERSHIPS

By Jackie Penoyer

When disaster strikes, it takes the right people, with the right training, to mount a swift response. With dozens of hazard types in South Carolina, including emerging risks exacerbated by climate change, effective planning and preparedness have become more critical than ever.

Enter: the South Carolina Emergency Management Division, the state agency at the frontline of all state-led crisis response operations. Charged with enabling the preparation for response and recovery from state emergencies, the division's ultimate mission in an emergency is to save lives, reduce human suffering and minimize property loss. The task is colossal and requires the state's best planners and leaders.

Kim Stenson leads the state division and has dedicated his entire career to enabling readiness. As SCEMD director, he and the division team have managed more than \$2 billion in response operations, including unprecedented rainfall during October 2015; Hurricanes Matthew, Irma, Florence, and Dorian; and, most recently, the state's expansion of medical care facilities at the onset of the covid-19 pandemic.

Before his time with the state's emergency team, Stenson served as an infantry officer in the U.S. Army. Over his 20-year military career, he organized several training exercises across the globe and served during the First Gulf War. Stenson credits much of the success in his current role to the hands-on experience and training he gained in the military.

"When you work in an infantry battalion, you develop exercises all the time to train your Soldiers. At one point, I was also part of a team organizing exercises for NATO," he said. "Here at the South Carolina Emergency Management Division, that's what we do: we plan, we train and we exercise. I always want to make sure our team is as ready as possible."

Comprised of over 100 personnel, SCEMD is broken up into several functional areas, including preparedness, logistics, recovery and operations. The division also has a dozen local officers — "boots on the ground" as Stenson puts it — located across the state to assist counties. According to him, it is partnerships with counties, state divisions, and other government or local agencies that often determine the success of an emergency response.

"Partnerships are a cornerstone in emergency management. Building strong relationships, understanding capabilities and regularly reinforcing responsibilities can define whether you're going to be successful or not. We take this very seriously in South Carolina."

To forge and maintain active partnerships, Stenson's team hosts year-round training and exercises, ensuring local, state and federal agencies are prepared to collaboratively and seamlessly respond to a suite of potential hazards, including nuclear disasters, dam failures, earthquakes, wildfires and floods. On average, the division holds one specialized course per week.

"We are busy all year long with annual updates, workshops, new initiatives and training," Stenson said. "We also always hold an annual full-scale exercise to integrate all our partners and ensure we've filled all the gaps."

Hurricanes, which are South Carolina's number one hazard, constitute a significant portion of the division's planning, Stenson said. While operations slow down some at the beginning of the summer in a "calm before the storm," the state's emergency management team closely monitors storm systems and ensures all key partners are ready to respond to a crisis.

Stenson's team and the Charleston District's Emergency Management branch have fostered a

strong partnership, thanks to routine communication and joint training. The relationship, he said, has paid dividends for the state during past hurricane recovery operations and, most notably, in the identification of potential alternate care sites for covid-19 patients. While no sites were ultimately constructed, the Corps' technical expertise was critical to site planning.

"Identifying alternate care sites, putting together plans, it was something we had never done before, and it was a huge lift. The Corps played a great role in this, and I'm not sure we would have put it all together as quickly as we had without the Corps."

According to Stenson, emergency management is always looking for the best and brightest. For aspiring emergency response officers, he suggests pursuing a formal degree in the field, volunteering to gain as much first-hand experience as possible, and developing a "well-rounded" foundation in planning, communications and logistics.

"Emergency management gets right to the heart of preserving public life and safety. It's challenging. You never know day-to-day what's going to happen. It's this critical work, and it has a direct impact on people's lives."



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