

## *GSRA Day at the Capitol Delivers!*



GSRA members on the Capitol steps with Governor Deal

Despite the threat of severe weather and generally soggy conditions most of the day, GSRA members representing local chapters from all over the state traveled to Atlanta January 30<sup>th</sup> to attend and support GSRA Day at the Capitol and Legislative Reception. When the day and the events were over, everyone participating agreed that the 2013 version was a resounding success.

Members converged on the Capitol beginning at 9:30 am to have their picture made with Governor Nathan Deal. After the photo opportunity, everyone convened in one of the Capitol hearing rooms to help put together the promotional bags to be given out and to receive a quick briefing from GSRA leadership team members. Then, after another photo opportunity with Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle, members fanned out across Capitol Hill to deliver the bags and the GSRA message to all legislators. Once all the bags were delivered, members were on their own for a couple of hours and used the time to catch up with their friends and former co-workers at lunch, attend legislative committee meetings or seek out opportunities to visit with their local legislators.

By mid-afternoon, members were hard at work again helping representatives from the Georgia Professional Human Services Association arrange and decorate the Empire Room in advance of the combined GSRA-GPHSA Legislative Reception honoring legislators from 5:00 – 7:00 pm. Like 2012's reception, the Empire Room was setup to help legislators easily find their GSRA and GPHSA constituents. In spite of the dismal weather, turnout was great and all parties enjoyed a selection of finger foods and beverages while taking the opportunity to both thank legislators for their service and make them aware of issues of importance to members of both organizations.



GSRA members enjoy social time with their legislators and each other at the GSRA-GPHSA Legislative Reception

In a short program held at 6:00 pm, GSRA honored Representative Debbie Buckner of Columbus when President Bill Tomlinson presented her with the GSRA *Legislator of the Year* award in recognition of her support of GSRA members and issues, particularly the opposition to SB 402, during the 2012 Legislative Session. GPHSA President D'Anna Liber, Director of Gwinnett County DFACS, then presented Representative Katie Dempsey and CEO Joe Stone of SMI, Systems and Methods, Inc. with the organization's *Friends of Children* award.

Representative Dempsey was recognized for her advocacy of children and her work with and contributions to the Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities Coordinating Council, and the Hospital Tax and Indigent Care Study Committee. It was also noted that, among other honors, she had been named *Child Advocate of the Year* by the Rome/Floyd County Commission on Children. Joe Stone was honored and recognized as an award winning executive whose leadership led SMI to build innovative solutions for human services and who consistently and enthusiastically supported efforts to make things better for families and children in the state of Georgia.

Following the awards program, members of both organizations continued to visit with their elected officials and other state legislators as the event and day wound down. Fellowship with old friends and former co-workers, as well as opportunities to make their voices heard to state leadership were the goals of GSRA Day at the Capitol and Legislative Reception. In the face of daunting weather, GSRA members achieved both and ensured the 2013 events were successful.

### GSRA says Thank You to our Vendor Sponsors!

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### GSRA-GPHSA LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION SPONSOR

As in past years, **Georgia United Credit Union** provided sponsorship for this year's GSRA-GPHSA Legislative Reception.

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## Buckner Is GSRA *Legislator of the Year*



GSRA President Bill Tomlinson presents Representative Debbie Buckner with GSRA *Legislator of the Year* award at the GSRA-GPHSA Legislative Reception

Representative Debbie Buckner received GSRA's *Legislator of the Year* award at the GSRA-GPHSA Legislative Reception January 30<sup>th</sup>. Buckner was selected in recognition of her outstanding support of GSRA members. Rep. Buckner was first elected to the House of Representatives in 2002 and now represents citizens in all or part of Harris, Meriwether, Muscogee, and Talbot counties in Georgia House District 127. In the 2013 Session, she is a member of several committees, including the House Retirement Committee. Rep. Buckner's occupation has been in the health care field, including working for the Columbus Health Department as a Senior Public Health Educator. She has volunteered tirelessly in and received awards from many charitable organizations.

As a member of the House Retirement Committee, Rep. Buckner worked tirelessly in the 2012 General

Assembly Session to oppose SB 402, authorizing ERS (but NOT TRS) to invest pension funds in alternative instruments, such as mezzanine debt instruments, distressed debt and equity instruments. She supported GSRA attempts to defeat the bill and then, when it was evident that the bill could not be defeated, worked to amend the more egregious provisions.. When the bill was presented on the House floor for vote, Representative Buckner spoke eloquently in opposition, most notably

questioning the disparate treatment of ERS members and TRS members. She voted against the bill in committee and on the floor.

GSRA thanks Representative Buckner for her service to the state, for her tireless support for active and retired state employees and educators, and congratulates her on being awarded GSRA *Legislator of the Year* for 2012.

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## **GSRA Meets with Retirement Committee Chairs**

GSRA president Bill Tomlinson and legislative liaison Chuck Freedman met with the new chairmen of the House and Senate Retirement Committees. They met with Representative Paul Battles on January 24th and Senator Fran Millar on January 30th. GSRA Legislative Committee member Maury Weil also attended the meeting with Senator Millar.

Both meetings succeeded in the goal of having the chairs and GSRA get to know each other and to share objectives and concerns. Representative Battles, being new to the Retirement Committee, expressed a desire to learn from GSRA, as well as other sources. He said that the previous committee chairman, Representative Howard Maxwell, was remaining on the committee and that Representative Maxwell's longtime and knowledgeable

aide, Sheila Gove, would be working in Representative Battles' office. Ms. Gove, a GSRA member, retired last year.

Senator Millar, having spent the last two years as vice-chair of the Senate Retirement Committee had, as expected, a deeper knowledge base from which to work. He asked penetrating questions -- including asking GSRA to prioritize its legislative objectives -- and offered insightful opinions. He emphatically stated that he was going to do his chairmanship job right.

GSRA attendees at both meetings were encouraged by the cordiality and openness of the two chairs and look forward to continuing the productive relationships during the 2013 session and beyond.

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### **Thank You to Members Who Participated!**

GSRA leadership wishes to extend a special thank you to the GSRA members who took time from their busy retirement schedules and traveled to the State Capitol, some from hours away, to represent GSRA and their fellow members at GSRA Day at the Capitol and Legislative Reception. We think the best thank you these tireless volunteers can receive is a renewed commitment from other GSRA members to volunteer their own time and participate in next year's events.



# GSRA Day at the Capitol/Legislative Reception Captured











**New Members in December/January**

<b>Name</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>County</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>County</b>
<b>December</b>		<b>January</b>		Kenneth Kemp	Hall
Stan Chandler	Tattnall	Mary Barnes	Ware	Terry Massey	Dekalb
Douglas Collins	Union	Pat Decocq	Dekalb	Dianne Narten	Lumpkin
Joyce Crow	Coweta	Alan Essig	Dekalb	Conyues O’Neal	Laurens
Gail Kirsch	Chatham	Linda Gibson	Talbot	Glenda Peters	Harris
Dixie Morris	Jackson	Jean Giles	Cobb	Lynn Razaitis	Dekalb
Annie Murphy	Chatham	Cynthia Goren	Dekalb	Douglas Simpson	Henry
Connie Nixon	Carroll	Theodosia	Newton		
Stephen Smith	Gwinnett	Hollingsworth			
		Barbara James	Lowndes		

**Does GSRA Have Your Correct Contact Information?**

Please be sure to update your **email address** with GSRA when it changes. Simply log in to [www.mygsra.com](http://www.mygsra.com) using your old email address and password; select “Our Members” and “My Profile”, and then change your information using the “edit” feature.

If your **mailing address** changes, and you do not use a computer, please notify us of your new address by sending a card or letter to the address at the bottom of this page.

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