

## **Henry County Cultural Diversity Committee**

A “Community Conversation” last September in Henry County sparked more than dialogue, it also prompted civic and business leaders in the south metro county to establish a Cultural Diversity Committee. The committee, created by the Henry County Chamber of Commerce, had its first meeting in March.

“We want to develop a strategic diversity business plan with proactive strategies for an inclusive community in Henry County,” said Dottie Wise, the 2006 chair of the Henry County Chamber.

The Cultural Diversity Committee was appointed by Henry County Dottie Wise, 2006 Henry County Chamber Chairman in response to the community conversation on diversity in Henry County last year. The committee includes Kay Pippin, Henry County Chamber President; Jason Harper, Chairman, Henry County Commission; Dr. Jack Parrish, Superintendent, Henry County Board of Education; co-chair Bruce Dickerson with Edwards Jones Investments and co-chair Kenneth Kelly with Georgia Power.

During its meeting in March, the committee discussed a host of topics, including race, gender and culture. The committee also agreed to expand and develop a strategic diversity plan in collaboration with a broad representation from the community, including business, government, non-profit, education, medical and religious sectors.

“The plan will not be prescriptive except to lay the framework to develop a great business plan on diversity in Henry County,” Kelly said during the group’s meeting on April 4. “We anticipate that the product from this committee will be a document that clearly answers the questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? How do we get there? How do we measure our progress? “

The Henry County Chamber of Commerce and Henry Board of Commissioners joined ARC and the Community Foundation in hosting the “Community Conversation” last

September. The event spurred a frank discussion around concerns of race, education employment and culture among the 30 community, business and elected leaders attending.

“We have held these dialogues throughout the region and the Henry County Chamber initiative is a great example of the kind of resulting activities we hope to see happen,” said ARC Director Chick Krautler.

Henry County leads the region in rate of population growth between 2000 and 2006 and is becoming more diverse. The county also leads in attracting movers from other area counties, with almost 27,000 added from a 20 county area. By 2030, ARC estimates that Henry will soar by more than 200 percent to 369,184. The leaders in Henry County recognize this as an opportunity and that the strategic plan will help ensure that that the intended destination is reached.