



Burgers & Business: Connecting Manufacturing and Industry Leaders Across Sumter County

Sumter County, GA - April 29, 2026 – The Americus-Sumter Payroll Development Authority hosted its fifth annual Burgers & Business event on April 28, 2026, continuing a growing tradition of celebrating Sumter County’s dynamic manufacturing and industrial community. This year’s gathering once again drew an impressive mix of over 100 business owners, industry partners, civic leaders, and state leaders — all united in their support for Sumter County’s continued economic momentum.

Executive Director Rusty Warner opened the evening by welcoming guests and expressing gratitude for the strong partnerships that fuel the county’s success. He highlighted how collaborative spirit, skilled workforce, and forward-thinking leadership continue to capture the attention of prospective industries.

“This event is about more than celebrating progress — it’s about strengthening the relationships that make progress possible,” Warner said. “The unity we see here each year sends a powerful signal to companies seeking a place to grow.”

The program featured introductions of business representatives, local and state officials, educational partners, and members of the Development Authority. Paul Hall, Chairman of the Development Authority, shared remarks emphasizing the importance of the event’s mission and extended a special thank-you to the group, followed by an update on the new industrial park and a special tribute to retiring board member Bill Harris Sr.

“It’s inspiring to see such a diverse group of leaders gathered together with a shared purpose,” Hall said. “Our manufacturing and large industry community is strong because of the people in this room — your dedication, innovation, and commitment to Sumter County.”

Attendees enjoyed a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere featuring great food, meaningful conversations, and opportunities to build new connections.

Zeb Portanova of Americus Fresh addressed the group, providing an update on construction and the opening date.

The program also included a dinner invocation and prize drawings. Prize Drawing Winners included: Phillip Sylvester of Genesee Wyoming Railroad, who won a gift bag of Sumter County-made items; Paul Farr of South Georgia Technical College, who won a \$150 gift certificate donated by Terracon; an engraved grill set, won by Justin Baker of BOLT Digital Technologies; and Daryl Dowell, a City of Americus Council Member, who won the grand prize, an electric smoker.

As Burgers & Business continues to grow in popularity, Sumter County’s reputation as a thriving industrial hub grows with it. Warner noted that the strong partnerships between employers, educators, and community leaders remain central to the county’s economic success. “Our strength comes from working together,” said Warner. “Events like this remind us just how much potential we have — and how much more we can achieve.”

About the Americus Sumter Payroll Development Authority

The Americus Sumter Payroll Development Authority is committed to attracting and retaining business investment while advancing workforce development and infrastructure. With a highly engaged board and strong partnerships across the public and private sectors, the Authority champions innovative strategies that position Sumter County as a premier destination for commerce and industry.

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