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## **FEATURE STORY**

### **CITY OF ALBANY, GA, LAUNCHES NEW ONLINE INITIATIVE TO ENHANCE SERVICE**

#### ***City/County citizen service improvements use QScend's e-government software***

**ALBANY, GA** – Citizen service in southwest Georgia has taken a great leap forward with the recent launching of the City of Albany's new 311 call center and online initiative. Responding to requests for better service, the City teamed with QScend Technologies to implement a municipal CRM system and to redesign its website. The City initiated the process, then engaged the Dougherty County government and Water, Gas & Light Commission so that all local services and information are captured in one place.

Albany's 311 center launched in September, and call takers have fielded 30 calls per day in its first month of operation while servicing a southwest Georgia population of 100,000. Early daily call averages for October have doubled. Citizens can call the 311 center (311 or 229-878-3111), powered by QScend's QAlert™, to request information or request service while speaking with a call center representative.

Citizens also can visit the Albany website ([www.albany.ga.us](http://www.albany.ga.us)) to search a knowledge base of information and submit service requests. Online hits to the 311 website for service or information totaled 300 the first month. Through this venue, citizens can be served 24/7 from anywhere there is Internet access.

"This [call center] is one very important way that we are addressing the need to be more attentive and responsive to our citizens," said Wes Smith, Assistant City Manager, in Albany. "A citizen needing any service or information can now call one number, 311, register an issue without anymore runarounds, and have that issue be addressed."

All citizen inquiries that require action by a City staff member are routed through the call center or through the Web form to the proper party for resolution. With QAlert, no calls are lost, and all the data relating to a request for service is stored. With QAlert's powerful reporting tool, the City can generate scores of reports to enhance management issues relating to services delivery, resource allocation, budgeting, and more.

"We now know which opportunities [service requests] we handle well, and which ones we don't," said Albany City Manager Al Lott. "That's very valuable because we also now have the data we need to get better."

The City of Albany's new website, powered by QScend's QContent™, was the first step toward integrating larger system changes and advanced technology. "The new site, launched in July, is greatly improved graphically and is a big improvement in terms of getting our users where they need to go," John Antoniewicz, Director of the City of Albany/Dougherty County Information Technology Department.

The new Albany website allowed for the seamless integration of the City's new online citizen service center, the Internet outreach area for the City's 311 call center. In addition to the knowledge base, citizens can establish accounts and note the progress on their service requests themselves.

Albany, Georgia's ninth largest city, awarded the projects to QScend after extensive research conducted before and during the bidding process. "We did our homework with relation to the municipal CRM software we wanted," said Smith. "The QScend solution best met our needs, and we felt comfortable with the team that made its presentation."

Using QScend's e-government software suite, the City of Albany staff can now:

- Track, manage, and report on citizen service issues, and disseminate up-to-date information through a knowledge base for call takers and online citizen self-help area using **QAlert™**;
- Manage its website content in a timely manner, while offering RSS feeds, interactive maps, photo galleries, file browsers for key documents, and more, using **QContent™**;
- Provide a calendar of events and online registration using **QScheduler™**;
- Distribute information via email lists using **QNotify™**; and,
- Conduct and report on single question polls and elaborate surveys using **QPolling™**.

QScend serves clients nationwide, offering affordable solutions to local and county governments to enhance their citizen service initiatives.

"Every municipality receives service requests," said Keith LeBeau, President and CEO of QScend Technologies, based in Waterbury, Conn. "They might not be called service requests, but the calls are coming in. What separates one community from another is the decision to track the calls, collect the data, and use the reporting to make the quality of life better for their citizens.

"Contrary to what many people think, it doesn't have to cost a great deal of money to improve services," LeBeau added. "With the right solution, government leaders can accomplish a great deal for a reasonable amount and generate a return on their investment in a short time, whether that return be tangible in terms of dollars or intangible in terms of happier citizens."

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