

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Jesse Branch Selected for 2026 GeorgiaForward Young Gamechangers Cohort**

**ATLANTA** — [GeorgiaForward](#) recently selected Jesse Branch as one of the 50 promising professionals to serve the organization's 2026 Young Gamechangers (YG) program. YG is a unique leadership action program hosted by GeorgiaForward, a non-profit organization administrated by the [Georgia Municipal Association](#). Young Gamechangers brings professionals from across the state to work on the persistent challenges of one Georgia community.

In 2026, the Hinesville and Liberty County community will host the Young Gamechangers. Local leaders have finalized their four "Challenge Questions" that the 2026 cohort will be charged to answer during the eight months focused on the Hinesville-Liberty County community, developing specific, actionable recommendations for the community. These questions will focus on educational quality, vibrant communities, poverty reduction, and entrepreneurial pathways.

"Each Young Gamechangers cohort represents the future of leadership in Georgia. This newest class brings together talented, passionate professionals who are committed to strengthening communities across our state. We are excited to see how their collaboration, creativity, and dedication will support meaningful solutions for the host community and serve as a model for community innovation statewide," said GeorgiaForward Board Chair Amir Farokhi.

Jesse Branch, 30, is one of the 45 Gamechangers selected for this class. She currently serves as the Special Events Coordinator for the City of Newnan's Main Street program, where she leads large-scale events, fosters partnerships with local small businesses, and helps strengthen the vibrancy of downtown Newnan.

"It's an honor to represent the City of Newnan and partner with leaders across Georgia to shape a stronger future for the state," Jesse Branch said. "I look forward to learning, collaborating, and bringing new ideas back to better serve our community."

“Hosting the Young Gamechangers cohort is an exciting opportunity for Hinesville. The collaboration between community leaders, residents, and these talented young professionals will help us evaluate challenges, identify solutions, and strengthen our vision for the future,” said Hinesville Mayor Karl Riles.

The 2026 cohort of Gamechangers will meet for the first time in Hinesville from April 22-24, and their work will culminate with a community presentation of their findings and recommendations on October 29. The Gamechangers are accomplished professionals aged 40 and under from across the state who wish to make an impact through civic engagement, economic development, and community partnerships. A third of the class is from the Hinesville-Liberty County area, another third is from the metro Atlanta region, and the remaining third are from greater Georgia.

Previous Young Gamechangers Host Communities are Athens-Clarke County, Columbus-Muscogee County, Americus-Sumter County, Dublin-Laurens County, Douglasville-Douglas County, Augusta-Richmond County, LaGrange-Troup County, Milledgeville-Baldwin County, Albany-Dougherty County, Monroe-Walton County, Dalton-Whitfield County, Columbus-Muscogee County, and Valdosta-Lowndes County.

**About GeorgiaForward:** GeorgiaForward is a convener, connector and catalyst and exists to unite our state and empower leaders to build vibrant, economically prosperous communities throughout Georgia. GeorgiaForward engages young professionals with leaders in civics, industry, government, academia, and the media to find a common vision for Georgia. The nonprofit organization, which is administered by the Georgia Municipal Association, accomplishes this by creating an environment in which vision and pragmatism can overcome political deadlock, fostering communication and goodwill among Georgia’s stakeholders, and seeking innovative solutions to Georgia’s biggest challenges. To learn more about GeorgiaForward visit [georgiaforward.org](http://georgiaforward.org).

**About the Georgia Municipal Association:** Based in Atlanta, GMA is a voluntary, non-profit organization that provides legislative advocacy, educational, employee benefit and consulting services to all of Georgia’s 536 cities. GMA anticipates and influences the forces shaping Georgia’s cities and to provide leadership, tools and services that assist municipal governments in becoming more innovative, effective and responsive. Created in 1933, the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) is the only state organization that represents municipal governments in Georgia. For more information, visit [www.gacities.com](http://www.gacities.com).

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