

by Tifanie Bean Ring

It's not typical in the life of most Georgia citizens to spend the day at the State Capitol during its legislative session. The building is buzzing with state representatives, senators, lobbyists, staff, and visitors – all there to move the needle forward for a better tomorrow.

Leadership Barrow's Class of 2024, presenting sponsor Piedmont Athens Regional, had the opportunity to visit the State Capitol on March 14th, and it was anything but a typical day for them. "The Day at the Capitol" was sponsored by Jackson EMC.

First, the class met with Barrow County delegation for a group photo, and then observed the Senate's session in action. During lunch, the group heard from Joshua Stephens, Director of Policy and Government Affairs -Georgia Department of Economic Development and Katie Duvall, a representative from the Georgia Chamber of Commerce.

Also, members of Barrow County's delegation, Senator Frank Ginn, Senator Clint Dixon, Representative Holt Presinger and Representative Houston Gaines, stopped by to speak to Leadership Barrow's participants.

Yoel Gonzalez, Leadership Barrow participant and Assistant Parts Manager at Akins Ford, found the day's experience memorable, inspiring, and very atypical.

"Knowing our district's representatives and senators is vital for ensuring effective representation, holding elected officials accountable, accessing resources, and actively participating in the democratic process," he said. "A good understanding of how the

state's legislature works empowers Barrow's leaders to effectively represent their constituents, access resources, influence policy decisions, and build partnerships that contribute to the well-being and prosperity of their community.

“The most memorable moment of our time at the capitol for me was witnessing the democratic process in action. Observing lawmakers from diverse backgrounds passionately advocating for their constituents’ interests and engaging in respectful yet spirited discussions left a lasting impression.

“This experience served as a powerful reminder of the significance of active civic engagement and highlighted the profound impact that legislative decisions can have on individuals’ lives.”