



WYTHE Economic Development News

**JOINT INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
OF WYTHE COUNTY, WYTHEVILLE, AND RURAL RETREAT**

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Note from the Executive Director

It is with great reluctance that I address a personal item in this column. However, this great reluctance is overcome by an even greater appreciation for the overwhelming outpouring of caring and thoughtfulness toward me and my family over the past several months as my wife faced colon cancer and eventually death. I dare say that we heard from a

majority of readers of this newsletter during our time of challenge. I know I'll have a hard time expressing my deep appreciation for such support, but over time I hope to personally thank most of you for your kindnesses. I especially want to thank the Joint IDA staff and board of directors for their extra efforts expended during this time. I look forward to working with many of you in the not too distant future.

A lan Hawthorne

Tours Mark Progress Park's 10th Anniversary

In recognition of the 10th anniversary of the creation of Progress Park, the Joint Industrial Development Authority and the Wythe County Board of Supervisors offered guided tours of Progress Park to interested citizens during the week of the 2009 Chautauqua Festival in cooperation with the Wythe Arts Council.

Three tours each day departed from the Spiller Elementary School parking lot on June 24th and June 27th. On the first day, the Park destinations included a tour inside the Wytheville Technologies, Inc./Atsumi Car Equipment (WTI/ACE) facility. On the second day of the event, the Park destinations included a visit to the



Gatorade Blue Ridge facility.

Those who went on the tours appeared to enjoy themselves. Many of the "tourists" expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn about Progress Park and see the inside of an advanced manufacturing operation.

Joint IDA staff have developed a presentation on Progress Park, including a virtual tour via Powerpoint images. If your organization would like to have this presentation given at a meeting, please contact the Joint IDA office at 276-223-3370.

Manufacturing Technology Center Offers Training Events

The Manufacturing Technology Center (MTC) at Wytheville Community College has the following events scheduled in September:

September 15, 2009 - *Lean Manufacturing/Six Sigma Industry Peer Group Event* - For more information, use the following link: www.mtcofswva.org/Industry_Peer_to_Peer_Meeting%20091509.pdf

September 18, 2009 - *Six Sigma Green Belt Training and Project Support* - For more information, click on the following link: www.mtcofswva.org/SSGB_091809.pdf

September 23, 2009 - *Environmental Peer-to-Peer Conference* - For more information, use the following link: www.mtcofswva.org/Recycling_092309.pdf

For additional details or to register for an event, please contact Linda Newman at (276) 223-4709 or wcnewml@wcc.vccs.edu.

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PBG Invests in Fuel Efficiency Improvements and Reduced Emissions

Pepsi Bottling Group (PBG) announced this past spring the addition of 21 hydrogen-injected trucks to its local fleet. These trucks feature reduced nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbon emissions resulting in more power and improved fuel economy. The technology used in these trucks provides an estimated 15% increase in fuel economy, surpasses vehicle emission standards by 11%, and boasts a second-life drive train that uses 100% synthetic oils and electric-powered functions to replace standard engine-powered components that waste fuel.

The specialized hydrogen injection system on these trucks extracts hydrogen gas from bottles of distilled water. The hydrogen is injected into the fuel mixture and enables combustion at a lower compression than standard diesel engines.



Company officials are anxious to see how the hydrogen-injected trucks perform in the mountainous region served by PBG's New River Valley Plant.

Labor & Employment Law Seminar

This year's seminar will be held on September 3, 2009, at Hungry Mother State Park near Marion. The Wythe Manufacturing Council (WMC) is a co-sponsor of this event. WMC members are eligible for \$25 off the full registration cost of \$125 for the seminar. If you need additional information or if you would like to register for the seminar, please contact Laralee Harkleroad of the Baker Donelson law firm at 423-928-0181.

Event Allows Students to Learn about Manufacturing and Related Career Opportunities

Background: This event was held to follow up student focus group sessions earlier in the 2008-09 school year. Those earlier sessions, facilitated by staff from the Virginia Department of Business Assistance, were held to gauge student perceptions of manufacturing and manufacturing-related career opportunities. A key finding of the focus group effort was that students have limited exposure to accurate information about manufacturing.

In March, a group of about 15 high school students (some from each of the three high schools in Wythe County), along with career coaches and the Career and Technical Education Coordinator for Wythe County Schools, visited the Gatorade Blue Ridge facility located in Wythe County's Progress Park. During this event, the students heard from managers of three different advanced manufacturing companies with operations in Wythe County. Each of the managers gave a brief presentation about what their operations involve and the types of training, skills, and traits/abilities that their respective companies look for in new employees and gave the students an opportunity to ask questions. The students also heard from and had a chance to speak with some Gatorade technicians. The event included lunch and a tour of the Gatorade production facility, which allowed the students to see firsthand what an advanced manufacturing operation looks like. This event was sponsored by the Wythe Manufacturing Council.

A brief survey of the students who participated in the March session found the follow-up event demonstrated that straight-forward presentation of accurate, relevant information by engaging presenters could have an impact on student perceptions of manufacturing.

Regional Unemployment Rates

Location	Apr-08	Apr-09	May-08	May-09	Jun-08	Jun-09
Wythe	3.6%	11.6%	4.2%	11.7%	5.6%	11.3%
Bland	3.3%	7.7%	4.2%	7.9%	5.1%	8.5%
Smyth	5.1%	12.2%	5.7%	12.5%	5.9%	12.7%
Carroll	4.2%	10.8%	5.6%	11.3%	6.9%	11.6%
Grayson	4.3%	10.8%	6.7%	11.7%	6.4%	11.6%
Pulaski	4.0%	11.3%	4.6%	12.4%	8.1%	12.4%
Galax	3.8%	10.1%	5.6%	9.6%	5.7%	10.0%
Region*	4.2%	11.2%	5.1%	11.7%	6.5%	11.8%
Virginia	3.2%	6.6%	3.6%	7.0%	4.0%	7.3%
US	4.8%	8.6%	5.2%	9.1%	5.7%	9.7%

* Overall rate for the region including the Counties of Wythe, Bland, Smyth, Carroll, Grayson, and Pulaski, and the City of Galax.

Wythe Economic Development News is published quarterly by the Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County to inform interested parties of industrial development activities in the county and its incorporated towns. If you are not on the distribution list and would like to be added, please let us know at JointIDA@wytheville.org or call 276-223-3370.