



WYTHE Economic Development News

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

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Note from the Executive Director

Success is measured by a variety of means, many of which are related to direct financial impacts. However, the non-financial impacts are sometimes the most important. I'm reminded of this when we celebrate the success of our manufacturers as they set new health and safety records. The Rural Retreat Klöckner plant has dramatically improved its safety record and last

year celebrated a new record period without a lost work time accident. This operation joins other recent successes by Mid-Atlantic Manufacturing and Quadrant Engineering Plastics Products, with its especially impressive record of over four years without even a reportable accident. These successes do indeed produce financial rewards, whether it's from reduced insurance premiums or improved productivity, but the most meaningful rewards are to the individuals and families who have avoided injuries, or in the worst case even death.

Increasingly, employers, insurance services, health care providers, and employees are recognizing that both financial and non-financial benefits can also be obtained from well designed and executed wellness programs that result in a better quality of life as well as lower long-term health-related costs and improved productivity. I hope to see more of our employers explore the benefits of these programs.

Alan Hawthorne

Marketing Meeting Held for Progress Park Lot 24

The Joint IDA recently hosted a meeting of the key partners in the Progress Park Lot 24 Project at the Wytheville Meeting Center. The purpose of the meeting was to update all partners on the exceptional combination of services and capacities that make Lot 24 a truly unique property and to discuss various aspects of the marketing proposition.

Local elected officials, along with Virginia's Deputy Secretary of Commerce and Trade for Rural Economic Development Mary Rae Carter, welcomed the participants. Presentations were given on ongoing

and upcoming marketing efforts for Lot 24 by representatives from both state and regional economic development organizations. Mike Lehmkuhler, Team Leader of the Strategic Properties Initiative in the Business Development Division of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, gave an overview of VEDP's Strategic Properties Initiative and spoke specifically about their focus on marketing Lot 24 as a Major Employment and Investment (MEI) site. Tom Elliott, Executive Director of Va's aCorridor, spoke on regional marketing efforts and the importance of "Readiness."



Final year of grading is underway on Lot 24.

Information about infrastructure and available services were provided by: Norfolk Southern (rail service), Appalachian Power (electric service), Atmos Energy and Spectra Energy (natural gas service), CenturyLink and Citizens (telecommunication service), and Peed & Bortz (water and wastewater service). Updates on the grading and off-site infrastructure construction were provided by Branch Highways and Peed & Bortz.

Following the meeting, attendees loaded into buses for a guided tour of Progress Park, including the Lot 24 construction site where representatives from Branch Highways answered questions about the progress of the grading project.

Norfolk Southern generously sponsored the meeting space and lunch.

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Joint IDA Welcomes New Associate Director

The Joint IDA is pleased to welcome Kimberly Simmons as the authority's new associate director.

A Wythe County native now living in Pulaski, Simmons earned her bachelor's degree *Summa Cum Laude* in mathematics with a concentration in statistics from Radford University.

Prior to joining the Joint IDA, Simmons was program manager for Virginia Economic Bridge Inc. located in Radford where she was integrally involved in marketing, business recruitment, and workforce assessment, among other activities.



The associate director takes lead responsibility for the Joint IDA's existing industry program as well as providing research and support roles for the authority's recruitment efforts.

Industry Appreciation Golf Tournament/ Reception Held

The 2012 Industry Appreciation Golf Tournament was held at the Wytheville Golf Club on May 17. The tournament enjoyed support from sponsors and players (24 teams). The golfers (and others) enjoyed good food and fellowship at the reception following the golf.



Someone forgot to tell Tom and Carolyn that the event was for play and not work.

Thanks to all who played, sponsored, donated prizes, or helped prepare for this event that resulted in a fun day of golf and fellowship.

Grants Support Manufacturing Competitiveness

The Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development recently completed a comprehensive look at services that could be provided to Mt. Rogers Economic Development District manufacturers of composite materials. Analyses included evaluating competitor locations and facilities, higher education and support resources available, product development and market research opportunities, and commercialization ideas. The study also included fieldwork by faculty and students to enhance the competitiveness of composites companies in the region. Four in-the-field projects were developed to solve manufacturing and product-development problems within local firms. Two of the participating companies were Acrylife, located in Wytheville, and Klöckner Pentaplast, located in Rural Retreat. Plans are underway to continue efforts to support enhanced competitiveness of companies with significant opportunities using or producing composites. Activities will include pursuing grant funding, networking, sharing best practices in addressing common problems, and improving communication to increase each company's participation.

The [GENEDGE ALLIANCE Innovation Grant](#) helps qualifying manufacturing and technology businesses located within the Virginia Tobacco Commission region bring new ideas and new products to market. Funded in cooperation with the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification Commission (TIC), the goal is to create more jobs in the region. The program, which continues through June 2013, seeks to fund high probability commercialization opportunities for regionally manufactured products and technologies. To be eligible for participation, companies must have established operations in the TIC region, operate with primary or secondary NAICS codes from 311 up to 339, or 54171, and be registered as such with Dun and Bradstreet (D&B). Eligible expenses include market research, development and materials, prototype development, third-party proof of concept, engineering/design, and certifications through independent testing services.

Regional Unemployment Rates

Location	Jan-11	Jan-12	Feb-11	Feb-12	Mar-11	Mar-12
Wythe	9.2%	7.3%	8.7%	7.0%	7.8%	6.5%
Bland	6.7%	5.9%	6.6%	6.1%	6.2%	5.6%
Smyth	10.7%	9.4%	9.6%	9.5%	9.0%	8.8%
Carroll	10.8%	8.7%	9.9%	8.9%	9.3%	8.1%
Grayson	13.3%	10.6%	12.7%	11.3%	11.5%	9.4%
Pulaski	8.1%	6.4%	7.5%	6.2%	7.3%	6.0%
Galax	11.3%	9.8%	11.0%	9.3%	11.3%	9.1%
Region*	10.0%	8.1%	9.4%	8.0%	9.0%	7.3%
Virginia	6.9%	6.0%	6.6%	6.1%	6.3%	5.7%
US	9.8%	8.7%	9.5%	8.4%	9.2%	7.7%

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

Presentations Available

If your civic or other community group would like to have a presentation on Progress Park or on Wythe County economic development in general, please contact the Joint IDA office to schedule a presentation for your organization.

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.