



WYTHE Economic Development News

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

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Note from the Executive Director

The recent decision by the State Corporation Commission to reduce the proposed base rate increase for Appalachian Power from just under 25% to just over 3% solidly reinforces one of the key advantages for Southwest Virginia. With energy representing an important component of the escalating cost of doing business

over the past couple of years, companies are looking more closely at opportunities to reduce this aspect of production costs. Not only is Wythe County strongly competitive in the electrical energy cost arena, with electricity cost only about one-half of the national average, we also now have a new 90 MW substation in Progress Park and a reinforced transmission infrastructure due to the new 765-kV interstate transmission line to Wythe County.

Alan Hawthorne

2007 Wytheville Job Fair

The 2007 Wytheville Job Fair, held April 13–14, drew approximately 700 job seekers to the new Wytheville Meeting Center. Registration surveys reveal that about 40% of the job seekers were unemployed and that the vast majority of attendees were from Wythe or an adjacent county.

Job seekers had the opportunity to sign up for WorkKeys testing that qualifies individuals for a Career Readiness Certificate (CRC). The tests are an assessment tool measuring skills in math, reading, and locating information. The tests (normally \$45) were offered for free to those signing up at the fair. Many local industries value a gold or silver CRC. See the article on the next page about last year’s CRC results.

Partners with the Joint IDA in the 2007 job fair were Wythe and Bland Department of Social Services, Virginia Employment Commission, Virginia Department of Business Assistance, Wythe Manufacturing Council, Town of Wytheville, and Wytheville-Wythe-Bland Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

Lane Enterprises, Other Construction Under Way in Progress Park

Progress Park is abuzz with construction activity. Lane Enterprises, Inc., of Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, manufacturer of corrugated metal and plastic drainage pipe for the construction industry, is building a facility on rail-served Lot 31 near the southern entrance of Progress Park. The Wytheville facility will produce and distribute high-density polyethylene (HDPE) plastic drainage pipe. Operations will begin with one production line, but the site allows for future expansion of up to four lines. Plant Superintendent Matthew Clarke and his team look forward to calling Wythe County home to their company’s latest facility.



Company President Patrick Collings and HPDE Division Manager Mark Dick join local officials in ground-breaking ceremony.

Coalfield Services is also constructing its building on Lot 6 in the Progress Park “mini-park” for small businesses. (See Spring 2006 issue for details.)

In addition to the Lane Enterprises and Coalfield Services construction, Wythe County recently paved Kents Lane, opening up a route through the entire park. Appalachian Power recently completed a 90 MW substation to meet Progress Park’s electrical needs.

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Mobile Medical Clinic Provides Onsite Services

The Mount Rogers Health District has purchased a mobile medical unit to serve the health needs of Mount Rogers businesses and residents. This 38-foot-long unit visits work sites to provide a range of services. Services available include blood pressure screening, cholesterol screening, bone density testing, hearing tests, and general pre-employment physicals. On-site health education programs are also available. The goal is to increase participation and to reduce the time employees are away from work to receive healthcare services. To learn more, call Caroline Jackson at (276) 781-7450.



New mobile clinic is available to do employee screenings at area businesses.

Joint IDA Holds Industry Appreciation Tournament/Reception

The 2007 Industry Appreciation Golf Tournament and Reception brought local business leaders and state and local officials together for an exciting day of golf. Twenty-four teams participated this year. Thanks to all who played, sponsored, or donated prizes.



Local Area CRC Results Are Impressive

During the year that followed the 2006 Wytheville Job Fair, where the Career Readiness Certificate (CRC) was heavily promoted, the number of area (50-mile radius of Wytheville) certificate holders increased to represent 9% of all certificate holders in the entire state. The CRC test measures reading, math, and information locating skills. Exam takers can earn a bronze, silver, or gold certificate based on test scores. Over 90% of those taking the exam within a 50-mile radius of Wytheville earned at least a bronze (compared to statewide average of 88%), and 80% earned a silver or gold certificate (compared to statewide average of 68%). Job seekers at the 2007 job fair had the chance to register for the CRC exam for free (regular fee is \$45). Over 200 job seekers did so. Increasingly area employers are using the CRC as a tool to evaluate applicants' skills in these core skills critical to most jobs. To learn more about the CRC exam, visit www.crc.virginia.gov or call Wytheville Community College at (276) 223-4724.

Revolving Loan Fund Assistance

With higher interest rates, small businesses might find it difficult to obtain attractive financing for capital expenditures needed to grow their business. The Joint IDA Revolving Loan Fund offers qualified small business owners gap financing to bridge the difference between what the business needs and what they can obtain from equity and other sources of financing. Qualified uses include the purchase of new equipment, real estate purchases or improvements, and working capital. Call the Joint IDA for more information at (276) 223-3370 or visit our website at www.wytheida.org/revolvingloanfund.aspx.

Regional Unemployment Rates

Location	Jan-06	Jan-07	Feb-06	Feb-07	Mar-06	Mar-07
Wythe	4.5%	4.8%	4.7%	5.3%	4.2%	4.8%
Bland	4.0%	3.7%	4.4%	4.2%	4.3%	3.9%
Smyth	4.7%	6.0%	4.3%	6.1%	4.3%	5.7%
Carroll	5.5%	6.1%	6.3%	7.9%	5.7%	6.3%
Grayson	4.7%	5.8%	6.4%	7.7%	5.9%	6.1%
Pulaski	4.6%	3.7%	4.8%	6.5%	4.4%	6.0%
Galax	4.5%	6.9%	8.5%	8.8%	7.0%	6.4%
Virginia	3.3%	3.2%	3.3%	3.2%	3.2%	3.1%
US	5.1%	5.0%	5.1%	4.9%	4.8%	4.5%

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.