



WYTHE Economic Development News

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

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Note from the Executive Director

A recent focus on the more formal side of strategic planning (see second page), reminded me of some very basic but important principles of the endeavor. When a young scientist at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, I had an opportunity to receive training in project management. To this day I remember a simple, lasting story illustrating the importance of both grasping the big

picture view as well as mastering the details. Working toward a goal is like climbing a ladder. You must carefully and methodically move from one step on the ladder to the next to accomplish the goal. With skill, and maybe a little luck, we will systematically move up the ladder to success. Just as important is to make sure that once you reach the top of your ladder you find it to be leaning against the correct building. Sometimes we diligently attend to the details, often efficiently, only to realize that our ladder was leaning on the wrong building, and thus we've not really been effective. Our goal at the Joint IDA is to provide proper attention to both the big picture and the execution of the details.

Alan Hawthorne

Career Coaching Enters Second Year

Workforce development continues to be a key item for the Joint IDA and is part of its updated strategic plan (see next page). One major component of the community's focus on workforce development was the placement of a career coach at each high school/middle school pair in the county (see [Summer 2006 issue](#)). The program commenced last fall with the hiring of three coaches, one for each school pair plus a career coach from Wytheville Community College. The career coaches' focus last year on middle school was one of the more progressive in the Commonwealth. The coaches organize career and reality



Career coaches and manufacturing technology instructors visit Musser Lumber in Rural Retreat.

fairs to help students learn of real-world opportunities and challenges. The coaches also work on important topics such as soft skill development. An outcome of last year's assessment is that students scored high in aptitude for manufacturing careers, but expressed relatively low interest in such careers. The Joint IDA is working closely with the Wythe Manufacturing Council on effective ways to educate students on career opportunities in the new high-performance manufacturing of today.

Mid-Atlantic Completes Expansion

Mid-Atlantic Manufacturing and Hydraulics, a division of West Virginia-based Swanson Industries, recently celebrated expansion of its Rural Retreat facility, more than doubling its building size and adding over 50 new jobs. The company manufactures fluid power, mining, and construction equipment. Mid-Atlantic has operated in the Rural Retreat Industrial Park since 2001.



Swanson Industries' VP Mark Carter and President Tom DeWitt receive state flag from Secretary Gottschalk at recent dedication.

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www.WytheIDA.org

Strategic Planning

Over the past summer, the Joint IDA was in the process of revisiting its strategic plan. The proposed plan update reaffirms the successful core strategy that (a) focuses on matching Progress Park, with its strategic location and robust infrastructure, to those companies that would most benefit from these advantages and that provide attractive job creation and investment for Wythe County and (b) works with existing local industry to enhance its competitive position in the global economy while accomplishing the goal of quality employment and investment in the community. To supplement this basic strategy, the Joint IDA is proposing to add four specific initiatives to its strategic plan: (1) pursue data centers as a target industry, (2) create a direct access from the interstate into Progress Park, (3) pursue, if appropriate, the development of a Wytheville Business Park, and (4) continue the recent effort to highlight workforce development. The Joint IDA invites citizens and economic development partners to submit feedback on the draft plan by December 1. The draft strategic plan can be found on our website at www.WytheIDA.org/reports.aspx.

Industry Recognition Awards

The Joint IDA presented its Special Recognition Award to Longwood Elastomers at the Wytheville-Wythe-Bland Chamber of Commerce annual dinner on November 19. For specifics of the award, see the press release at www.wytheida.org/pressreleases.aspx. Lane Enterprises was recognized with a new industry award. Industry tenure awards will be presented at a special dinner to be held on January 24, 2008.



Longwood Elastomers receives the Joint IDA's Special Recognition Award for 2007.

Six Sigma and Lean Manufacturing Assistance

Competing in today's global markets often requires manufacturers to implement programs such as Lean Manufacturing and Six Sigma. The Manufacturing Technology Center (MTC), headquartered at Wytheville Community College, offers assistance with these and other programs. Beginning January 14, 2008, the MTC will teach a twelve-week course on Six Sigma Green Belt Training and Product Support. Participants will meet weekly at 8 a.m. until noon with the day and place to be determined. The course demonstrates Six Sigma Green Belt tools using a project simulation. Each participant will be required to have a job-related or sponsor-approved project, and the course agenda is designed to help participants with their individual projects. For more information on this course or other MTC programs such as lean manufacturing and environmental audit compliance, visit www.mtcofswva.org or contact the MTC at 223-4881.

Revolving Loan Fund Assistance

With tighter credit markets, 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	July-06	July-07	Aug-06	Aug-07	Sept-06	Sept-07
Wythe	4.7%	5.2%	4.7%	4.6%	3.7%	4.1%
Bland	4.4%	4.1%	4.3%	4.0%	3.8%	3.8%
Smyth	4.7%	5.0%	4.6%	4.4%	4.5%	4.2%
Carroll	5.0%	5.2%	5.3%	5.5%	5.1%	5.5%
Grayson	6.0%	4.1%	5.9%	5.3%	6.3%	5.1%
Pulaski	3.8%	5.6%	5.8%	6.4%	3.6%	4.8%
Galax	6.8%	4.7%	6.2%	5.8%	6.7%	6.1%
Virginia	3.3%	3.1%	3.2%	3.1%	3.1%	2.8%
US	5.0%	4.9%	4.6%	4.6%	4.4%	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.