



WYTHE Economic Development News

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

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Note from the Executive Director

Balance. Can we have a balance between traditional job growth and the desire to maintain the rural character and natural beauty of our community? Or must one or the other be a primary goal with the other goal being an important, but secondary guide? These are the questions that a community visioning committee with the assistance

of Virginia Tech's Center for Public Administration and Policy will be addressing in the coming weeks as the Wytheville/ Wythe Horizons series of community deliberative forums conclude. Two strong themes have surfaced repeatedly during community forums. The first is the need for quality job opportunities for citizens, especially opportunities for our youth who frequently leave for economic opportunity even though they express a desire to remain in the community if quality employment opportunities were available. The second theme is the desire to preserve the small-town rural character of our community, with special emphasis on maintaining our natural beauty. The results of this visioning effort will have a dramatic impact on economic development efforts for years to come. We would do well to pray for wisdom to choose the best vision and dream for the future of our community.

Alan Hawthorne

DBA Programs Benefit Local Companies

Several Wythe County industries are benefiting from programs offered by the Virginia Department of Business Assistance. DBA's Workforce Services Division offers programs designed to help new or expanding companies meet training goals.

Two programs assist with recruiting and training new employees. The programs reimburse authorized expenses and provide training resources such as the popular "Train-the-Trainer" course. A unique benefit of these programs is the production of a free training video. A professional film crew works on-site to produce a video that can be used for recruitment, training, or



Workforce Services films at local firm.

general marketing. This service is free to qualified businesses that create new jobs in Virginia. The video production alone is worth approximately \$20,000. The minimum program requirement can be as low as five new jobs and \$100,000 of new capital investment.

The third Workforce Services program is a retraining program designed to offset some of the costs of retraining employees to stay competitive. For more information, please contact the Joint IDA at 223-3370 or DBA's Shannon Blevins at (276) 608-2145.

Industry Appreciation Golf Tournament Set

Mark your calendars to participate in the annual Industry Appreciation Golf Tournament scheduled for May 27 at the Wytheville Golf Club. The tournament is being held in conjunction with the state's Business Appreciation Week activities. Donations of door prizes, grab-bag items, and other awards are welcomed. Please contact the Joint IDA for registration forms and sponsorship information. If you would like to serve on the golf tournament planning committee, chaired by Joint IDA Board Member Robert Ayers, please let us know. We look forward to seeing you on May 27.

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SCC Hearing Examiner Rules on DENA Facility

On January 27, the State Corporation Commission released a report by Hearing Examiner Michael D. Thomas on Duke Energy's application to build a gas-fired combined cycle generation facility in Foster Falls. The report recommended that the application be either denied or remanded for further study. Duke Energy is currently working to provide additional information on issues raised by the hearing examiner's report. The proposed project has previously received approval from several other government agencies.

Broadband Seminar Draws Interest

The "Broadband Options in the Wytheville Area" seminar was a huge success. Over thirty community participants devoted the morning of January 16, 2003, to learning about broadband services. Speakers covered topics such as wireless and DSL options. Copies of most of the presentation slide shows are available. Please contact Mike Webb of the Joint IDA at 223-3370 if you would like a copy or if you need more information on broadband service to your business location.

We would like to offer a big thank you to Virginia's Center for Innovative Technology (CIT), the Small Business Development Center, the Manufacturing Technology Center, and the Wytheville-Wythe-Bland Chamber of Commerce, Inc., for serving as co-sponsors. Thanks also goes to CIT for sponsoring lunch, Sprint for sponsoring morning refreshments, and Wordsprint for designing and printing flyers.



Broadband Seminar Scenes

Southwest Specialty Heat Treat ISO Certified

Southwest Specialty Heat Treat, Inc., of Wytheville recently earned ISO 9001-2000 Certification. Southwest Specialty Heat Treat provides customized heat treating of metal components. In addition to heat treating services, the company also offers assembly services. The Manufacturing Technology Center supported Southwest Specialty Heat Treat by providing technical assistance during the certification process. Congratulations to company President David Carpenter and his team for their hard work.

Revolving Loan Fund Accepting Applications

The Joint IDA continues to accept applications for its Revolving Loan Fund. If you are a small business needing assistance bridging the amount available from bank financing and the amount of your needs, a Revolving Loan Fund loan may be what you need. Call the Joint IDA office for information or for an application package.

Unemployment Rate Continues to Improve

Wythe County's unemployment rate steadily declined over the past quarter. In fact, for the last two months, Wythe County's unemployment rate has been below the national average. This drop in unemployment can be largely attributed to recent expansions at local companies. While they might not generate the publicity of a large expansion or new facility announcement, a series of small expansions can have a significant impact on the local economy. Additionally, a series of smaller expansions helps diversify the economy in that the new jobs are not coming from one source. These figures show an encouraging trend for Wythe County, and we hope it continues.

Location	Oct-01	Oct-02	Nov-01	Nov-02	Dec-01	Dec-02
Wythe	9.8%	5.7%	6.6%	5.2%	6.9%	5.1%
Bland	5.9%	3.6%	3.9%	4.2%	3.9%	3.9%
Smyth	8.1%	10.1%	7.6%	10.0%	7.9%	9.9%
Carroll	7.6%	12.1%	7.1%	7.6%	6.8%	5.1%
Grayson	7.1%	4.2%	6.3%	10.0%	6.1%	6.7%
Pulaski	14.8%	9.9%	6.0%	4.9%	6.6%	4.3%
Galax	6.0%	14.3%	5.1%	8.7%	4.6%	4.1%
Virginia	3.5%	3.8%	3.6%	3.6%	3.6%	3.6%
US	5.0%	5.4%	5.3%	5.7%	5.4%	5.7%

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.