



WYTHE Economic Development News

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

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Winter 2006



Note from the Executive Director

Wow, what a start to the new year! In addition to Governor Warner's announcement in the closing days of his administration that Amcor PET Packaging will locate in Progress Park, January provided afternoon temperatures of around 60° for the hugely successful Wytheville Job Fair. We are very appreciative of all our partners who helped organize this event.

We have been kept happily busy with these events, as well as the ongoing development of the Gatorade site in Progress Park. We have also undergone some organizational change. We wish out-going board member Bob Ayers all the best and welcome Dr. David Johnson as the new Rural Retreat representative on the board. We will be welcoming Danielle Skeens as the new Joint IDA administrative assistant on March 1 and look forward to the skills she brings to the organization. Although we will certainly miss Angie Pack in the office, we wish her well as she begins her career with Gatorade. Appreciation is also extended to Andy Hall for his support as he leaves Virginia's aCorridor at the end of February.

Alan Hawthorne

See the full press release at www.yesvirginia.org/About_Us/NewsArticle.aspx?newsid=773

Job Fair Huge Success

The Wytheville Job Fair far exceeded expectations, with an estimated 2100 job seekers attending. Initially scheduled as a two-day event, the fair was extended to a third day in response to the heavy turnout. Thirty companies plus several other organizations exhibited. Employers and employees alike expressed satisfaction with the job fair. Attendees came from across the region, including West Virginia and North Carolina. Registration surveys showed about 31% of the attendees to be unemployed.



Over 2000 job seekers attended the Wytheville Job Fair.

A key feature of the job fair was the opportunity for job seekers to sign up for free WorkKeys tests leading to a Career Readiness Certificate. Approximately 450 participants signed up for the tests. Once testing is complete and CRCs issued, the number of certificate holders in the region will dramatically increase. Gold-, silver-, or bronze-level certificates are awarded depending on test scores and verify competencies in the critical areas of applied math, reading, and locating information.

Amcor PET Packaging Coming to Progress Park

Governor Mark Warner announced on January 10, 2006, that Amcor PET Packaging will construct a facility in Wythe County, creating 144 new jobs and \$105 M of capital investment. The company will construct a 700,000 sq ft building on Progress Park Lot 18 adjacent to the Gatorade facility. This rail-served site was graded as part of Progress Park Phase II improvements.

Amcor PET Packaging is a leading manufacturer of PET (polyethylene terephthalate) plastic packaging for the global beverage, food, and non-food industries. The Amcor facility will supply hot-fillable plastic bottles to Gatorade and to other beverage manufacturers. Amcor PET Packaging is part of Amcor Limited, which is headquartered in Melbourne, Australia, and employs 27,000 people worldwide.

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www.WytheIDA.org

Joint IDA Board and Staff Changes

The Joint IDA welcomes two new persons to its team and says good-bye and thank you to two others. Administrative Assistant Angela Pack has decided to pursue other opportunities after just over one year with the Joint IDA. Bob Ayers, who represented the Town of Rural Retreat on the Joint IDA board, has stepped down as he no longer resides in Rural Retreat. Bob's attentive leadership and organizational skills have especially helped make the Industry Appreciation Golf Tournament an annual success, and he will be missed in this role.



Welcome Danielle Skeens as the new Joint IDA administrative assistant.

While the Joint IDA will miss Angie and Bob and wishes them success, it welcomes Danielle Skeens as its new administrative assistant and Dr. David Johnson as the new board member from Rural Retreat. Ms. Skeens is a Wythe County native who previously worked for the Wythe County Sheriff's Office. She is a graduate of Wytheville Community College and is pursuing a bachelor's degree in marketing at Old Dominion University through its Teletechnet program. Dr. David Johnson is interim vice president of instruction and student development at Wytheville Community College. He previously served WCC as dean of continuing education and is a long-time partner with the Joint IDA, especially in the area of workforce development.

Industry Appreciation Golf Tournament Set

The annual Industry Appreciation Golf Tournament is set for May 18, 2006, at the Wytheville Golf Club. The event is held in conjunction with statewide Business Appreciation Week activities, set for May 15–21, 2006. Participation in recent tournaments has increased every year, and it is hoped that this year's tournament will continue the trend. Information on registration and sponsorship opportunities will be distributed shortly. Be sure to mark the date on your calendar.

Revolving Loan Fund

As interest rates rise, your business may find itself in need of alternative sources of financing. The Joint IDA Revolving Loan Fund is designed to provide "gap" financing between what qualified small businesses need and what they can obtain from traditional sources. The fund is for companies creating or retaining jobs in Wythe County. For more information, call the Joint IDA at 223-3370 or visit www.WytheIDA.org.

Online Business Information

A fairly new web site provides a single entry point to access a wealth of resources for Virginia businesses. By visiting www.Business.Virginia.gov you can access materials on business startup, permits, taxes, and assistance programs. The site also contains valuable links to regulatory agencies and has information on becoming a state vendor, among many other topics.

Regional Unemployment Rates

While unemployment rates are below national averages for Wythe County and some of its neighboring jurisdictions, the Wytheville Job Fair provided proof that a large segment of the workforce is still seeking better opportunities in the area.

Location	Oct-04	Oct-05	Nov-04	Nov-05	Dec-04	Dec-05
Wythe	3.9%	3.7%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%	4.1%
Bland	3.3%	3.6%	3.4%	3.8%	3.1%	3.6%
Smyth	4.8%	4.9%	4.5%	4.7%	5.0%	4.6%
Carroll	4.2%	4.6%	4.5%	5.5%	4.3%	5.6%
Grayson	4.4%	4.5%	4.3%	5.5%	5.0%	5.2%
Pulaski	4.7%	3.7%	4.6%	4.6%	4.3%	4.5%
Galax	5.2%	3.7%	4.9%	6.1%	5.3%	7.1%
Virginia	3.3%	3.2%	3.4%	3.3%	3.4%	3.0%
US	5.1%	4.6%	5.2%	4.8%	5.1%	4.6%

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.