

The Business Journal

of Tri-Cities Tennessee / Virginia

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Eastman, Costa inducted into JA Business Hall of Fame

Plus:

Miyake commits
to Phipps Bend
and
Laughlin, MSHA
close merger deal

Mark J. Costa at Eastman's corporate headquarters. Photo courtesy Eastman.

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COVER STORY

17 Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame

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Cover Photo of Mark J. Costa at Eastman headquarters courtesy Eastman and Junior Achievement Tri-Cities



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KINGSPORT 100

Celebrating the Kingsport Spirit ▶ 2017

MANUFACTURING COMMUNITY UNITY

Kingsport has long prided itself on “the Kingsport Spirit” a notion coined by the late J. Fred Johnson, who defined the spirit as, “one of mutual helpfulness and a willingness to submerge selfish interests.”

If indeed the city was founded on that ideal 100 years ago, then around 40 years ago, that spirit was less in evidence than it had been at anytime before. Petty disputes dominated politics and business.

In response, the Chamber of Commerce created a summer festival, Fun Fest, to give residents an opportunity to put aside their differences and enjoy each other’s company. The city, which was famous for manufacturing, began to manufacture community unity.

Today, Fun Fest has not only fulfilled its original purpose, it has grown to become one of the most successful events of its type in the nation.

2017 Chairman Carlos Carvajal, a native of Bogotá, Colombia, brings an exciting engineering and global perspective to the



Carlos Carvajal and Festus

local festival. He’s particularly excited about two events: Makers Faire and Busking around the World.

Makers Faire has grown over the last four years as an engine to encourage the next generation to learn more about science and engineering-related fields through multiple hands-on activities. Makers Faire kicks off after Breakfast with the Balloons July 22 at the Civic Auditorium.

“We hope to gain some synergies between Kids Central and Makers Faire this year. We want to reach as many kids as possible and encourage them to attend both events and get excited about science, technology, engineering and math,” says Carvajal.

Busking around the World will showcase many cultures represented in our area. Street performers and artists known as ‘buskers’ will fill the sidewalks and

alleys of Broad Street from Church Circle to Main Street at the free event July 15.



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All 40 Under Forty nomination materials are due no

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The 25th Annual 40 Under Forty Gala will be held at the Millennium Centre in Johnson City on Friday, October 6. Call 423.979.1300 for more information.

Honorees attend at no charge.



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40 Under Forty honorees will be featured in the December issue of The Business Journal.

Deadline for nominations is July 26, 2017. Nominate online at 40under.com

We're number one through 50!



You may have noticed the trend in journalism over the last few years of publishing lists where articles used to be. In the old days, we journalists had a very specific term for our colleagues who slapped together lists instead of taking the time to craft an article or column: lazy. These, however, are not the old days.

I attended a journalism conference in May in which “list-icles” were discussed

at length. The only problem most of my fellows had with these one-time abominations wasn’t that they were space-filler that almost always failed to give the readers useful information. It was that they are, and here’s an example of today’s specific journalism terms: “click-baity.”

The list-icle pitch that most often comes into my email inbox from ad agencies, government departments and sundry p.r. hacks is the ranking. Not a day goes by that I’m not informed by someone that my country, state, county, city, neighborhood or side of the bed is near the top or the bottom of some remarkably important ranking. On ranked list-icle writers’ busy days, depending on what they are selling, I am clearly intended to believe I am living simultaneously in heaven and hell.

To point out the silliness of it all, I have compiled my own ranking, showing that Tennessee is in fact, the top ranked state in the nation, the bottom ranked state in the nation, and all 48 other rankings in between*. These rankings were compiled from actual press releases from the last 18 months.

Where Tennessee ranks:

1. Auto manufacturing
2. Road and bridge quality – sent by a lobbyist against the gas tax
3. Overall tax burden – sent by a lobbyist for the gas tax
4. Best state to retire to – sent by a marketer for senior living communities. You see how this works, don’t you?
5. Cost of living
6. Electricity prices
7. State government fiscal stability
8. Dog ownership
9. High school graduation rate - did you know it was that high?
10. Best place to practice medicine
11. Best place to be an entrepreneur
12. Strictest DUI laws
13. Charitable giving
14. Job growth

15. Number of farms selling food locally
16. Total population
17. Tourism revenue - did you know it was that low?
18. Female earnings as a percentage of male
19. Fourth grade science scores
20. Workforce productivity
21. Eighth grade science scores
22. Incidence of cancer
23. Population growth rate
24. LEED Certified Commercial Spaces
25. Fourth grade math scores
26. Most automobile-deer collisions
27. Percentage of population spending more than it earns
28. Home ownership
29. Broadband access
30. Advancement opportunities for law enforcement officers
31. Energy efficiency
32. Overall children’s health
33. Opportunities for romance and fun
34. College affordability
35. Median home value
36. Total area in square miles
37. Safe driving habits
38. Credit rating
39. Dating opportunities
40. Voter registration percentage
41. Employer health insurance coverage rates
42. Obesity rate
43. Power grid reliability
44. Smoking rate
45. Average income
46. Cancer death rate
47. Affordable sales tax
48. High blood pressure
49. Violent Crime
50. Opioid prescriptions per capita, fatal automobile crashes involving cell phones, accidental shooting deaths and voter turnout.

So there you are. I hope you feel appropriately proud, ashamed and 48 other emotions in between, because the way list-icles work is that everyone in Tennessee is presumed to be accurately represented by all 50 of these rankings.

**My apologies, Virginia readers. I haven’t the space for 100 entries.*

New contracts on homes sales hit a 13-month high in May

According to the Northeast Tennessee Association of Realtors' (NETAR) Trends Report 826 new pending sales had been logged by the end of the month. That is 81 more than April and 102 more than May last year.

Combined with contracts that haven't moved to closing, the new contracts pushed the active, pending sales total to 1,190, which is also a 13-month high.

Pending sales are the number of single-family homes, condominiums, and townhomes with accepted offers. They typically move to closing in a month to six weeks, but that process has slowed in the last two months. One reason is the number of contingency sales has increased. The normal fall-through rate on pending sales is 4 percent. Contingency contracts do not necessarily increase the fall-through rate, but they can slow the amount of time it takes for them to move to closing.

NETAR President Eric Kistner said there were a little over 1,000 new listings in May bumping the year-over-year total 7 percent better than last year. "That's welcome news because it shows more owners have decided now is a good time to sell." The local market has seen



Market Data Report

May Existing Home Sales

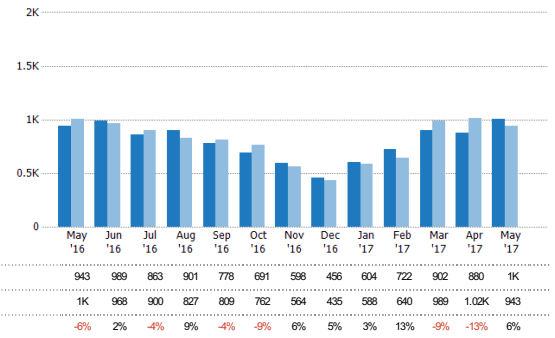
New Listings

The number of new single-family, condominium and townhome listings that were added each month.

Filters Used

Custom Area: NETAR - Full Area
Property Type:
Condo/Townhouse/Apt, Single
Family Residence

Month/ Year	Count	% Chg.
May '17	1K	6.5%
May '16	943	-6%
May '15	1K	8%



a tight inventory for over a year while sales continue moving at a record pace. "That's beginning to push the average sales prices higher at a faster pace than we have seen in the past two years," he added.

However, May's new listings were not enough to significantly change the overall inventory picture. "We're 19 percent below last year active listing total and have 5.4 months of inventory," he said. That is the number of months it would take to exhaust active listings at the current sales rate.

The year-to-date average listing price is \$233,877, up 8.4 percent from the average for the first five months of last year.

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Ups & Downs

A quick check of the conventional wisdom on who's going what direction in Tri-Cities business



Northeast State - First, best wishes to Janice Gilliam, former Northeast State president, in her retirement. But that's not the reason for this up arrow. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce recently noted the apprenticeship program at the Regional Center for Advanced Manufacturing in its "Learning to Work, Working to Learn" report alongside programs at such notable institutions as Bates College, DePaul University and the University of Texas.



Eastman - You'll read a good bit about the Kingsport-based specialty chemical company in this issue, but it bears noting in this space that Eastman has recently been acting as a great ally for the region's economic developers. A Chinese company has made visits to the region as it considers where in the United States to make a significant capital investment and create a good number of high-paying jobs. Eastman has taken a lead role in the recruitment process. The region's economic developers know a rising tide lifts all boats and Eastman's investment in their efforts is an investment in the region's economy as a whole.



Reelsolver (Book of Lists) - This one's a bit self-serving, we admit, but Tim Siglin and Donnan Morris at Reelsolver have been doing great work putting together our 2017 Book of Lists. Since outsourcing the research component of the BoL to Reelsolver last year, we've been pleased with the work they've done. If you get a call or email from Donnan this month, please take a moment to update your information for this year's book. It's due out with the September issue.



Bristol, Va. - We won't beat the dead horse of how Bristol got to be in the fiscal condition in which it finds itself. The city recently went through a painful budgeting process in which it was forced to consider cutting investments in tourism through funding of the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Birthplace of County Music Museum, which runs the well-attended Rhythm and Roots Reunion. We cannot fault the city for taking austerity measures. But the fact that those measures mean the city cannot fully invest in the one industry that brings outside dollars in to relieve the tax burden on local citizens is unfortunate at best.



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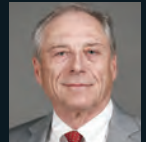
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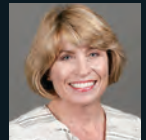
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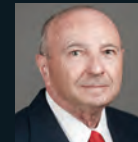
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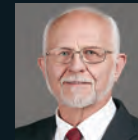
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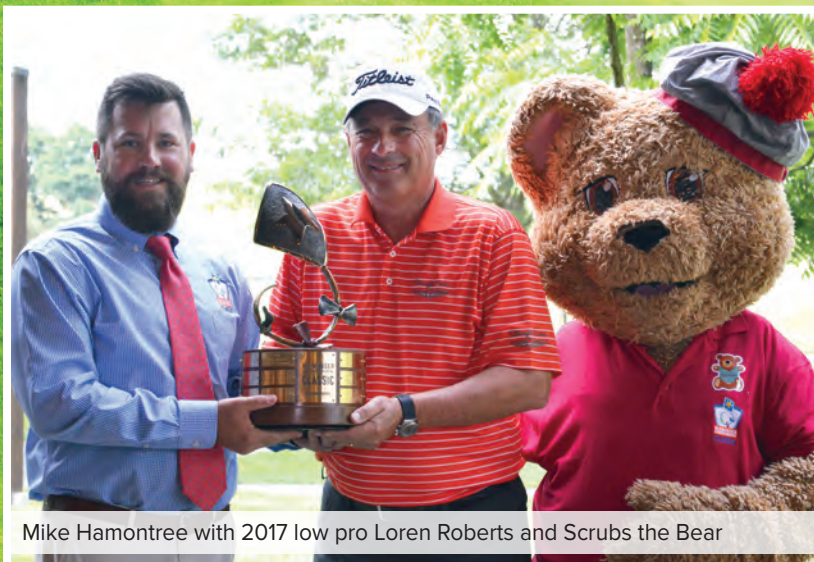
The Niswonger Children's Hospital Golf Classic gave local golfers the opportunity to tee it up June 29 with 39 celebrity and tour players at the Olde Farm golf course in Abingdon, Va. Generous local golfers donated their playing fees to the Children's Hospital to have the chance to play with some big name talent.

Some of the PGA tour players included Corey Pavin, Loren Roberts, Gene Sauers, Stuart Appleby, Kevin Sutherland, Paul Goydos and Mike Hulbert. LPGA players were Stephanie Delgreco, Brooke Pancake, and Jaye Marie Green. Celebrities included Phil Fulmer, Mike Smith and Chipper Jones.

The Golf Classic events Sunday evening included a VIP Pairing Par Tee, live and silent auction and concluded with the Classic Concert at the NPAC auditorium which featured Brian Culbertson and his Funk Tour. The Niswonger Children's Hospital serves more than 200,000 children in a 29-county radius in Northeast Tennessee, Southwest Virginia, Southeast Kentucky and Western North Carolina. Photos courtesy Mountain States Health Alliance



Chris and Sabrina Miller enjoy the day with son Levi and daughter Addie.



Mike Hamontree with 2017 low pro Loren Roberts and Scrubs the Bear



Arriving at the Classic



Participants get in a few practice swings



Former Atlanta Braves Chipper Jones (front, center) leads the 2017 tournament field.



Team Jarden-Zinc celebrates after the tournament. (L-R) Randy Harkelroad, Jeff Blake, Classic Director Mike Hammontree, Scrubs the Bear, April Smith and Tom Wennogle.



WJHL's Josh Smith conducts the auction.



The Golf Channel interviews Niswonger Children's Hospital CEO Lisa Carter



Scott Niswonger with Brian Culbertson

Miyake Forging to invest \$13.7 million in new Phipps Bend plant

By Scott Robertson

Miyake Forging, a Japan-based bearing and parts company, announced in June it will build a new automotive bearing parts manufacturing facility in Surgoinsville, Tenn.'s Phipps Bend Industrial Park. The company said it will create 60 jobs and invest \$13.7 million in its inaugural North American operation.

"I have a great feeling about opening our new facility in Hawkins County," Miyake Forging North America President Akitoshi Fujikawa said. "At Miyake, we are very happy to expand our business in the United States of America. We are extremely thankful to all of the people who helped make this happen. We hope to grow and contribute our humble efforts to the prosperity of Hawkins County and the United States."

The announcement was hailed by Tennessee economic development executives at the June 7 groundbreaking. "I'd like to welcome Miyake to Tennessee and look forward to the company's future in Hawkins County," Economic and Community Development Commissioner Bob Rolfe said. "Tennessee prides itself on craftsmanship and manufacturing excellence and I'm pleased that Miyake has chosen to call Tennessee home."

Miyake will build a 45,000-square-foot facility in Phipps Bend Industrial Park in Hawkins County. The facility, which is expected to be operational by early 2018, will manufacture automotive bearing parts through hot and cold forging processes.

Founded in 1939 in Osaka, Miyake today operates its headquarters plant in Mie, with another plant in Shiga, Japan. The company also operates a 7,200-square-meter plant in Rayong, Thailand.

The company produces a variety of bearing parts that facilitate movement in machines, most notably automobiles. Among those are ball bearings, transmission and clutch bearings, hub bearings, tension bearings, taper and needle bearings. The company also manufactures parts for automotive steering and brake assemblies, as well as CVT and constant-velocity joints. In addition, parts are manufactured for motorcycles, piping and shafts.

Local officials and the Tennessee Valley Authority applauded Miyake for its investment in Hawkins County. "We are pleased to welcome Miyake Forging North America to Hawkins County," Hawkins County Mayor Melville Bailey said. "Miyake's decision to locate in Phipps Bend Industrial Park reinforces our position that Hawkins County offers the quality of workforce that industries need and want. We look forward to working with the company in any way possible to ensure many prosperous years in Hawkins County."

"TVA and the Holston Electric Cooperative congratulate Miyake Forging North America Corporation on its announcement to locate and create new quality job opportunities in Surgoinsville, Tennessee," said John Bradley, TVA Senior Vice President of Economic Development. "We are pleased to partner with the State of Tennessee, Hawkins County Industrial Board, NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership and the Phipps Bend Joint Venture Managing Committee to facilitate Miyake's new location decision." 



The June 7 groundbreaking Photos courtesy NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership



Community and Economic Development Commissioner Bob Rolfe speaks with Miyake Forging North America's Kazuo Kudotani



Artist's rendering of the Miyake plant at Phipps Bend

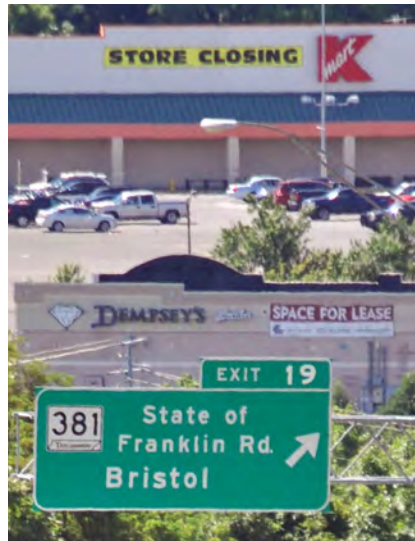
Pending Kmart closure creates commercial real estate buzz

By Scott Robertson

With the June 6 announcement from Sears/Kmart corporate headquarters that Kmart store 7353 in Johnson City would be shuttered, a new excitement surrounding the future of that piece of land has arisen. If, as the old joke goes, the three most important factors in real estate are location, location and location, then the lot at the junction of Interstate 26 and State of Franklin Road checks all three boxes.

The purchase price for Kmart's 20.33 acre lot in 1994 was \$12,393,812, according to property transfer records. But the most recent appraisal of the property, conducted in 2014, shows a total market value of \$8,532,800. According to those figures, the land market value is \$6,632,700 and value for improvements (the building, parking lot, lighting, landscaping, etc.) is \$1,900,100, according to the state comptroller.

The current building is 172, 251 square feet, but is also more than 20 years old and could be razed to



The lot's ease of access to I-26 and State of Franklin Road will be a unique selling point. Photo by Scott Robertson

make way for more contemporary space. The expected sale of the property marks the second time the lot has generated significant excitement. In 1994, it was considered the gateway to a new era of prosperity. At that time, as the city's growth pattern was taking retail and restaurant businesses beyond their heritage locations on North Roan Street, the construction of a Super Kmart on "Washington County Lot 037E" served as the watershed moment that opened the North State of Franklin corridor to development beyond planned med-tech.

As time has passed and retail shopping patterns have changed, however, the lot's importance has dwindled along with its contributions to the local sales tax coffers. Kmart demoted the store from Super Kmart to regular Kmart status years ago, and the location's fortunes have mirrored the downward spiral of Sears/Kmart's national

status. The Johnson City store is one of 72 slated to close. BJ



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Laughlin, Mountain States complete merger

By Scott Robertson

Laughlin Memorial Hospital and Mountain States Health Alliance officially joined Mountain States Health Alliance June 30, completing a merger that had been announced last November. “This historic step will help preserve and strengthen Laughlin Memorial Hospital,” said Chuck Whitfield, CEO of Laughlin. “We are excited to expand upon our decades-long relationship with Mountain States by becoming an integrated part of the system. This will allow us to not only protect access for our community but also to expand services in areas where they are needed.”

The merger marks the end of an era in health care in the region. Laughlin was the last independent hospital operating in Northeast Tennessee. “It was a matter of community pride along with employee pride in our hospital that we were independent,” Whitfield said. “It resulted in all decisions being made locally and could be implemented, at least we felt like, much quicker than if we had been part of a bigger system. So we could maintain



Mountain States' WINGS Air Rescue helicopter on the pad at Laughlin the day after the merger agreement was signed.



Laughlin's main entrance

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Alan Levine of Mountain States and Chuck Whitfield of Laughlin at the November merger announcement (file photo)



Marvin Eichorn

that independence as long as financially we were sound enough to do that. But as time has gone on it has become too big of a challenge.”

That challenge is not unique to Laughlin. Mounting financial, demographic and regulatory pressures have led to the closing of more than 70 rural hospitals since 2010. “It is a reimbursement challenge that has been driven by the decreased volume of patients,” Whitfield said. “In the last year or so we have seen a 13 percent decline in inpatients and about a 2 percent decline in outpatients. When you couple those declines with a decrease in reimbursements, while at the same time our expenses are going up 5 and 6 percent, it’s just not a sustainable model.”

That having been said, the Mountain States plan for Laughlin’s future operations includes a commitment to increase the investment in the hospital, not cut it. As part of the definitive agreement, Mountain States has committed to making a minimum of \$28 million worth of capital investments in Laughlin over the next five years.

“Laughlin is a beautiful hospital,” said Marvin Eichorn, Mountain States executive vice president and chief operating officer. “It is phenomenally well-main-

tained. It has a beautiful medical office building. They have done a fantastic job in terms of investing in technology and things you want to have for patients in terms of diagnostics, surgical equipment and that sort of thing. So a good bit of this \$28 million is going to insure we keep that up.”

The rest, Eichorn said, will be invested in potential expansion of services. “We have typically done a lot in communities we have been fortunate enough to work with is working closely with medical staff and bringing in new physicians, hopefully in some cases, physicians who will bring additional capabilities as an added service to the community. We have talked with Chuck a lot about physician recruitment. Along with that, for most doctors, especially surgeons, there are things you have to do in terms of new equipment in order to ensure they have the technology they need to provide that additional service. We’ll be working to identify all this in the next zero to six months to make sure we continue to have capital to keep things well-maintained plus new services and new technologies.”

Laughlin became the 14th hospital in the Mountain States system. Until such time as the states of Tennessee and Virginia complete their assessment of the proposed merger between Mountain States and Wellmont Health System, Laughlin employees will see little in the way of change as a direct result of their own merger with Mountain States.

Whitfield said he was pleased Mountain States is holding off on changes to employee badges, benefits and other details until the Wellmont matter is resolved, so that Laughlin’s people don’t potentially have to deal with two transitions in a short time-span. “We believe this strategy will be the smoothest and most cost effective for everyone.”

That common sense mindset was just one of the reasons Laughlin chose to merge with Mountain States after talking with three other hospital chains, Whitfield said. “It always came back to Mountain States for a number of reasons: our long-standing relationship, proximity, reputation and culture. It all just fit for our hospital.”

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Mark J. Costa and David Golden of Eastman



2017 *Laureate* Mark J. Costa

Mark J. Costa, chairman and CEO of Eastman, rose from working class, if not humble, beginnings. He was born to Alice and Donald Costa and raised in Salinas, California. Donald Costa was a first-generation American, his parents having emigrated from Portugal. An entrepreneur, Donald became successful in agriculture and trucking, eventually giving Mark the opportunity to become the first member of his family to pursue a college education.

While Mark was an adolescent, he developed an affinity for outdoor sports, enjoying everything from water skiing to tennis to mountain biking. But four years before Mark was to graduate high school, Donald began teaching his son the value of real-world hard work.

"By the time I was 14, I would go work in the truck yards and do maintenance every summer," Costa remembers. "I worked my way into the business office by the time I got to be a senior in high school, but I was always sort of working in that kind of business. Working in the maintenance yard gave me a deep appreciation for hard labor and hard work that people do in this country."

When Costa arrived at the University of California – Berkeley, he had already planned out his career – or at least he thought he had.

"I was pre-med all the way through college," Costa says. "I always thought I was going to be a doctor. That was my mission in life, my goal, and so I was always taking a lot of science as much as I could. Somehow, I had the intuition along the way to also be an economics major in addition to doing all of the pre-med work when I finally got to Berkeley, which worked out well for me in the end."

Things changed dramatically for Costa

during his senior year when his father's business went bankrupt. With the family in a difficult financial situation, med school was no longer an option. Costa went to work to help the family get by. The work ethic his parents had instilled in Mark proved its worth.

"It turned out to be great," Costa says. "I am glad that I ended up on the path I am, but I think one of the things it taught me is you can't predict life. Success and failure in life is defined by the choices you make when opportunity or tragedy strike and how you respond to it."

Costa ultimately ended up going to work for a consulting firm called the Monitor Group. He traveled the country, meeting with clients and growing his own business acumen as he helped them. It was during his time with the Monitor Group that he met the remarkable woman who would become his wife, Gita.

"I was the last person to walk on the plane because I was late," Costa remembers. "I sat down next to her and we started talking. We happened to have a connection that her closest friend at work was dating my roommate from college. As that goes, that allowed us to build a conversation and we ended up dating and ultimately getting married. It was certainly the best decision of all of my decisions in my life. I am incredibly fortunate to have her as a partner in life because she certainly makes me a much better person."

"I didn't tell her, by the way, that the seat wasn't my seat on the plane until three months after we started dating, but again, opportunities and choices, right?" Costa smiles. "You know, the seat presented itself. I chose to sit there instead of my assigned seat and that was an excellent decision. So it always shows up: life is choices."

In addition to giving him the opportunity to meet the love of his life, working for the Monitor Group gave Mark the chance to study a broad range of businesses, learning what worked and what didn't in a wide variety of circumstances.

"I wouldn't say it was forethought, where I knew what I was doing, but it positioned me well because it gave me a tremendous business education, to learn a lot about industries, a lot about different companies, and different leadership styles by seeing so many different firms," Costa says, "and that ultimately led me to Eastman."

Eastman had a corporate culture that was unique among his clients, Costa says. "Most corporations are consumed with unproductive politics inside the company where everyone is trying to advance their own career often at the expense of someone else's career, or just not collaborating in the ways that they could, over their own insecurities or aspirations; however you want to frame it. What is so unique about Eastman was, that is just not true; in fact it was the opposite. If you ever behave in a way that you are trying to advance your own career here, no one will work with you, you are done. You don't have a future at Eastman anymore. So, you have to actually behave as a team in order to be part of a team. So many companies just don't have that."

Because of that, Costa says, he knew if he and the leadership team could come up with a great plan to grow the company, Eastman's people would be able to execute it.

"It wasn't the strategy. It wasn't the assets or the technologies or the markets that we were in. It was, 'I actually think this group of people can do things that are extraordinary and I want to be part of that.'"

Eastman Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer Brad Lich

remembers the day he heard Costa was joining the company in 2006. Lich says the first thing he did was place a call to a friend at the Monitor Group who knew Costa.

"I heard a lot of positives, and as you might expect, a few things he could improve upon," Lich remembers. "But the one thing that came out through and through in that conversation was that Mark was somebody who was intolerant of politics and intolerant of personal agendas. I can say that after working for him for the last 10 years that if I got the same phone call, they would hear a very similar description. I think the only way a leader delivers that kind of consistency in their behaviors is by being very rooted in a set of principles. For Mark that is very much about serving the stakeholders."

Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer Perry Stuckey agrees. "Mark knows that shareholders matter. He knows employees matter as much as the shareholders. He also knows that driving and helping customers succeed is very important."

"Mark is a leader who is focused 100 percent on delivering superior outcomes for our stakeholders," Lich says. "So for our employees, our customers, our investors, this community, and the communities that our people work in and around the globe, he enters every discussion with a single purpose: how do we get to the right outcome for our stakeholders? He checks his ego and his title at the door and he expects everybody else to do the same."

The notion of a CEO who checks his ego at the door surprises some, but it fits perfectly when one considers Costa came to Eastman because he already had confidence in the excellence of the people who work there.

Senior Vice President, Chief Legal and Sustainability Officer, and Corporate Secretary David Golden remembers one incident that cemented in his mind the fact that Costa was about doing what was best for the company, regardless of ego. "He and I had been working on a particular issue and I was having a one-on-one with him, and at the end, I felt impressed to offer a little bit of coaching. So I said, 'Mark, do you mind if I offer you a little bit of coaching?' He immediately turned to me and was locked in and focused, like



Costa has been praised as both a coach and a listener.

it was Christmas morning or something. I offered some coaching and he said, 'That's a frame I've never thought about before. Do you have more time to talk?' For the next 30 minutes, we kicked around what I said and looked at it from different angles. Afterward he looped back and said, 'I really appreciate you taking the time and giving coaching.' He was extremely sincere about it."

Senior Vice President, Chief Manufacturing, Supply Chain and Engineering Officer Mark Cox says that in addition to taking coaching, Costa has the ability to coach as well. "In order to coach well, you have to know the folks you're coaching," Cox says. "That includes coming alongside them – your ability to work alongside them to understand how they work. In my case, the areas I'm responsible for within the company include manufacturing and engineering. Although Mark may not be a deep expert in those technical subjects, he is an expert in thinking – an excellent thought partner who is always willing to come sit beside me and take the time to help me think through an issue."

Remembers Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer Stephen Crawford, "One of our specialists ended up riding the elevator down with Mark, and

Mark walked with her all the way down to her car. The entire conversation was not what she expected. She had expected more of a CEO coaching experience, but it wasn't. It was more of him questioning her, looking for advice, and listening to the things she had learned in the past as she has driven change-management opportunities. After Mark left her she called me to say, 'Wow, that was a great opportunity to interface with the CEO. He was so engaging and so much of a leader.'"

Costa says being surrounded by great people gives him both the confidence and the humility to take that approach to leadership. "If you are not constantly learning, if you are not constantly seeking feedback and advice from people to improve the quality of your own decisions, the odds of you making great decisions is low. There are a lot of CEOs out there who, once they get the job, think they either have to have all the answers to be the CEO or they get so arrogant that they think they know all the answers – which are really the frightening ones. It's impossible. So, the other part of long term success in life is humility."

Though Costa chooses humility, it's not just his colleagues who are eager to sing his praises. John Tickle, Chairman of the Board

of Strongwell and himself a Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame laureate, has worked with Eastman executives dating back to the days before the company spun off from Kodak, both as a supplier and purchaser. He's become both a business partner and a friend to Costa.

"Running a company like Eastman that does business all over the world takes somebody that's full of energy," Tickle says. "Not only for the job at Eastman, but for all the extra things you have to do being the chairman of a fortune 500 company. It's a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week job, and Mark has that energy. He gives you energy just to be around him. So he's the type of person Eastman, or any Fortune 500 company needs to run a company this size. I think he has unlimited possibilities with Eastman."

Today, Costa needs that energy, as he and Gita are raising two sons, Grayson and Parker, both of whom take after their father as outdoor sports enthusiasts.

"My oldest is 15 and my youngest is 12-and-a-half. They love the outdoors like dad, which is good. We do a lot of mountain biking together, and skiing, and other activities so that makes it a lot of fun. They are also into sports but their chosen sport is lacrosse over football. It seems to be slightly less damaging to the brain but is still a good all-American contact sport, so perfect balance. They are fantastic. Oddly, both are really interested in science like dad so we will see where that goes."

The advice Costa gives his sons is the same he says he would give to every JA student. "Focus on doing whatever is in front of you as well as you possibly can do. Make sure whatever it is you have chosen to focus on, you have a passion for, that you enjoy. Don't go do something in life just because you think you should do it, because you will never succeed if you don't love what you do or at least like it.

"Always seek out as much feedback about how you could be better and more successful in your life from people you respect. Listen in the moment even if it is what you don't want to hear. Don't get defensive because if they are (criticizing you); they are not trying to be mean. They are actually trying to help you. And if they are telling you that – and it is someone you respect – they mean it. So, dismissing it is probably not a good idea because there is



Gita and Mark Costa



The Costa family: Gita and Mark with sons Grayson and Parker

to some degree some truth in it. (Accepting what you do not want to hear) is the hardest part about self-development for people.

"Recognize you don't have a lot of control over what opportunity presents itself in your life. You can't plan out every

step of the way for the next 20 years," Costa concludes. "It is about how to make decisions in the moment and how you make choices that will dictate that outcome. Then just focus on doing everything well." ▲



David Golden



2017 *Laureate* Eastman - Corporate Citizen

The list of past laureates in the Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame is dotted with leaders from the first 97 years of Eastman. James C. White was a member of the inaugural class of laureates. He would be joined by Perley Wilcox, Toy F. Reid, Earnie Deavenport, Brian Ferguson and Jim Rogers. These individuals were recognized for both commercial and civic ventures. Bearing those criteria in mind, 2017 marks the first induction of a corporate citizen into the Hall of Fame: Eastman.

The company came to the region in 1920, as the Tennessee Eastman Corporation, its sole customer being Eastman Kodak, which sought American sources for methanol and acetates. Perley Wilcox purchased the site of the first Eastman buildings for a reported \$205,000.

During World War II, the United States government was so impressed by Eastman's people it contracted with the com-



*They are a part
of our fabric.*

- Ken Maness

pany to run the Y-12 electromechanical plant at Oak Ridge. The company oversaw production of Uranium-235 for the first atomic bombs, utilizing a workforce of almost 25,000. The U. S. government also hired Eastman to build what was then known as Holston Ordnance Works to manufacture explosives for the war effort. Eastman's people showed their mettle in those days, maintaining total secrecy at Oak Ridge and manufacturing high explosives in Kingsport with no accidents involving loss of life, though virtually none of the employees had experience with such substances.

As the years have passed, Eastman has

grown, and in so doing, has become the region's leading corporate citizen, recognized by leaders throughout the region, from the private and public sectors.

John Tickle, Chairman of the Board of Strongwell in Bristol, Virginia says, "Eastman goes well beyond Kingsport. It serves this whole area. It's amazing what I've noticed – the integrity that Eastman teammates have and how much they give back to the community. Not only Eastman, but Eastman supports its leaders in giving back to the community. It would be a sad, sad state of affairs if we didn't have Eastman in this area, so we're very fortunate."

Dr. Brian Noland, president of East Tennessee State University in Johnson City agrees. "They are not only one of the pillars of this region, but of the state of Tennessee as a whole, both from a philanthropic perspective, from an economic and community development perspective, a



From fresh-faced interns ...

social engagement perspective, we would not be who we are as a region were it not for Eastman.”

That the company cares for the people of the region is evident in its generosity, says Brenda White Wright. “The Toy F. Reid Eastman Employee Center not only provides a wonderful facility for our Symphony of the Mountains, but also for our high schools, our social service organizations and all kinds of programs. It is a Class A facility and we are so grateful they open it up to the community for us to use.”

And that generosity is part of the corporate culture of Eastman, adds Kingsport Chamber CEO Miles Burdine. “If there is a problem in this community, we are going to call Eastman. We are going to ask them to help us with it. It doesn’t necessarily mean that they have to give dollars toward solving that problem. Usually it is just their people, their knowledge, their experience, their expertise, their caring heart is what usually helps solve community problems.”

That mindset goes beyond the boundaries of Kingsport throughout the region, says Bill Greene, chairman of Bank of Tennessee. “We are one region. Eastman is helping us become the center of that region to take on the world. There’s no way these individual communities, counties and cities could take the world on. All of us together certainly have a shot at it. Eastman knows that and is working hard to accomplish that, which helps all of us.”

There is no doubt Kingsport and the region have benefitted greatly from Eastman’s presence, says City Manager and model city native Jeff Fleming. “I think historically Eastman has been a very paternalistic company in terms of taking care of its employ-

ees, taking care of its community and in a global environment where you must change and make those changes very quickly to adapt to ever changing forces of the economy, you have to ask those level of questions. You have to understand what’s on the horizon and how quickly you have to change to match that. I think a lot of times locally we think that everything revolves around Wilcox Drive when in fact it revolves around Wall Street and they have to adapt quickly.”

Fleming’s point is well taken. The company cannot continue to be a leading corporate citizen unless it stays ahead of a changing world marketplace. Happily, says Kingsport Mayor John Clark, Eastman’s focus on the future is as easy to see as its new corporate headquarters.

“They could have easily gone with bricks and mortar, which is what the rest of the manufacturing center looks like, but the reality of it is they went with a totally different look, sending a signal to their industry, their shareholders, their customers, our community, that Eastman is different now. So I think one of the great things about Eastman is its ability to evolve over time and change along with the market, to continue to take on leadership positions in that particular industry that is highly competitive and not just here domestically but also abroad as well.”

That forward-looking approach led Eastman to begin a major change in corporate strategy in 2012, shedding portions of the business in order to become a truly innovation-based specialty chemical company.

“From 2012 through 2014, we did about \$9 billion of acquisitions as well as grew the organic portfolio and really changed who



... to experienced employees, what makes Eastman unique is its people.

Eastman was,” says Chairman and CEO Mark J. Costa. “So, when you think about our entity value back in 2010-11, we were about \$7 billion in market cap plus debt. Today we are about \$18 billion so almost triple the size of the company in a period of five years.

“I think that if you look at America today and Eastman as an example of America, what has made America great is innovation. Innovation in business, innovation in products, innovation in services – we lead the world like we have for decades in developing the best products that are offered to the world.

The challenge of innovation, Costa says, is that it requires great people capable of creating brilliant ideas, then turning those ideas into market-altering products. “At the end of the day, you know what’s going to separate Apple versus its competitors, or Eastman versus its competitors, is the people. It is not the assets and technology or the markets that you are in. It is what people do with all of that. So you have to build a culture and a capability across your organization that can be better than its competitors.”

So while much has changed over 97 years, one constant remains. Eastman’s people are still showing their mettle.

“I have watched Eastman over the years,” Burdine says, “and I have learned so much from not just the company but the people that work there. I mean their ethics, their sustainability, how they treat their veterans, how they treat their people, diversity, all those things, all of those words that we use on a daily basis and in chamber world, they are right there at Eastman on a daily basis, and they are at the forefronts of all of them.

Says Senior Vice President, Chief Legal and Sustainability Officer, and Corporate Secretary David Golden, “Before coming to

Eastman I was a lawyer in a law firm and worked with a number of companies. One thing that differentiated Eastman was the people. It was the honesty and sincerity, the focus on wanting to do what they need to do, heightened responsibility, a high-end trust, and just good people to work with.”

Eastman’s reputation as a corporate citizen is known worldwide, says Tickle. “Eastman is a green company. They’ve received a Top 50 places to work award in 2014, 2015 and 2016, so that says a lot about a company. They’ve been voted one of the most ethical places to work several times. They’ve won Energy Star Awards in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017. They do everything right... I like to do business with not only companies that have high integrity, but people that have high integrity. I’ve noticed that their management teams throughout the years have been easy to work with. They are very accommodating. They want to help. So it’s a company you want to do business with.”

Adds Greene, “I’ve recruited all over the world. I’ve been very lucky. I’ve been to China, Japan, South Korea. If I had my choice, picking an industry I would want for this region from anywhere in the world, after watching them for 70 years and visiting other countries, other leaders in major industries including the chemical industry, I would recruit Eastman.”

George Eastman once said, “Embrace light. Admire it. Love it. But above all, know it.” Today, almost a century after the company came to this region, the light that shines from Eastman emanates from its people.

The first Corporate Citizen to become a Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame laureate: the people who are Eastman. ▲

Fifty years of achievement By Ken Maness

Junior Achievement plays a tremendously important role in our community, interpreting and perpetuating America's free enterprise system to the students of our region. It has been my pleasure to work with JA in various roles over the years. Again this year, it was my distinct honor and privilege to serve as master of ceremonies for the Hall of Fame gala.

Our region is a shining example of America's free enterprise system. The lofty peaks and inviting valleys of our area have, for scores of years, attracted people with high hopes and magnificent dreams – people whose visions of industry range from high tech to high adventure. The achievements of these dreamers molded our area from an untamed wilderness to a center of commerce, while we retained the natural beauty and freedom that attracted the earliest settlers to tame America's first frontier.

The founders of Eastman provided the

model for corporate responsibility, community leadership, and environmental sensitivity. During the evening of May 31, we paid tribute to Mark J. Costa whose bold leadership and focus on innovation is mapping the course and blazing new trails for Eastman's global enterprise. We learned about his life and the influences that made him into the man he is today. We paid tribute to Eastman as well, a company that has been the forefront of business leadership in our area for 97 years. By inducting them into the Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame, we hope to perpetuate the qualities they represent and to share their vision for future business leaders in our communities.

As we conclude our 50th year as JA in Tri-Cities, it is more important than ever for students to see the examples of individuals like Mark Costa and companies like Eastman, in order to understand the vital importance of free enterprise, and to have



the experiences JA brings to prepare those students for the future. We thank you for your continued support.

A night of celebration By Cathy Salley

The 2017 Junior Achievement of Tri-Cities TN/VA Business Hall of Fame had a lot to celebrate. First, we were thrilled to induct two outstanding honorees, Mark J. Costa, Eastman Chairman & Chief Executive Officer and Eastman as the first business to be inducted as a Corporate Citizen. Both join our long line of the prestigious regional entrepreneurs, business leaders and industry pioneers.

Secondly, we celebrated 50 years of Junior Achievement of Tri-Cities Tennessee/Virginia. James C. White, Eastman CEO a half-century ago, was most instrumental in getting Junior Achievement in our region by making the call to investigate a non-profit organization that taught high school students about business and

economics. White and other community leaders gave many area high school students the opportunity to have hands-on experiential learning. The students had JA instead of the traditional economics classroom experience and received the same course credit. Eastman has continued to be a primary supporter and a great corporate partner of a Junior Achievement organization that now serves Kindergarten through 12th grade students.

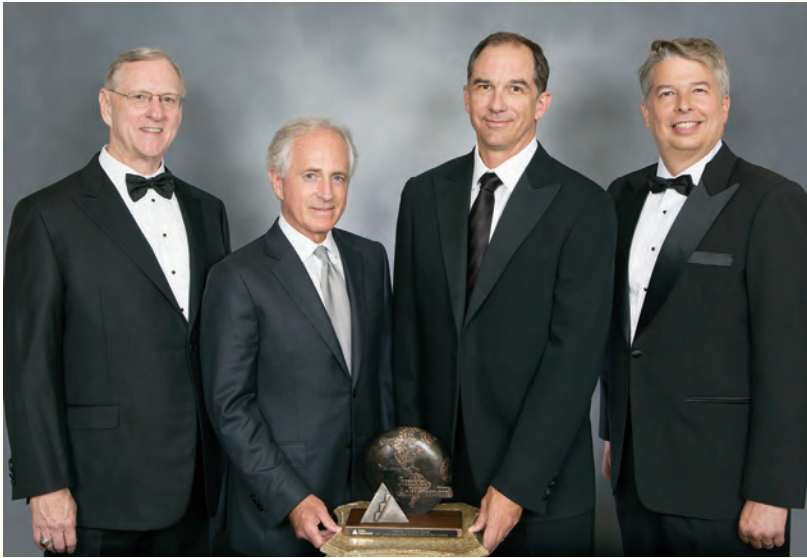
Thirdly, we celebrated a successful Hall of Fame and the 11,000 plus students that Junior Achievement impacted with economic education this school year. We could not have accomplished this without the support and dedication of our Hall of Fame sponsors, contributors, volunteers, educators, board members and staff. My heartfelt thanks to each of you. I extend a special thank you to the Hall of Fame committee for their time, energy and tremendous help as the backbone of the JA Business Hall of Fame and its continued success. Thank you Ken Maness for the incredible job you did as chair of the event. Thank you to *The Business Journal of Tri-Cities TN/VA* and to Spectrum Reach for their expertise and support in helping share the stories of our inductees.

As we look back over the past 50 years of the guiding principles and the foundation that Junior Achievement of our region afforded tens of thousands of our young people, please join us as we look forward to the next 50 years with excitement and enthusiasm to continue empowering, inspiring and giving hope to our future youth.

Congratulations to Mark J. Costa and Eastman, the people of Eastman, on their recognition. Again, thank you to each of you.



Colette George, Carol Hicks, Sherry Tysinger, Donna Johnson



Junior Achievement®

2017 Hall of Fame Gala

Scenes from the 2017 Gala: Top left, Scott Niswonger, Senator Bob Corker, Mark J. Costa and David Golden. Top right, Vivian Crymble and Valerie Joh. Middle right, Ken Maness and Alan Levine. Bottom right, Dennis Phillips and Steve Darden. Lower left, Randy Boyd, Perry Stuckey and Mark Cox



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Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame Past Laureates

1994

Allen Harris, Jr. (1906-1992)
John M. Jones (1914-2016)
James McGlothlin
Robert H. Porterfield (1905-1972)
James C. White (1890-1973)

1995

Larry Carrier (1922-2005)
John C. Paty (1899-1975)
Perley S. Wilcox (1874-1953)

1996

Clyde B. Austin, Sr. (1881-1966)
E. Ward King (1896-1977)
Robert S. Lane (1921-1992)
Joseph W. Lawson (1913-2001)
May Ross McDowell (1898-1988)

1997

Frank W. De Friece, Jr. (1921-2009)
W. B. Greene, Sr. (1902-1987)
W. Pat Jennings, Sr. (1919-1994)
B. Carroll Reece (1889-1961)

1998

Giles W. Morrill (1930-1997)
James J. Powell
Toy F. Reid (1924-2009)

1999

Zella Moore Arnold (1906-1989)
Earnest W. Deavenport, Jr.
Scott M. Niswonger
Jack C. Smith (1925-2007)

2000

John W. Andersen (1928-2006)
Charles O. Gordon, Sr. (1920-2004)
Woodrow W. McGlothlin (1914-2005)
John D. Tickle

2001

Samuel H. Anderson, Jr.
Louis H. Gump
Thomas G. Hull (1926-2008)
Frank L. Leonard (1933-2016)

2002

Wallace D. Alley, Sr. (1926-2015)
Kent Bewley
Lois A. Clarke
Dan Mahoney

2003

Fred "Pal" Barger
William B. Greene, Jr.

2004

C.M. "Bill" Gatton
Stuart E. Wood (1938-2010)

2005

Wayne G. Basler
Steven C. Smith

2006

Jeff Byrd (1949-2010)
Mitch Cox

2007

J. Don Hill (1929-2011)
Jim Street

2008

Richard Green
R.T. "Rab" Summers

2009

J. Brian Ferguson
Joseph R. Gregory

2010

Jerry L. Miller, M.D.
Keith Wilson

2011

Mike Quillen
R. Lynn Shipley, Jr.

2012

Dennis R. Phillips
James P. Rogers

2013

Allen Johnson
Ken Maness

2014

The Band Perry Family
Kimberly, Reid, Neil, Marie and Stephen

2015

Roy L. Harmon, Jr.
Mitch Walters

2016

Greg Boehling
Lewis Wexler, Jr.



Past laureates and their representatives (L-R): Gregg Jones, Dennis Phillips, Lynn Shipley, Sam Anderson, Lois Clarke, William Greene, Jim Street, Scott Niswonger, Kent Bewley, Mark Costa, Roy Harmon, Keith Wilson, Rab Summers, Ken Maness, Dan Mahoney, Jim Powell, Valerie Joh.

The Award

The Business Hall of Fame honors business leaders who have played a prominent role in our region, all of whom have met these criteria:

ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY. Each laureate must have established a successful business record based on ethical conduct and corporate responsibility to employees and to the community.

LEADERSHIP. Each honoree must have exerted a substantial influence on promoting and preserving our region's business climate.

RECOGNITION. Each inductee must have positively contributed to the image of the Tri-Cities TN/VA region.

REPUTATION. Each laureate must have earned a high level of respect within the business community for financial achievement, corporate responsibility and public service.

The Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame was established in 1994 to honor the champions of free enterprise and to present role models in business to youth.



Junior Achievement of Tri-Cities TN/VA 2016-2017 Contributors

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Why the Sykes buyout of Frontier Secure means job security for Wise employees

By Scott Robertson



Todd McReynolds of Sykes accepts the President's Award from the Southwest Virginia Technology Council June 15 in Abingdon.

The news that Sykes Enterprises, Inc. (NYSE: SYKE) has purchased the former Frontier Secure operation in Wise, Va., is good news for the employees and the community, says the executive who was responsible from bringing those jobs to Wise almost exactly a year ago.

Todd McReynolds is a Wise County native who helped convince Frontier Communications' leadership to start up a call center near the airport in Wise last summer. At the time, the facility began doing inbound customer care work for Intuit.

Intuit's CEO even took the time to visit the Wise facility, meeting with the staff and executive team there. Yet within months, it became apparent that Frontier Secure, whose parent company was in

financial dire straits, was not making Intuit feel secure.

At the Southwest Virginia Technology Council Awards June 15 in Abingdon, McReynolds said, "Frontier Secure was a byproduct of Frontier Communications. We were at a point in our journey where we really labored with our capabilities in working with clients like Intuit. They have global needs outside the U.S.

"So last year we started looking at companies that would allow us to really grow our footprint and be a disruptor in the industry," McReynolds said. "So we joined with Sykes Enterprise about six weeks ago and we're now beginning to further that relationship with great companies like Intuit in Europe and Asia." **BJ**



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TRI readies for Aerospace Park grant process

Works to replace flight school

By Scott Robertson

The next few weeks represent the deep breath before the plunge for Tri-Cities Airport (TRI) officials working to obtain state funding for the Aerospace Park project. The Tennessee state government budget includes \$30 million in grant funding through the Department of Transportation for economic development efforts related to airports. Officials at TRI want a little less than \$9 million of that.

"The department has yet to announce a timeline for the disbursement of those grant funds," TRI Airport Director Patrick Wilson said, adding that the department has not yet explained in detail how the application process will be carried out.

The budget originally included only \$15 million, but with both Aerospace Park and the burgeoning effort to build a new airport at Oak Ridge likely to compete for funds, state officials realized it was possible neither project would get the funding it needed at that level. The authority already has commitments from the local governments to back a bond issue for part of the funds.

In the meantime, the TRI Airport Authority kept busy last month giving Wilson the go-ahead to work out an agreement to bring a new general aviation flying service to the facility. Beverly



Artist's rendering of Aerospace Park when grading is complete.

Courtesy Tri-Cities Airport

Barnett recently retired, closing Advanced Flight Training.

Wilson has been in preliminary talks with the owners of Morristown Flying Services to bring Cessna 150s and 172s to fill that niche, with 182s possible if demand dictates. [BJ](#)

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Business community backing education, workforce development efforts

Pathways, SCORE and Work Ready Communities

By Scott Robertson

Within a 30-day span in June, regional business, government and education leaders heard about and/or took part in the development of three different workforce-development related initiatives affecting Northeast Tennessee.

SCORE, the State Collaborative on Reforming Education (not to be confused with the Service Corps of Retired Executives, which uses the same acronym) is an organization created by former Tennessee United States Senator Bill Frist. In advance of next year's gubernatorial election, SCORE is working to create a document similar to the one it put together in 2009. That document, entitled "A Roadmap to Success" was created after the organization crisscrossed the state, holding meetings with business and community leaders regarding ways to improve the effectiveness of public schools.

On June 21, SCORE held a similar meeting with Tri-Cities leaders in the offices of the Kingsport City Schools. "We have a full research and policy team. The research team looks at best practices across



Zachary Adams and Adriana Harrington of the Tennessee Department of Education led the Pathways Tennessee discussion. Photo by Scott Robertson

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the country and the advocacy team seeks to implement those policies at both the local and state levels,” said Taylor Hall, director of outreach. “We measure our success as an organization based on student achievement in Tennessee.

“We create a report every year about what K-12 education in Tennessee should look like. This year is a little bit different, though, because we have the 2018 gubernatorial race coming up, where we know we will have a new governor for the first time in eight years. So we’re going to put out our next report in November, hoping to cast a vision on what Tennesseans say the next governor should be doing in education.”

After around two hours of discussion, Northeast Tennessee’s input was summed up by Richard Kitzmiller, vice president of the Niswonger Foundation, who said the next governor should endeavor to put a similar effort to Governor Haslam’s “Drive to 55” higher education initiative in place for K-12. Lottie Ryans, director of workforce and literacy initiatives for the First Tennessee Development District, added, “I would make that pre-K-12.”

Just days before, Ryans had stood with mayors from across Northeast Tennessee at the Tennessee College for Applied Technology in Elizabethton to celebrate the fact that the eight counties of Northeast Tennessee are now all actively engaged in earning ACT Work Ready Communities status.

Then, on June 27 at the new Blue Cross/Blue Shield building in Johnson City, representatives from Pathways Tennessee, an organization dedicated to providing a framework to get students from middle school seamlessly into the workforce held a Northeast



Carter County Mayor Leon Humphrey, surrounded by his fellow county mayors speaks about the region’s Work Ready Community progress.

Photo courtesy First Tennessee Development District

Tennessee organizational meeting.

With opportunities in advanced manufacturing, healthcare and information technology already in place for qualified candidates in Northeast Tennessee, the Pathways initiative seeks to get industry leaders involved in student learning as early as middle school, to help secondary and post-secondary education institutions work together to allow students to bank post-secondary credits and/or industry certifications, and to create multiple entry points into the workforce from there. [B]

The background of the advertisement is a collage of images related to commercial roofing. It includes a blueprint with technical drawings, a yellow calculator, a black pen, and a small image of a building. The text is overlaid on this background.

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GO Virginia's Region 1 Council gets to work

By Scott Robertson

The regional council charged with finding economic development projects worthy of receiving grant funds from the GO Virginia program held its second meeting last month on the campus of UVa-Wise, approving its inaugural budget.

The setting for the meeting was no accident. UVa-Wise has agreed to serve as both the fiscal and support organization for the Region One Council. The university will provide a full-time staffer, plus office space, audit, travel, equipment and legal expenses.

In addition, the council plans to host its quarterly meetings at sites throughout the district, which will entail additional travel and event-related expenses. The region includes 13 counties. The first meeting was held at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Washington County. The next is scheduled to occur in Wythe County. While the rotation through the region allows different individual members to bear the brunt of the travel burden for each meeting, it does require the administrative effort to work out details for a new venue for each meeting. When the budget for meetings, travel, training and marketing are factored in, more than \$150,000 of the council's \$650,000

budget will have been spoken for.

Each regional council is responsible for creating its own Growth and Diversification Plan by August. UVa-Wise agreed at the meeting to inventory existing strategic plans in the region, to coordinate workgroups, to procure the services of an outside consultant and to provide oversight for that consultant. The careful creation of the plan is key to the future success of the council's efforts because the state GO Virginia organization requires annual reporting to be tracked against the plan. That means today's plan will determine the rubric the larger organization uses to judge the region's efforts in the future. The estimated expense of creating the plan is \$150,000 while the compiling of those annual reports will run in the neighborhood of \$35,000.

All of that has to happen before the region can begin giving serious consideration to pitches from companies seeking Growth and Opportunity grant funding. The budget also factors technical assistance to applicants in the development of proposals, bridging to competitive grants, project monitoring and reporting, and reserves. [BJ](#)

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Tim Lawson

Not your grandmother's yarn factory

Universal Fibers defies outdated expectations

The second in a series of "Operation Tomorrow's Workforce" articles by the United Way of Southwest Virginia

Brandon Turner grew up hearing about the local yarn factory, but never really having any idea what those words meant.

"I'm from this area and I went to school with someone for years whose dad worked at 'the yarn factory' – that's what he called Universal Fibers. Every time he told me that his daddy worked in the yarn factory, I pictured in my mind grandmas knitting. Now that I work here, it's so funny to me."

Bristol, Va.-based Universal Fibers defies many outdated expectations. With additional manufacturing facilities in Europe, China and Thailand, the company defines what it does this way: "As the only solution-dyed fiber producer in multiple chemistries, our versatile products and capabilities begin with four core polymers; Nylon 6, Nylon 6,6, PET and PTT. Universal Fibers offers finished yarns in both single colors and multi-end specialties. We welcome orders in small to large lots in specifications to meet the unique needs of our global customers in diverse markets such as carpet,

industrial, medical, filtration, military, rope and cordage."

Does that sound like grandmas knitting?

"Most of the community probably doesn't know what all what we do here," said Turner. It's likely an accurate statement, but it's also troubling. Southwest Virginia is losing its population, by some estimates as much as 1,000 people per year. Yet if that population, especially the members of the younger demographics, remains unaware of the diversity of jobs available at existing companies, how can they be expected to stay?

Universal Fibers is a prime example of a company that offers great reasons for Southwest Virginians to stay. The company makes tons of specialized yarn to be used in high-performance products including parachutes, sports apparel, and flooring. What makes their product – commonly called "fiber" in their niche industry – unique

SEE **UNIVERSAL FIBERS, 40**

UNIVERSAL FIBERS, CONTINUED

is the coloring process. The melted-down solution is colored before it's even made into fiber, so when the fiber is produced, the color is actually part of the fiber. For a visual comparison, Universal's fibers are like carrots (the same color all the way through) whereas their competitors' fibers are like radishes (colored on the outside but still white on the inside). Again, it's not your grandma's yarn.

So, there are no knitting grandmas, and even though it is a large manufacturing facility, there are no dirty, crowded, dangerous floors inside, either.

Located in the industrial park in Washington County, Virginia, the company employs about 530 people locally, all of whom work in a clean, safe, air-conditioned, comfortable environment, whether in an office, the lobby, the conference room, or the factory.

"The dirty, dangerous, crowded environment is just the stigma associated with working in a factory," said Tim Lawson, human resources manager. "And we are constantly trying to shift mindsets. That's one of our biggest challenges."

Lawson also explained that the production flow is atypical as well. "Some fiber plants would run one, two, or three products, and that's a pretty old school model. We have more color changes per day than we actually have the number of machines for, so we are continually changing product and color. That's very challenging, and it takes a high level of expertise to go from one color to another color on the same machine; a lot of people are needed to make that happen."

Brendan McSheehy, Jr., vice president of Innovation, Sustainability, and IP said, "Many people don't realize the variety of jobs

within the company and how many people are needed throughout every step of the process. You have your actual manufacturing processes, and then you have the maintenance group that is there to support the manufacturing group. We operate 24/7, and if the machines are not running (right), we can't manufacture the product, which is why there is a support side to everything we do. We have a whole slew of professional services that contribute – customer service, innovation, product and process development, marketing, sales, quality, accounting, and information technology. All of those have to come together with the manufacturing side. That's why it's so important that our associates can problem-solve, communicate, and get along with everyone they work with."

Turner, now 35, has been with Universal Fibers since 2007, when his "knitting grandmas" theory was busted after his interview for an entry-level job in the manufacturing process. "When I got the entry-level job and had orientation, I was told, 'Do every job you can.' So I did."

Turner kept his first job for a few years before working several other jobs on the manufacturing side of the process. Those jobs in the manufacturing process at Universal Fibers are closer to what you might expect in a traditional "factory", including positions in logistics, purchasing, handling, coloring, extrusion, spinning, texturing, and quality.

"As I worked in those jobs throughout the manufacturing process, I watched other employees – like technicians – do their jobs," Turner said. "That's when I fell in love with the support side of the process."

A surprising percentage of Universal Fibers' workforce is



Brendan McSheehy, Jr.

comprised of associates on the support side. Positions on the support side are necessary for the company to run smoothly and include dozens of professional services jobs like the ones described by McSheehy.

“You are always trying to find that job you’re happy doing because it makes it easy to go to work,” said Turner. “I was happy doing every job that I’ve had here, but when I finally got the process technician job after several years and moved over to the support side, I began to feel like I was really engaged. I felt like I could troubleshoot and bridge gaps between the operators and the engineers. Then, I saw an opening in IT that also involved a different kind of troubleshooting, so I put in for that because I’ve always loved computers, and I got the job.”

Now that Turner is in IT, he addresses problems throughout the entire company. He can relate to the employees he’s helping because he’s been there.

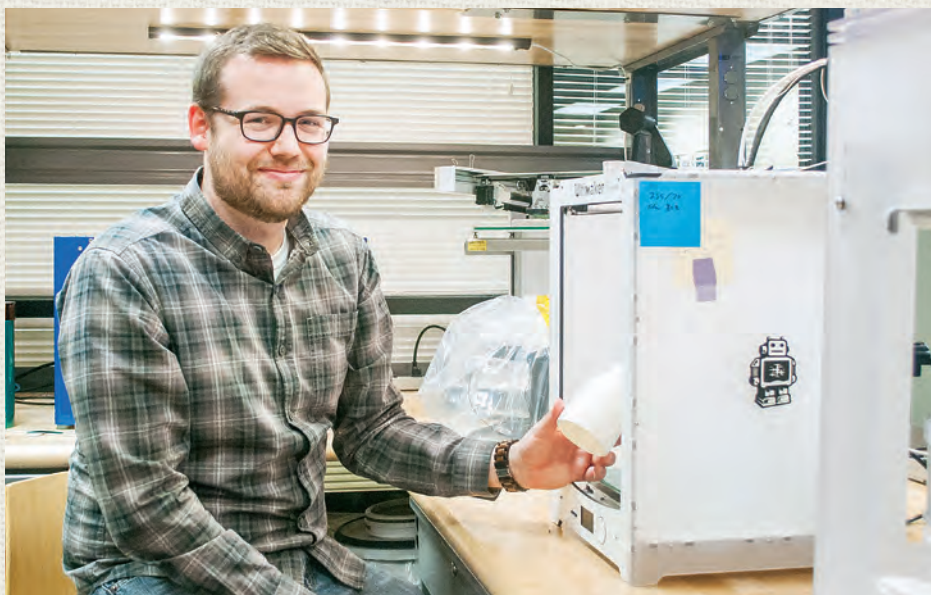
Said Lawson, “I don’t know many corporations out there where you can seriously come in the door, start from scratch, bounce around and learn the process, and gain the skills to move up to a position like that.”

The availability of such opportunities in Southwest Virginia could help stem the flow of population from the region. Just as the people are hungry for good jobs, companies are eager to put good people to work.

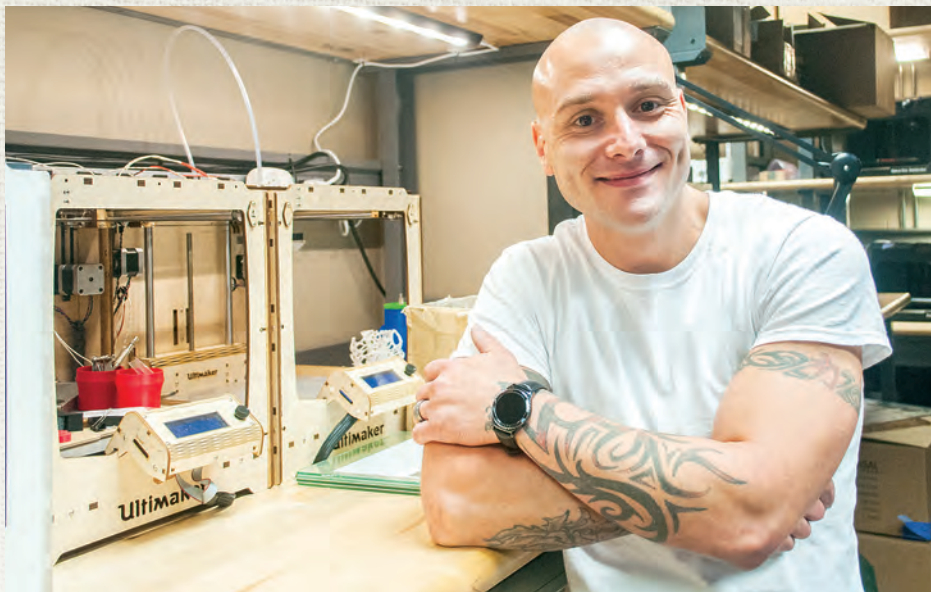
The adaptability and curiosity required to bounce around and learn specific processes is a trait McSheehy agrees is needed in every organization – especially in manufacturing. “Manufacturing by its nature resists change, because the definition for quality is uniformity. But we need people on both sides of the process – manufacturing and support – who are willing to think differently. We are not the factory that makes black Model T’s.”

Adaptability is an important component of innovation, McSheehy’s area of expertise. Universal doesn’t just innovate products – but also support systems and jobs within the company. There have been many cases where someone at Universal Fibers has seen the value an individual could add to the organization, so they’ve brought that person on as an intern or employee.

Five years ago, Logan Pensinger was a senior majoring in chemical engineering at Virginia Tech. He called Universal Fibers to ask a few questions for a research



Logan Pensinger




Brandon Turner

project, and was amazed to find that the company in his hometown employed individuals from a variety of professions. His questions led to a larger conversation with McSheehy and then to full-time employment by Universal Fibers, where Pensinger has led a wide variety of innovation projects, including #D Printing filament. He now holds several patents and has acquired expertise in conducting and publishing Life Cycle Assessments.

Universal Fibers’ leaders say they are proud to offer a variety of good jobs to people in Southwest Virginia, just as they

are proud of the people they employ. Turner and Pensinger are examples of individuals taking non-traditional paths to get to two different positions. They’re also examples of finding successful employment by remaining in or returning to Southwest Virginia.

“We want the next generation to know what careers are here – that you can come here with a high school diploma or a college degree,” Lawson said. “We want them to work in a career they love near their families and communities, and we want them to have a positive impact on Southwest Virginia.” 

ON THE MOVE

Matt Clabaugh has joined Barge, Waggoner, Sumner and Cannon, Inc., as natural resources manager. Clabaugh specializes in stream restoration and natural channel design. His experience also includes hydrological determinations, permitting, stream monitoring, stormwater quality design, erosion prevention and sediment control, and NEPA documentation.



Matt Clabaugh

A graduate of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University with a Master's Degree in Environmental Engineering as well as a Bachelor of Science in Aquatic Resources, Clabaugh is a registered professional engineer in Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia, with a designation as a Tennessee Qualified Hydrologic Professional.

He has completed the Level I-IV Rosgen River Restoration and Natural Channel Design courses, in addition to numerous other stream restoration design and stream restoration construction training courses.

Clabaugh has been involved in the Rotary Club of Scott County (Virginia). He and his wife are active members at the First Baptist Church of Kingsport.

Meghan Carty of Strongwell has accepted the position of corporate manager, Purchasing and Pricing. Carty will be responsible for the management and coordination of corporate purchasing activities, raw material contract negotiations, and strategic supply chain relations, while working closely with divisional purchasing, production control, and material control departments to foster efficient procurement activities. She will also continue to guide Virginia Operations pricing activities for standard and custom products.



Meghan Carty

Carty will report to the president and CEO. She began her career with Strongwell in 1999 in Customer Service. She has held progressively increasing positions of responsibility as an account specialist, cooling tower project coordinator, customer service manager, and most recently pricing manager in Bristol. She received her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Tennessee in 1994. Carty resides in Bristol.

Jeffrey McClellan has been named industrial division manager at Quesenberry's Construction, a comprehensive general contractor and construction manager that has served southwest Virginia and surrounding states for over 70 years. McClellan previously served as project manager of the capital maintenance program for the

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"We are very excited that Jeff has joined our executive team," said President Abran Quesenberry. "He brings 28 years of industrial construction and project delivery experience, including as a division and corporate manager. Jeff's leadership will help Quesenberry's Construction better serve our current industrial clients and meet our expansion goals in that sector."

At Columbia Pipeline Group, McClellan oversaw a \$25 million budget for reliability projects, including the corporate longwall mining mitigation program and compressor station upgrade projects with contract values of \$70 million. He also was responsible for the pipeline, metering, and valve portion of the WB Express project, a \$250 million expansion to northern, eastern and western markets, scheduled for completion in 2018.

McClellan has previous executive and project management experience with Celanese Inc., Wood Group Mustang Engineering, Breakell, Inc., and the Radford Federal Army Ammunition Plant. Early in his career he worked in industrial sales for Ferguson Enterprises in Radford, Va., where he received the national sales leadership award.

McClellan is a LEED Accredited Professional, OSHA 10 certified, and has completed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



Jeffrey McClellan

Quality Control program. He studied business administration at Liberty University and Radford University.

Brown Edwards Certified Public Accountants has announced **Billy Gilliam** has joined the partnership. Gilliam began his public accounting career in 1989 with Dent K Burk Associates, P.C. after receiving a B.S. degree in Business Administration from the University of Tennessee. He earned his CPA certificate in 1992 and became a principal in the firm in 2001. He is licensed to practice in Tennessee and Virginia.



Billy Gilliam

Gilliam serves individuals as well as businesses in several diverse areas such as manufacturing, financial institutions, nonprofit organizations and certain governmental organizations. He consults with clients in various tax, auditing and accounting matters. A native of Kingsport, Billy is a graduate of Dobyns-Bennett High School. He and his wife Laura have two children, Carson and Brandon.

Gilliam is a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the Tennessee Society of Certified Public Accountants (TSCPA). He has served as an officer in all positions with the local Appalachian Chapter of the

SEE **ON THE MOVE**, 44

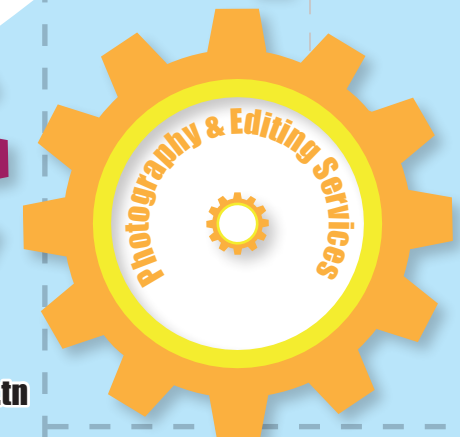
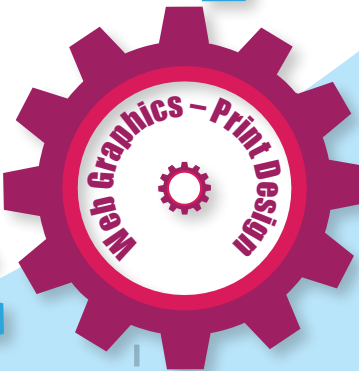
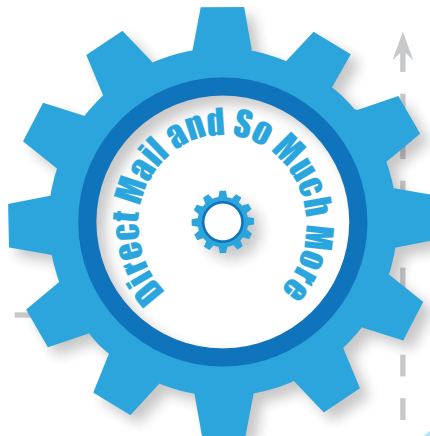


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ON THE MOVE, CONTINUED

TSCPA. His community involvement currently includes serving as treasurer and member of the board of directors for the Rotary Club of Kingsport – Sunrise for the past ten years and member of the board of directors for the Kingsport/Sullivan County Chapter of the The University of Tennessee National Alumni Association. In addition, Gilliam is an active member of First Baptist Church of Kingsport, where he has served on the audit committee and administrative committee.

AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

Jones to serve on Financial Literacy Commission

Janice Jones of Bristol has accepted an appointment to the Tennessee Financial Literacy Commission. Jones is the President and CEO of United Southeast Federal Credit Union.

“Janice is uniquely qualified to serve on the Tennessee Financial Literacy Commission, and I believe they will greatly benefit from her voice and expertise,” said Tennessee Speaker of the House Beth Harwell. “I am grateful that she accepted this appointment, and have full confidence that she, along with the rest of the commission, will continue to do great work on increasing financial literacy across the state.”

Jones has 47 years of experience in credit unions, rising through the ranks to her current position of President and CEO. While overseeing a \$150 million financial institution, she remains active in her community. She is a member of the Bristol Morning Rotary Club, serves as chairman of the board of the Bristol TN/VA Chamber of Commerce, served on the Credit Union National Associations (CUNA) Federal Credit Union

Subcommittee for four years, and most recently served as a board member with Volunteer Corporate Credit Union.

“I am honored that Speaker Harwell has appointed me to the Tennessee Financial Literacy Commission,” said Jones. “This organization does great work, and I look forward to serving with other individuals who are passionate about financial literacy and the prosperity it can bring Tennesseans.”



Janice Jones



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Susan Reid, executive director of the First Tennessee Development District retires

By Bill Derby, Publisher



Susan Reid has dedicated her professional career to people and programs she dearly loves. The results of that career span 44 years of multiple successes. She is now spending her last few months in the transition process with her replacement Chris Craig.

The information under Susan's Science Hill High School class of '65 annual photo reads... "Good nature is the sign of a large and generous soul." I am lucky to be one of Susan's classmates who can attest to that statement.

Susan Reid's dedication to her work and fellow employees has served her well since joining the District in 1973, more evidence of a good nature and generous soul. In today's world it is a rare occurrence for a professional to stay with one company or institution for 44 years. She also carries the distinction of being the first female and longest serving Development District Executive Director in Tennessee history.

During her tenure she has received numerous awards and recognition such as the Tennessee Valley Corridor's Champion Award she shares with fellow recipients Senator Lamar Alexander and Congressman Chuck Fleischmann and recently as the first recipient of the Tennessee Development District Association Lifetime Achievement Award.

"I so love what we do. How many people get the opportunity to work with people you love and to do good things for people all the time? I have been so blessed," Susan shared.

Many people in the region may not be aware of the continuous projects or major successes the First Tennessee Development District has championed. There are too many to share in this space but all have been vital for our region.

I asked Susan what she considered an accomplishment she is most proud, "I would have to say our work on getting Interstate 26 completed. That was huge. Our agency worked very hard for 20 years with our elected officials to get it completed. I think the

cost was around \$15 million per mile.

"We met with North Carolina delegates monthly. We sent letters to the North Carolina General Assembly outlining the benefits for both states and region. I can't stress how hard we worked alongside many supporters," Susan explained.

"I am also very proud of the work we have done helping the people in Sneedville in Hancock County. Their communities are so remote and isolated and it was difficult getting the projects completed. The people there are just fabulous. They were wonderful to work with. The state recently committed to building a call center which will help employment," she added.

"One of our most difficult but rewarding projects involved getting water to the Fish Springs community near Watauga Lake. Children from that community wrote letters to Washington sharing their experiences 'that to get water, they had to go to the creek to fill buckets to take back home. They explained that many times little wiggly things were in the water.' That touched my heart. It's unthinkable in this day and time people don't have clean water to drink. We tried to find a water source for the community but none was available. It was expensive but we ended up digging a well and now they have clean drinking water," she explained.

Susan said the District works closely with the Appalachian Regional Commission and is one of the most efficient government agencies in Washington. She said they have come to our aid many times and understand the region's needs without having to jump through numerous hoops.

She leaves a legacy of success most times behind the scenes and very quietly. She insists that has given her people the opportunity to focus on the successful completion of their numerous projects.

Congratulations Susan Reid on a career of distinction, service and dedication to our communities and region. **BJ**



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