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Marketing Aerospace Park

NETWorks, TRI partner in effort to find first tenants

Michael Parker of NETWorks and Mark Canty of Tri-Cities Airport.
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| ON THE COVER

Marketing Aerospace Park

The regional cooperation that created the park was only the start of an effort to bring new jobs and investment to the region. Now NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership and the TRI are marketing the site to companies and consultants.



Cover Photo by Earl Neikirk

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Office
423.854.0140
news@bjournal.com

Publisher
William R. Derby
bderby@bjournal.com
423.979.1300

Co-Publisher
Jeff Derby
jderby@bjournal.com
423.306.0104

Managing Editor
Scott Robertson
srobertson@bjournal.com
423.767.4904

Marketing Coordinators
Maggie Cooper
mcooper@bjournal.com
423.863.0750

Richard G. Preston
rgpreston@bjournal.com
423.262.7760

Robin Williams
rwilliams@bjournal.com
423.794.6938

Creative
Derby Publishing, LLC
Graphics Director / Judd Shaw
jshaw@bjournal.com
423.833.2726



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Keri is so very...part of Crown Laboratories

Crown Laboratories, Inc. (“Crown”), the Johnson City, Tenn.-based skin care company, announced May 1 it has acquired the North American rights for Keri from GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) and received an equity investment from Greenspring Associates, Inc. Other current equity investors in Crown include Hildred Capital Partners, LLC and Montreux Equity Partners, LLC.

“Keri has a long and successful history in the market, supported by dermatologists and healthcare practitioners across the world,” Crown said in a press release. “Keri provides Crown with another major skin care brand with a rich heritage, that has provided elegant therapeutic formulations to consumers for decades.”

The acquisition of Keri from GSK marks the sixth product from GSK that Crown has acquired in the past five months.

“Acquiring the Keri brand supports Crown’s objective of providing its customers with a broad offering of skin care solutions for every age and skin type,” said Jeff Bedard, Crown’s president and CEO. “We approach our business with a cradle-to-grave philosophy. Our product portfolio treats, protects and nourishes skin of all ages. Keri is a welcomed addition to every daily skin care regimen, and we are proud to now have the opportunity

to build on the brand’s heritage.”

“We continue to find ways to provide meaningful diversification for our consumer portfolio and enhance our breadth of trusted skin care therapies,” added David Solomon, partner of Hildred and chairman of Crown.

“Providing value for our customers and investing in products they love is critical. We are committed to doing just that, and we are pleased to have Greenspring on board as a new equity partner with Montreux to continue supporting business development programs that enhance Crown’s consumer healthcare, aesthetic and prescription product lines.”

Financial terms of the transaction were not disclosed.



Jeff Bedard

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To nominate an individual or organization today, email news@bjournal.com or mail to P.O. Box 5006, Johnson City, TN 37602 with a letter of recommendation telling what makes them a Healthcare Hero. Deadline for nominations is the close of business on May 31.

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Nominations are judged based on the impact nominees make on the community, the difficulty of their accomplishment, innovation of their work, their leadership qualities and the quality of the nominee's documentation.

The **2019 Healthcare Heroes Luncheon** will be held **July 19** at the **Carnegie Hotel** in Johnson City, Tenn.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T



A little over a year ago, Mark Costa, CEO of Eastman, told community leaders Eastman would no longer support economic development initiatives that were not regional in scope. Ballard Health's Alan Levine echoed that sentiment. Apparently, it was a wake-up call, not just for economic developers, but for governments, not-for-profits and other entities that depend on the region's largest employers. Regionalism efforts have popped up

throughout Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia since. It's reached the point that all Costa had to say this year at the same meeting was, "regarding regionalism, thank you."

Most recently, a rebranding initiative for the region was launched by a group of local governments. "It's all in a name: An effort to unite our region" has hired a consultant recently used by Johnson City in a separate branding initiative. That consultant is handling the mechanics of an effort that includes an online survey at nameourregion.com.

Here's why that's important. It's not that having the right brand name for the region will suddenly make this the most popular destination in America for new jobs and capital investment. It won't. It's that the process by which the brand will be chosen will be inclusive of multiple communities, influencers and yes, common citizens.

The Appalachian Highlands brand that had recently been floated by private sector executives was rejected by the city leaders for various reasons, including lack of opportunities for outside input. One former elected official texted me a few weeks back, "who the hell decided we're the Appalachian Highlands?!?"

What matters most, in my mind at least, is that the private sector leaders who came up with that name have pulled back and are letting the "It's all in a name" organizers do their thing. This is a marked change from the past.

When I say the past, I am referring specifically to 11 years ago. In the May 2008 issue of *The Business Journal* is a three-page story entitled "What is Performance USA? The story

behind the creation of a regional identity."

At that time, business leaders had commissioned the Regional Alliance for Economic Development to come up with a new brand to use in marketing and economic development efforts. This brand, it was expected by those who created it, would be adopted by every city, county, town and hamlet in Northeast Tennessee.

Do you remember your city ordering new letterhead with "A Performance USA Community" on it?

Of course not. They didn't.

Even though the idea was soft-peddled as much as possible – "we never want anyone to give up their identity, just to consider saying they are a Performance USA community" – it flopped immediately. That's because it came from a few people working for one organization. Yes, they polled economic developers and site consultants, but what they did with the results was something they did alone.

Fast forward to today and there are still about a million things that can go sideways with the current regional branding initiative. For instance, what if someone with immense pride of ownership in an idea stuffs the ballot box in this online survey? What if the ne'er-do-wells of Internetland decide they're going to have fun subverting the effort by building support for the least usable option? Think it can't happen? Google Boaty McBoatface.

One anti-regionalist has already suggested Methadonia. That's not helpful.

In my mind, the bottom line is that the choice of a name is not as important as how we go about choosing it, and what we do with it in our regional marketing afterward. I'm pretty sure from what I've seen so far the grown-ups on the public, private and not-for-profit boards that will have input into this have learned lessons from decades of anti-regionalism.

This branding debate had the chance to blow up into an us vs them, public sector vs private sector battle played out in the comment sections of local media websites. It doesn't appear to be headed in that direction, and that fact speaks to the commitment to true regional progress on all sides. Leaders have shown self-restraint and respect for each other.

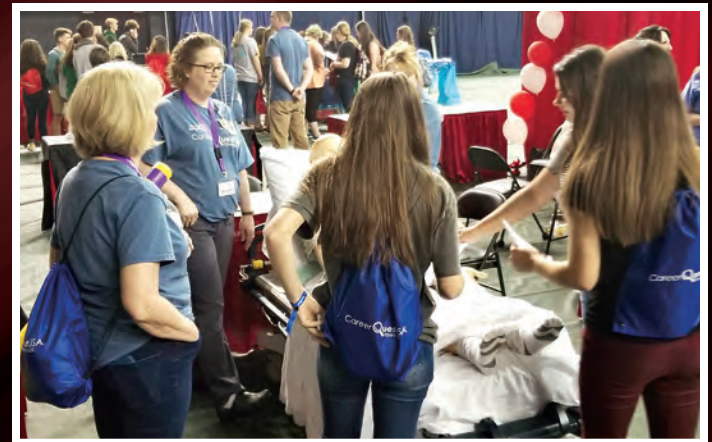
These are keys to success. We should encourage them.

CareerQuest TN shows students pathways to prosperous careers



The annual CareerQuest TN event at East Tennessee State University drew more than 4,300 students and 82 vendors from across Northeast Tennessee April 12. Students learned about career paths available in the region from employers and from higher education institutions including ETSU, Milligan College, the Elizabethton and Morristown TCATs, Northeast State and the Lincoln Memorial Univer-

sity Veterinary School. Platinum sponsor Ballad Health was joined by sponsors including the Tennessee Valley Authority, the UT Center for Industrial Services, AO Smith, US Nitrogen and AGC. More than 450 volunteers including players from the ETSU men's and women's basketball teams, as well as the soccer and golf squads helped shepherd the students through hands-on displays.



Local pending home sales continue to outpace new listings

New approved contracts for existing single-family, townhome and condominiums raised the bar again in March. The record is now 839 new approved contracts in one month. That total is 58 more than recorded by Realtor Property Resource (RPR) March last year. It is also 219 more than all the residential closings in March.

Add last month's new contracts to those awaiting closing, and you have a total of 1,160. That number is also a record for active pending sales in the 11 counties monitored by the Northeast Tennessee Association of Realtors (NETAR).

Pending sales are forward-looking indicators based on new contract signings. "The recent trend toward lower mortgage rates is welcome since it reduces the total monthly mortgage payment. The rates are a factor in how much home the consumer can afford," NETAR President Karen Randolph said. "At the same time, local buyers and sellers are navigating through record tight inventories. This is especially true and very stressful in the \$200,000 and below price range. That price range accounts for approximately 70 percent of local resales."

The average 30-year fixed rate was 4.17 percent for the week ending March 19. So far this year, new single-family listings are running 6.3 percent better than the first three months of last year, but new pending sales were 14.2 percent higher during the first quarter of 2019. These numbers mean there were 50 more new pending sales than new listings, according to Don Fenley, NETAR market research analyst.

The ratio of the new listing to new pending sales in the townhome and condominium market sector show a similar inventory absorption picture, Fenley added. During the first three months of this year, new listings are down 20 percent from last year, and new approved contracts are up 3.9 percent. In raw numbers there were 33 more pending townhome or condo sales than new listings in March.

A home sale is listed as pending when a contract has been signed, but the transaction has not closed. Pending sales usually move to closings in 30 to 45 days. Not all contracts in the pipeline will move to closing. It is normal for as many as 5 percent to fall through and the fall-through rate has been higher recently due to the number of contingency contracts.

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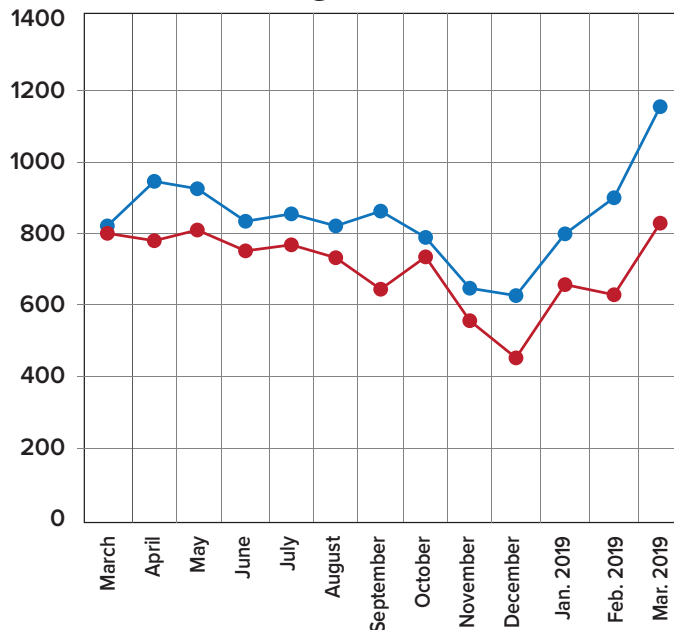
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March Pending Sales Active New



Marketing Aerospace Park

Collaboration continues in search for tenants

by Scott Robertson

When five county and municipal governments in northeast Tennessee came together over the last two years to fund the Aerospace Park project construction at Tri-Cities Airport (TRI), it was an accomplishment unrivaled in recent years as proof-of-concept for regionalism. Now those communities want to be able to show their taxpayers some return on that investment. To that end, TRI and NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership are jointly marketing the park, which consists of 160 acres adjacent to the main runway opposite the passenger terminal.

Mark Canty, director of Trade and Business Development at TRI, and Michael Parker, director of Economic Development for NETWORKS attended the MRO Americas* trade show in Atlanta April 9-11, manning a booth and meeting with aerospace industry companies and consultants. 2019 marked the fourth year of the collaboration by TRI and NETWORKS at the show.

“Our partners, those entities who have given us grants, they see us actively marketing the site,” Canty said, “and that’s important, because we do meet people here who can make a difference.”

Added Parker, “All developments are not created equal, and we have a specific type of tenant we’re searching for here.” MRO Americas was a target-rich environment for that type of potential tenant.

During the time *The Business Journal* spent at the NETWORKS/TRI-sponsored Aerospace Park booth, a site consultant from Jones Lang LaSalle approached, asking Parker, “Tell me about your site.” That consultant, Parker later said, has been invited to this year’s NETWORKS red carpet tour of the region. Making contacts like that is what justifies the expense of hosting a booth at a show attended by more than 15,000 registered attendees and featuring more than 800 other vendors.

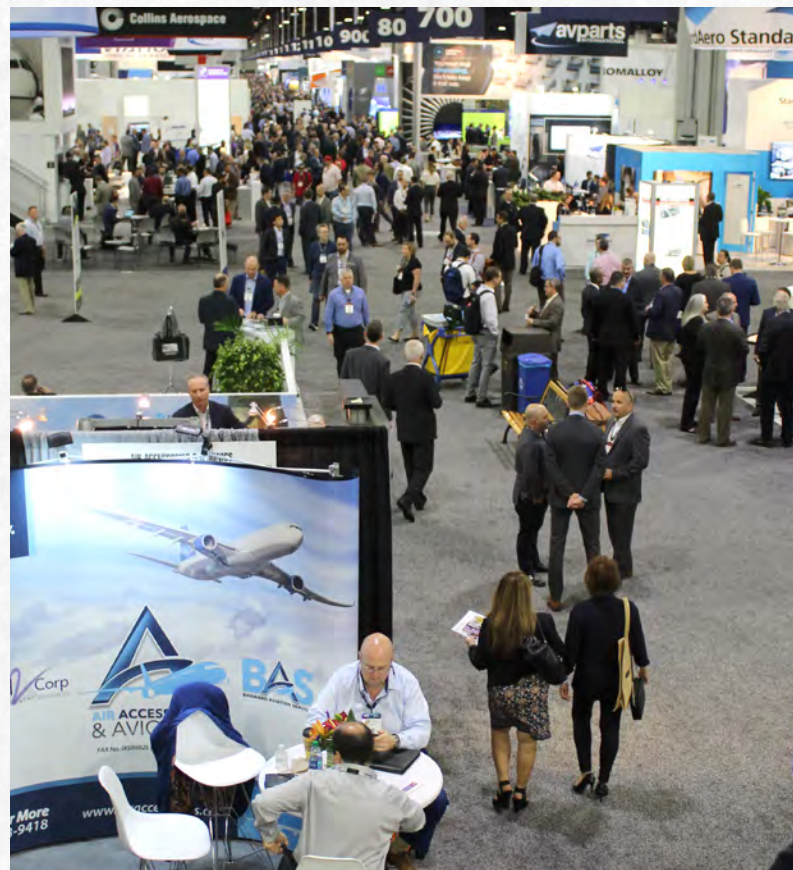
Aerospace Park competes for attention from the same companies and consultants who see Aerospace Park’s competitors at MRO Americas. Airports from St. Lucie to Terre Haute to Colorado Springs to Greater Wichita hawked similar sites at MRO Americas, though none with the location advantages of Aerospace Park, which Canty was quick to enumerate.

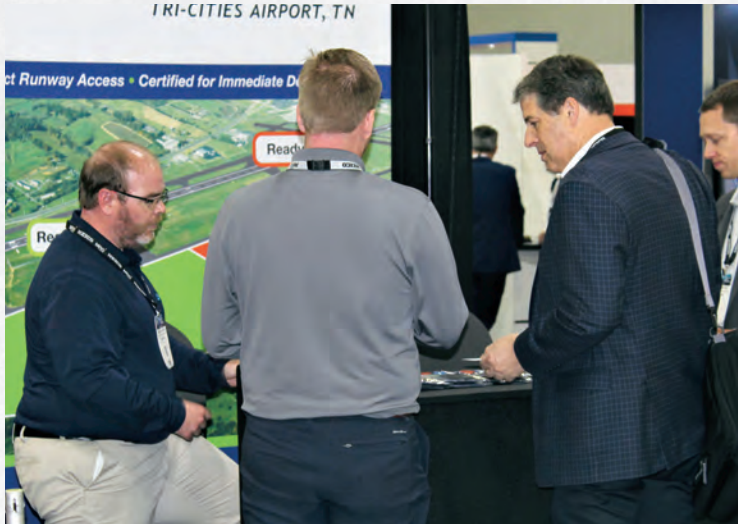
“While the ultimate goal is to receive the actual projects themselves,” Parker said, “there’s a secondary objective of brand awareness. All these companies might not have active projects – in fact, several do not – but they might in the near future. So, our main goal is that when their projects do materialize, we’re top of their minds.”

At a reception sponsored by the Tennessee Economic Partnership the first evening of the show, representatives from the two statewide economic development drivers, the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (ECD) and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), said backing Aerospace Park was a key part of their mission at MRO Americas.



Above: Michael Parker and Mark Canty man the booth at MRO Americas, April 9. Below: MRO Americas stretched the length from Aisle 100 to Aisle 5400. PHOTOS BY CLAY WALKER AND SCOTT ROBERTSON





Parker and Canty discuss Aerospace Park with a representative of an international commercial real estate firm. PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERTSON

“It’s extremely important for economic development organizations such as TVA to work with our partners like Tri-Cities Aerospace Park and NETWORKS in attending events such as MRO Americas so we can get face to face time with aerospace employers that we would like to recruit to our region,” said Adam Murray, senior target market specialist for TVA. “For economic development projects that require runway access or to be located at an airport, companies in the United States can choose from over 5,000 airports so establishing a relationship with these companies and maintaining that relationship is critical so that you get that call when a company is looking for a new location.”

Chassen Haynes, director of Business Development for ECD, said, “Having available sites, especially with ties to the aerospace industry like the Tri-Cities Aerospace Park, gives Tennessee an advantage to attract companies looking to locate operations. One of the first things we are asked when working with companies is if we have shovel-ready sites available, and we are lucky enough to have that type of asset available across Tennessee.”

“The state can capture the overall business climate, training programs, logistics and other unique advantages from a high level by being part of these conversations,” Haynes said. “When conversations dive deeper into specifics like available land, existing building space, community demographics and workforce development programs, these stories are captured better by our expert community partners making pitches at these types of events. It is great to have an inside perspective from the community partners who can give specifics on what companies are looking for and to have the ability to pitch great communities across the state.”

The collaboration between the airport and NETWORKS will continue throughout the year, said Clay Walker, NETWORKS CEO. An episode of “Success Files” hosted by Rob Lowe will be shown on national media outlets soon. That video includes comments from executives of both TRI and NETWORKS. “Aerospace Park is the crown jewel of our aerospace efforts,” Walker said, pointing out the fact that other sites in the county are also available for aerospace firms who don’t need direct runway access, but can still benefit from the aerospace workforce development efforts at Northeast State and other amenities the county has to offer. **B**

**MRO = maintenance, repair and overhaul. Americas = there are also MRO shows in Europe, Austral, Asia, etc.*



Cutline

Eastman among MRO Americas presenters

Kingsport, Tenn.-based manufacturer Eastman was among the presenters at the 2019 MRO Americas show in Atlanta. The company partnered with Delta Tech Ops to present a technical briefing designed to look into the future of turbine oil and hydraulic fluid products.

Dr. Andrew Markson, director of Aviation Fluids Technology said Eastman’s focus on innovation in aviation products flows from collaboration with those designers and airlines. “Rather than, as a technology company, which Eastman obviously is, kind of blindly or independently devising new products for legacy and current equipment, we can design to meet their needs in the future.”

The future Markson refers to could be as far out as half a century, he said. “By knowing what the direction of that technology is from the hardware, we can better design new products which ultimately will last and will be serviceable for that length of time and provide an optimized solution for that equipment.”

“To get to that point, we need deep technical communications to solicit those needs from the point of view of the designer and of the operator,” Markson said.

Having opportunities like MRO Americas to build those relationships is important because Eastman, the designers and the operators all come at the same problems from different directions, Markson said. “Eastman has got a proud heritage in innovation and chemistry. But chemistry is not a kind of talk that our operators get involved in. When they get a fluid or a product, they’re not thinking about molecules. We are. So, if you want better oil life or better stability or better wear protection, we take those needs and we convert that into chemistry and ultimately into products.”

Branding Iron making clients stand out at MRO Americas

by Scott Robertson

Precision Aero Technology was way down the room at MRO Americas. Fifty-four rows of vendors made the show floor seem to stretch for miles. Yet even toward the far end of the room, Precision Aero Technologies stood out. With its tall signage and location on the center walkway that bisected all 54 rows, PAT's booth stood out from the rest.

"You're rolling the dice when it comes to placement at a big show," said Precision Aero Technology President Mark Stemwedel, "especially if you're not going to spend a lot of money. We're at about the tail end of the show, but we have great placement on the main aisle here. The extra effort that Branding Iron made to get our overhead sign placed almost in the center walkway is huge. Even though we're at the end, you can see exactly where we are from the other end of the show a quarter of a mile away."

Branding Iron, a Johnson City-based advertising, marketing and PR agency, had set up the booth so Stemwedel and his team could concentrate on marketing their business of avionics and instrument repair for large commercial and heavy military aircraft without giving a thought to trade show details.

"We manage all the trade show coordination," Branding Iron co-founder Scott Emerine said. "We staff it so we have all the events and giveaways all set. We handle press announcements. I met with a publication out of Denmark on the things PAT is doing. We do pre-event marketing, including social media so they have a presence not only at the show, but before and after. And, we're already working on PAT's next shows in London and Germany."

Garcia related a story of Emerine having greeted a prospect at the booth while all the PAT employees were engaged with others. "Scott is actually like a working salesperson on the floor for me,"

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(L-R) PAT's Mark Stemwedel and Hafid Garcia with Scott Emerine at MRO Americas in Atlanta. PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERTSON

Stemwedel said. "Going that extra mile is special."

Almost a quarter mile away, on the other side of the Georgia World Congress Center floor, Skip Cook, director of Sales and Customer Service at QAI Aerospace and another Branding Iron client was also talking up Branding Iron's work. "We've been together for seven or eight years," Cook said. "He's helped us with graphics and brochures and with booths for trade shows. Even if he can't do exactly what we need, he can put us in touch with people who can. He's a great resource." Cook pointed out two videos that run at trade shows, crediting Branding Iron for their production.

"We are a 145 repair facility specializing in repair of instruments, accessories and avionics, so we need to separate ourselves by letting people know we're not a place to go buy products. We're actually a place where you send your product in for us to do bench repair. Branding Iron is great at getting our message across." 



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American now booking TRI-DFW direct passage for September flights

by Scott Robertson



TRI Executive Director Gene Cossey announces new service to DFW.

American Airlines is now selling seats on the recently announced twice-daily flights between Tri-Cities Airport (TRI) and Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW). Those flights begin Sept. 4, 2019. The TRI-DFW flights were announced by Gene Cossey, TRI executive director April 11. The airline began booking passage April 15.

“Our passengers will now have access to 84 additional one-stop routes,” Cossey said, pointing to a map showing routes running directly from DFW to Honolulu, Beijing and Hong Kong, among others. “The Dallas flight, and continuing our work to increase service, are vital to the region’s business and tourism communities.”

“We are very excited to grow our presence at TRI,” said Cedric Rockamore, American Airlines vice president of Hub Operations at DFW. “Offering two daily flights from TRI to DFW will help us continue to provide customers in this market an opportunity to easily travel to our largest hub and connect on American to numerous destinations around the world.”

Kristi Haulsee, director of marketing and air service development said the airport’s research has long shown Dallas to be a prime route for direct service, especially for business travel.

“We look through our passenger numbers regularly, at least once a quarter, and Dallas and a few other markets always show up as the highest of where our passengers are going,” Haulsee said. “That’s how we develop our target markets and the airlines we’re trying to recruit for that. Dallas obviously is one of those places where we already had a lot of passengers already going, connecting through other airports. We have not done an official study in some time, but based on the traffic we have, I would suspect that for Dallas we are pretty much 60-40, with 60 percent being business and 40 percent being leisure travel.”



All points west and international flights.

The TRI has been working to recruit direct DFW service for years, Haulsee said, but a recent decision by American to expand their gates at that facility led to sudden success. “We were communicated with Wednesday of last week (April 3) that this was a possibility and we would be able to do an announcement today. It came that quick.”

Flights outbound from the TRI are scheduled to depart daily at 6:15 a.m. and 4:20 p.m. (Eastern time), arriving at DFW at 7:50 a.m. and 5:55 p.m. (Central time) respectively. Flights inbound to TRI are scheduled to depart at 12:35 and 6:55 p.m. (Central) and arrive at 3:55 and 10:15 p.m. (Eastern) respectively.

American and TRI have already announced an early week of flights ahead of the Bristol Motor Speedway’s August race week. Flights will run August 15-20. [BJ](#)

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From left: Mike Sexton, Citizens Banker Brooke Tittle, Parker Sexton and Scott Sexton

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Ballad, Niswonger Children’s Hospital, SCC launch new regional initiative

by Dave Ongie

Earlier this year, Ballad Health announced the formation of an Accountable Care Community (ACC), which is a collaboration of over 200 organizations in Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia committed to helping children in our region thrive.

While the ACC has a broader focus on helping entire families, an initiative announced last Wednesday morning at Bristol Motor Speedway is designed to hone in on organizations in our region that deal directly with children. STRONG Kids - which stands for Striving Toward Resiliency and Opportunities for the Next Generation – is a partnership between the Bristol Chapter of Speedway Children’s Charities, Ballad Health and Niswonger Children’s Hospital that will strive to provide mainly nonprofit organizations with the tools, resources and funding to work more efficiently.

Wednesday’s announcement came during a forum that brought together several organizations from around the region to learn new information and begin strategizing in a coordinated manner. The first forum featured Dr. Karen Schetzina of ETSU Physicians, who spoke on childhood trauma and resiliency as well as adverse childhood experiences.

“It’s really looking at what programs need to be developed and how we can capitalize on existing programs,” said Lisa Carter, CEO of Niswonger Children’s Hospital. “Obviously Speedway Children’s Charities provides resources for a lot of these organizations, so if there are financial means that need to be distributed, then how collectively can we do that? It really is looking at a strategy for the region to have the greatest impact on kids.”



Representatives from Ballad Health, Speedway Children’s Charities and Niswonger Children’s Hospital announced a new regional initiative called STRONG Kids last Wednesday in Bristol. From left, BMS vice-president Julie Bennett, Speedway Children’s Charities director Claudia Byrd, Balla Health vice-president Paula Masters and Niswonger Children’s Hospital CEO Lisa Carter. PHOTO BY DAVE ONGIE

Indeed, Speedway Children’s Charities has been funding nonprofits that support kids throughout an 18-county area encompassing Southwest Virginia and Northeast Tennessee for over 20 years. The fact the area served by SCC overlaps almost exactly with Ballad Health’s footprint makes the partnership a natural one.

Claudia Byrd, the executive director of SCC, said she is excited to have the opportunity to facilitate opportunities for the organizations supported by SCC to work together more efficiently.

“We’re lucky we get to raise money and give a check away at the end of the year, and that’s great, but these organizations

through this partnership, we’re going to be able to give them so much more,” Byrd said. “We’re going to be able to give them tools to do their jobs and really improve the quality of life for children throughout the year. We’re going to give them information that they might not be able to get anywhere else.”

From Ballad’s standpoint, the STRONG Kids initiative is an opportunity to help everyone in our region begin doing some solid long-term planning that will pay big dividends down the road. The hope is to eliminate chronic problems that are plaguing our area by investing in young people and instituting preventative measures.

“At Ballad Health, we are thinking through not just the people that we serve through healthcare,” said Paula Masters, vice-president of health programs at Ballad Health, “our journey is going away from being just a healthcare delivery system to a community health improvement organization.”

Tennessee backs Ballard's NICU plan

The Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Health and the office of the Tennessee Attorney General have issued statements of support for Ballard Health's plan to change Holston Valley Medical Center's neonatal intensive care unit to Level I. Ballard's decision to change the NICU status was widely unpopular, but Ballard argued that evidence showed it would improve overall healthcare efficiency.

Health Commissioner Dr. Lisa Piercey issued the following release May 1:

The Tennessee Department of Health's role related to Ballard Health's certificate of public advantage is to provide active supervision, to improve the health and well-being of the region and to maintain access to high-quality health care. These goals guide the department's data-centered approach in evaluating any plans, strategies and tactics proposed by Ballard Health.

The Ballard Board of Directors, after conducting extensive research and analysis, voted to seek the department's approval to maintain Level III neonatal intensive care unit or NICU services in Johnson City while changing Holston Valley Medical Center's NICU services to Level I. In considering this request, I have carefully reviewed all the information provided by Ballard and key stakeholders including the regional medical community, Ballard Health employees, local government officials, business leaders and the general public. I have also conducted extensive evidence-based research on best practices, along with drawing from my professional experience as a pediatrician and my personal connection to the Northeast Tennessee region.

As a parent, I also know firsthand the stressors of having a baby in the NICU. Three of my four children were NICU babies who experienced prolonged stays due to prematurity, so I personally understand the significance of this decision.

In objectively weighing the pros and the cons of consolidating NICU services, it is my opinion that the benefits of doing so significantly outweigh the detriments. Guided by the well-established standards of regionalized perinatal care, I find the most notable benefit of the consolidation to be the enhancement in quality of care and patient

outcomes, secondary to higher patient volumes, sufficient physician coverage and timely specialist access. The consolidation plan ensures adequate bed capacity, robust transport capabilities and marked financial improvement from system efficiencies.

It is important to recognize there are drawbacks to these changes. The most obvious are the increased travel time and inconvenience for NICU families. Currently, Ballard offers onsite lodging at the Ronald McDonald House in Johnson City and makes transportation grant funds available through its foundation. I recommend that Ballard consider additional dedicated travel funds such as gas cards, meal allowances, etc. for the approximately 100 NICU families each year that will be affected by this consolidation. Additionally, for any staff members whose work location may be adjusted as a result of the transition, I recommend that Ballard Health offer individualized placement services and

employment counseling to minimize the impact of this change.


During this transition, it is important that Ballard communicates clearly with its affected workforce, medical staff, patient base and community as well as keeping the department informed of any notable events or issues throughout the process.

Minutes later, the office of Tennessee Attorney General Herbert Slattery followed suit, releasing the following statement. *The Attorney General's office supports the decision by Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) Commissioner Lisa Piercey to approve Ballard Health's request to consolidate neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) services. This was not an easy decision. The Commissioner and the Ballard Board of Directors engaged in a thorough and objective analysis weighing the impact of realignment with the goal of enhancing quality of care and improving patient outcomes for the community.* BJ




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2019 Tribute to Women Recipients Announced

YWCA Northeast Tennessee and Southwest Virginia feted this year's recipients of the Tribute to Women Award April 25 at any event that recognizes exceptional women for their community impact and demonstrated commitment to the vitality of the region.

2019 TRIBUTE TO WOMEN RECIPIENTS

Nurture Category

Chaiba Bloomer works to encourage women's leadership, reduce homelessness, and mentor at-risk youth. She serves as a mentor for future business leaders and young adults. As one of the first female bank presidents in the market, Bloomer was committed to both her customers and employees. She now runs CKB Consulting, an international banking consultation firm she founded.

As a principal and nationally recognized educational leader, **Pam Davis** works to serve young children from impoverished

families. By forming partnerships with local agencies Davis was able to secure volunteers and donations for students. As a result, attendance and state mandated test scores improved. She was recognized for her efforts by the First Lady of Virginia, and became a spokesperson for a national nonprofit, No Kid Hungry.

Heidi Dulebohn connects with people in order to build relationships and work together toward a common goal. In addition to her volunteer work, Dulebohn works as an international consultant and lecturer. She has served as a leader, officer, and supporter of many nonprofits and causes in the area. One of her greatest passions has been supporting the Niswonger Children's Hospital as both a volunteer and an employee.

Transform Category

In January 2018, the Abingdon Music Experience was recognized as a Top 20 event by the Southwest Tourism Society. This is one of 27 events that **Sara Saavedra** organizes for the town of Abingdon each year. In addition to helping grow the tourism industry and generate revenue for local businesses, these events have helped to create a lively atmosphere in the downtown area.

In 2017 **Becky Haas** began working with regional leaders to



Angela Baker



Chaiba Bloomer



Tonya Coleman



Pam Davis



Heidi Dulebohn



April Eads



Becky Haas



Sara Saavedra



Wynne Tyree

design and develop the Holy Friendship Summit to address the regional problem regarding opioid abuse and treatment. She has used her ministry to bring about positive transformation locally, state-wide, and nationally. As the Trauma Informed Administrator for Ballad Health, Hass designed and implemented training for healthcare team members.

Angela Baker became aware of a need to acknowledge people doing great work for causes in the area, so she created VIPSEEN Magazine. Her magazine has been recognized by The Kingsport Chamber of Commerce, the Tri-Cities Military Affairs Council, and the Kingsport Office of Small Business Development and Entrepreneurship.

Empower Category

April Eads wants young women to understand it is acceptable to pursue a degree in a male-dominated field. As a

multiple engineering technology degree-holder she understands the challenges they will face. As a Junior Achievement volunteer and mentor she also works to ensure young people in our community are exposed to as many career opportunities as possible. Through her economic development work with Bristol Tennessee Essential Services, Eads helps to bring businesses and industries to our community, and help existing industries thrive.

Both personally and professionally **Tonya Coleman** has devoted herself to the well-being of children and families. Her service in the US Army inspired her love of the medical field. As a speech and language pathologist at Bristol Regional Speech and Hearing Center, the only non-profit speech and hearing clinic in the region, Coleman is always searching for ways to help her patients. She has focused on serving the population that needs her the most, and has less access to affordable specialized care.

A Kingsport native, **Wynne Tyree** has built Smarty Pants, one of the top market research companies in the world. She has a client list that includes many large companies such as Netflix, Target, Hasbro, and Google. Behind the scenes Tyree has given thousands of dollars to quietly assist those in need, and is active in local nonprofits.

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Couple's 'Daily Dealz' pitch tops ETSU iBucs competition

"Daily EatZ," a business concept presented by East Tennessee State University students Logan and Alexandria Craft, was selected as the best pitch by a panel of local business owners and among five startups to receive a cash prize.

The iBucs Competition, sponsored by ETSU's College of Business and Technology, provides a platform for entrepreneurial-minded students to create and fine-tune business plans and present their ideas to seasoned business owners and experts. To participate in the competition, students had to create a business plan and a pitch deck. Pitches were scored based on criteria such as understanding of customer need, commercial feasibility, the approach for bringing the business to market and the ability to sustain operation and growth.

Those serving as judges were Ashley Cox, owner of SproutHR, LLC.; David Graham, assistant director of the Tennessee Small Business Development Center (TSBDC) at ETSU; Tony Lettich, managing director of The Angel Roundtable; David Nelson, co-founder of BrewFund, Inc.; Seth Thomas, owner of Skillville; and Edwin Williams, founder of Perserbid.

The group heard 10 pitches and cash prizes were awarded to the top five. Logan and Alexandria Craft received the top award of \$4,000 to go toward their startup. "Daily EatZ" is a web and mobile application the Crafts plan to launch that will connect



iBucs winners Alexandria and Logan Craft pitch their business plan for "Daily EatZ." PHOTO COURTESY ETSU

users with discounts at local restaurants.

Tyler Dunn acquired 2nd place and \$2,000 for his invention, the Rescue Pen. This lightweight multi-tool was created for rescue professionals and first responders and has a LED flashlight, seatbelt cutter and window breaker.

The 3rd place award of \$1,000 was given to C-Turtle:





The iBucs judging panel. PHOTO BY SCOTT ROBERTSON

Analytics, founded by Tomas Hill and Austin Helton, who have developed proprietary prediction algorithms for crowd-funded project campaigns.

Caleb Taber, James Sam and Darack Nanto, creators of Tempak, took 4th place for their smart watch accessory that can heat or cool the person wearing it. The Tempak team won \$500 as did Julia Owens who placed 5th for pitching “Club-It,” an online platform for student clubs and organizations.

Organizers of the event have offered to assist iBucs participants who wish to enter the Student Pitch Competition at the 36|86 Entrepreneurship Festival hosted by Launch Tennessee, the state’s leading business-generation enterprise. [@](#)

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Join a dynamic sales team and become part of our national award winning community newspaper, the 22-year-old Johnson City News & Neighbor and our 31-year-old regional business to business glossy magazine, The Business Journal of Tri-Cities TN/VA. We are adding a sales position for a career minded salesperson.

The *Johnson City News & Neighbor* is considered the community's hometown newspaper and *The Business Journal* is the most trusted publication in the market devoted to covering timely and informative news about the people and businesses that make up the region.

The sales territory will include regional selling (Tri-Cities area) for both publications. The ideal candidate will have strong communication skills, be diligent in follow-through, be detail oriented, be well organized and a self-motivated "go-getter" with effective time management skills. Have the ability to exceed expectations in a fast-paced, results-oriented environment; goal oriented and motivated by challenges and income.

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First Bank & Trust Company, headquartered in Abingdon, Virginia, has carved out a regional market niche catering to businesses large and small, as well as consumers, since 1979. First Bank & Trust Company prides itself on being a bank built on TRUST, and growing organically, versus mergers and name changes.

The local bank offers services from the most basic to the most complex of financial needs. Their growth and success serve as a daily reminder that they are privileged to have their customers' trust and will always put the needs of their customers first. The philosophy is embodied in the corporate theme, "The Bank That Puts You First".

According to William H. Hayter, President and CEO, "We remain committed to the founding values that have played a pivotal role in placing First Bank & Trust Company among the top performing banks in the nation. Our financial strength has generated value for our customers, our communities and our employees."

The Bank has an impressive history of being ranked top among peer banks across the country. The latest ranking from Seifried & Brew in 2018 placed First Bank & Trust Company in the top 15th percentile compared to banks across the United States with assets between \$10 million and \$30 billion using the S&B

Composite scoring. However, rankings are not the only thing being talked about in the community.

First Bank & Trust Company's business services are getting noticed by established customers as well as new commercial clients. In addition to offering comprehensive lending services, First Bank & Trust Company has a reputation in business circles for their unique ability to structure commercial deposit management services. The Bank has a dedicated team that customizes deposit solutions to help businesses maximize cash flow, improve efficiency and increase profitability, therefore eliminating the burdens that take the focus of many business owners away from their bottom line.

There are currently 22 full service office locations, and 6 loan production offices. If you've been to The Pinnacle lately, you've seen the First Bank & Trust Company sign that reads, "Coming Soon". Construction will begin at The Pinnacle following completion of the new corporate headquarters, currently under construction in Abingdon, Virginia. Make no mistake, there is a First Bank & Trust Company near you for convenient, personal and business banking needs.



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TOP EXECUTIVE:

William H. Hayter,
President and CEO

DATE FOUNDED:

1979

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

362



Jeff Eaves, President

A Commitment to Service

Home-Grown Company Provides Solutions for Tri-Cities Businesses

Appalachia Business Communications is a locally owned family business providing superior products and service to the local businesses.

Jeff Eaves, president of Appalachia Business Communications, confirmed their company focus, “Our commitment to service has helped us to become one of the largest photocopier dealers in the Tri-Cities area.”

The company is an authorized dealer for TOSHIBA Electronics; serving TOSHIBA Copiers and Facsimiles in Upper East Tennessee and Southwest Virginia.

Appalachia Business Communications opened for business in June 1979 in Colonial Heights with a staff of two. Now, located in Gray, TN in a 7,200 square foot office space, the company has grown to a staff of twelve with four factory trained service technicians, four sales and three administrative personnel.

In 1985 Jeff Eaves joined Appalachia Business Communications as a sales representative. In 2006 Eaves bought out his father’s silent partner becoming president of the company.

Eaves added, “We are proud of our beginnings and how far we’ve come over the past 40 years. Although we are primarily a copier company, our commitment to service, as well as offering network support to our customers and companies wanting proactive network protection has helped us to become one of the largest photocopier dealers in the Tri-Cities area.”

Jack Eaves, Vice President, added, “We realize if your equip-

ment goes down during a standard business function, your concern is how soon will it be back up and running. Our mission in service is to quickly resolve your concern.”

In addition to TOSHIBA, they are an authorized distributor for LEXMARK, FUJITSU and KIP America wide format products and services. KIP America features complete lines of multifunction office equipment, Workflow management software, digital document handling and storage with new computer network support and security along with digital signage solutions with content management.

“Supporting industry changes requires a ‘Specialist’ to position our organization to fulfill our customer and prospect concerns. Training and maintaining these specialists is a responsibility I pride myself with every day,” says Jeff.

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TOP EXECUTIVE:

Jeff Eaves
President

DATE FOUNDED:

1979

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

12





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As for our story, we began back in 1934 during the aftermath of the Great Depression. At the time, a small group of Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) employees decided to form the Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union because they realized the need for a strong financial partner they could trust. Since those humble beginnings, we've grown into a full-service financial institution serving nearly 200,000 Members across 23 locations throughout East Tennessee with over 55,000 ATMs nationwide.

Last year, with the merger of Mountain Lakes Community

Federal Credit Union, we were able to make a positive impact in our community as we expanded our commitment to service. We now have four locations available in the Tri-Cities area where we continue to offer competitive financial services and convenient hours. Our branches—located in Bristol, Johnson City, Kingsport and Piney Flats—are the best in the region because of our commitment to put Members needs first.

Our Credit Union may have grown in size but our philosophy of “People Helping People” has stayed at the heart of our not-for-profit charter. Membership is available to anyone who lives, works, worships, owns a business or attends school in the following counties: Blount, Hamblen, Jefferson, Knox, Loudon, Roane, Sevier, Sullivan or Johnson City. Family related to any Member of Knoxville TVA Employees Credit Union are also eligible to join. To learn more, please visit tvacreditunion.com. Or for information regarding the credit union’s special events and promos, visit Celebrate85Years.com.

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DATE FOUNDED:

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Left to right: James Battle, MD, Amy Young, MD, Randal Rabon, MD, Jeff Carlsen, MD, Michael Shahbazi, MD, Joshua Busscher, MD, Peter Lemkin, OD, Jennifer Oakley, MD, John Johnson, MD, Alan McCart, MD

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While the name and physicians have changed through the years and facilities have expanded, improved, and relocated, the Johnson City Eye Clinic has remained steadfast in its mission to provide personalized attention, outstanding service, and unparalleled comprehensive eye care to five generations in upper East Tennessee and beyond. Founded by Dr. Thomas McKee in 1942, the Johnson City Eye Clinic has grown to well over 100 eye health care professionals dedicated to serving the community.

John Johnson, MD, is a board-certified ophthalmologist and is fellowship trained in vitreoretinal diseases and surgeries. Dr. Johnson has a particular interest and extensive experience in the treatment of neovascular or “wet” macular degeneration.

Alan McCart, MD, is board-certified and practices general ophthalmology with a special interest in advanced cataract and corneal surgical procedures.

Michael Shahbazi, MD, is a board certified and fellowship ophthalmologist with a special interest in medical and surgical treatments of glaucoma.

Amy Young, MD, practices comprehensive, board-certified ophthalmology with a special interest in the treatment of diabetic patients.

Randal Rabon, MD, a board certified, comprehensive ophthalmologist with a special interest in advanced laser assisted

cataract and refractive procedures including LASIK.

Jeff Carlsen, MD, is a fellowship trained pediatric ophthalmologist specializing in pediatric and adult strabismus surgeries. Also, a fellowship trained cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgeon, he is the Medical Director of The Med Spa at Johnson City Eye Clinic.

James Battle III, MD, is a board certified and fellowship trained ophthalmologist specializing in the medical and surgical treatment of glaucoma. He is especially interested in cataract and minimally invasive glaucoma surgeries.

Jennifer Oakley, MD, practices comprehensive ophthalmology with a special interest in minimally invasive glaucoma surgeries. Board certified and glaucoma fellowship trained, she also offers a variety of cataract and refractive surgeries.

Joshua J. Busscher, MD, who will join the practice in August of 2019, is currently completing a Cornea Fellowship at Emory University, Atlanta, GA. He will bring with him an array of cornea treatment and surgery options which surpass all that have been previously available in our region.

Using the most technologically advanced equipment and newest surgical methods, our experienced physicians and well-trained staff are committed to providing the most complete array of eye care services in the region.

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TOP EXECUTIVE:

Travis Dingus, CEO

DATE FOUNDED:

1942

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

100+



**JOHNSON CITY
EYE CLINIC**

The Med Spa @
Johnson City Eye Clinic





From left: Debra Chandler, Matt Stickley, Bob Hefty, Michael Worley and Brandon Burluson

Mortgage lender offers large variety of loans

Mortgage Investors Group (MIG) is the largest independent provider of single-family residential mortgages in the state of Tennessee and Bob Hefty, Branch Manager and Senior Loan Officer, has added new team members to his Tri-Cities group.

Hefty said, “We’ve added four new loan officers to better serve our growing market in the Tri-Cities, Michael Worley, Debra Chandler, Matt Stickley and Brandon Burluson. Our area represents a \$850 million annual residential market. With added team members we are better prepared to provide more timely service for our realtors and borrowers.”

In Tennessee, MIG has nearly 400 employees in 16 branch locations from Memphis to the Tri-Cities. The Johnson City office is located at 508 Princeton Rd. Suite 201 and the King-sport office is located at 1825 N. Eastman Rd., Suite 3.

Bob earned a BS degree in finance and economics gaining experience as an Army finance officer for five years and later 11 years with a Fortune 500 company. “Since I had my mortgage with MIG I realized I wanted to build my own business and

made my next career move to MIG.” Bob now has 17 years of experience with MIG and is consistently one of the top 20 mortgage loan producers company wide.

Bob has personally trained and continues to mentor his highly qualified team saying, “We are prepared and eager to educate and service the Tri-Cities Realtors and potential home owners.”

MIG has been in Johnson City for over 24 years and provides mortgage programs for purchases and refinances specific to the customer’s needs that include – Conventional – FHA – VA – THDA – Rural Development and Jumbo loans. In addition to offering competitive rates and a diversified line of residential mortgage products, MIG houses on-site underwriting, processing and appraisal services, and employs state-of-the-art technology to ensure a swift and professional home buying experience.

Purchasing a home is one of the most important financial decisions one will ever make. Bob and his team are committed to making the experience as smooth and pleasurable as possible.

CONTACT INFO:

508 Princeton Rd, Suite 201
Johnson City, TN 37601
423-283-4702

TOP EXECUTIVE:

Chuck Tonkin II and
Chrissi Rhea, Co-Founders

DATE FOUNDED:

1989

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

400





SoFHA guided by desire for independence, commitment to patient care

Born out of a spirit of collaboration, State of Franklin Healthcare Associates (SoFHA) is a hometown provider with deep roots in our community.

SoFHA was officially formed in 1998, but the independent practices that banded together to form the provider each came to the table with a long history of providing quality medical care. Over 20 years later, the physician-owned company has built a firm foundation that enables SoFHA to be nimble enough to adapt to the rapidly changing landscape of healthcare in the 21st century.

“We’re really part of this community and we put patients first in what we do,” said Rich Panek, CEO of SoFHA. “We’re not confused about who we are and what our mission is. Our mission is to care for the patient first and do the right thing for the patient, irrespective of the economics or political pressures.”

During the mid-1990s, the winds of consolidation were swirling through the healthcare community. A group of local practices, Johnson City Pediatrics, Medical Center OB/GYN and Johnson City Internal Medicine yearned for independence and began working to establish a physician-owned organization grounded in a patient-centered approach to healthcare.

The result was SoFHA, which operates under the oversight of a physician board of governors focused on maintaining a high level of care, searching for ways to improve methodology and engaging in long-term strategic planning in order to anticipate the needs of their patients in the future. With medical services in internal medicine, interventional pain management, physical therapy, walk-in clinic, OB/GYN, family practice, pediatrics, hospitalists and sleep medicine, SoFHA is currently supported by over 140 skilled healthcare providers working in 15 healthcare practices.

Since physicians have been in charge of setting the goals and long-range planning of the company with patient care as the primary focus, Panek says SoFHA is able to see needs and move quickly to

address them. For example, the company formally opened an Acute Care Clinic, within Johnson City Internal Medicine, for patients with chronic conditions on July 1, 2016. The new facility allows SoFHA to provide better access to care for patients with chronic conditions, increase healthcare efficiency and reduce costs for all involved. Other examples include meeting the need for extended hours within our pediatric practices and creating group prenatal care for our OB patients.

As the population in our region continues to age, SoFHA has once again tried to be proactive in its approach. In addition to finding ways to leverage new technology, SoFHA has gone back to an old model in order to care for elderly patients or those with chronic complex problems who cannot make it in to see their doctor at the office.

A team of medical providers and social workers are grabbing their black bags, so to speak, and fanning out to homes in the community to meet patients where they are. These “home teams” assess needs, help coordinate services and generally do all they can to keep patients with chronic conditions living healthy and independent lives in their own homes for as long as possible.

With innovations on the horizon such as the promising potential of telemedicine and at home acute care SoFHA is focused on the future. But Panek is also well aware of the lasting legacy SoFHA has built over the course of its first two decades of existence.

“It’s interesting at this point because now a lot of our senior physicians are starting to have their children come and work in their practice,” Panek said. “This is really a culture of family. Our legacy will always be centered around caring first for our patients.”



Rich Panek, CEO
State of Franklin
Healthcare Associates

CONTACT INFO:

2528 Wesley Street,
Suite 2
Johnson City, TN 37604
Phone (423) 794-2468

TOP EXECUTIVE:

CEO, Rich Panek
Chief Manager, James
Hansen, M.D.
Medical Director of Clinical
Integration, David Moulton, M.D.

DATE FOUNDED:

1998

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:

700+



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Johnson City 423-282-3850



Bob Armstrong
Johnson City 423-282-3850



Cindy Anderson
Johnson City 423-975-9900
NMLS # 662698



Wes Fletcher
Johnson City 423-282-3850



Joe Ganger
Johnson City 423-282-3850



Steven Swinney
Kingsport 423-246-3700
NMLS #491097



Scott Peak
Bristol 276-466-9222



Gary Malcolm
Bristol 423-652-2022
NMLS #491085



Maggie Weathley
Bristol 423-652-2022
NMLS #1068124



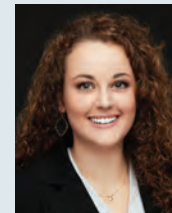
Kathryn Keith
Bristol 423-652-2022



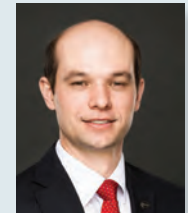
Lance Blaylock
Bristol 276-466-9222
NMLS # 1767999



Vicky Holbrook
Bristol 276-669-1122



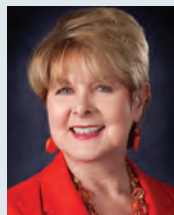
Ashley Leonard
Bristol 276-698-7088



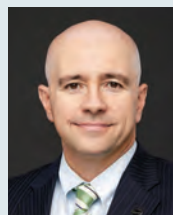
Brent Dyson
Abingdon 276-628-3838
NMLS # 455644



Robert Looney
Abingdon 276-628-9558
NMLS # 491084



Gloria Smith
Abingdon 276-628-9558
NMLS # 491095



Chad Taylor
Abingdon 276-628-3838
NMLS # 455646



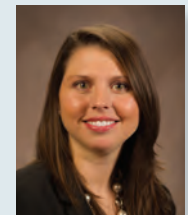
Mike Hillman
Lebanon 276-889-4622
NMLS # 507456



Justin Trent
Lebanon 276-889-3401
NMLS # 1648305



Jonathan Mullins
Wise 276-328-3439
NMLS # 507469



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Leslie | Nurse
Russell County Hospital
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