

NETWORKS

Sullivan Partnership



PARTNERSHIPS PREPAREDNESS PROFESSIONALISM

2017



CHAIRMAN'S LETTER



PARTNERSHIPS, PREPAREDNESS, AND PROFESSIONALISM

It's What We Do Where Tennessee Begins Its Business Day

"Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success"
– Henry Ford

Partnership, collaboration, and cooperation are buzzwords heard often in the economic development world, so much so, that they can lose meaning and importance. However, for NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership, these are more than mere buzzwords. They embody the cornerstone of our mission, driving us to strive for ambitious goals and attain the successes we have enjoyed thus far.

Cooperation and collaboration are key components to not only our success, but also the achievements of similarly committed agencies, which influence our region's overall economic well-being. In fact, our focus on relationships and regionalism has consistently produced fruitful results and promises to bring continued growth to our region's economy, proving that working together we are able to achieve so much more.

At NETWORKS, we interact daily with partners across the region – and not just the obvious ones such as our friends at TNECD. We partner with other community and regional economic development groups as well. In fact, our collaborative efforts reach across the state as we engage and grow new and existing relationships, seeking promising projects to benefit our region's economy.

Our CEO, Clay Walker, just completed his chairmanship of the Tennessee Economic Partnership, the state's marketing arm that is a joint effort of community and regional EDOs, TVA, TNECD, and private industry. It is under the TEP umbrella that we host our annual Northeast Tennessee Red Carpet Tour. This year, that event – which attracts some of the nation's leading consultants to our area for three days, culminating with the Bass Pro Shops NRA Night Race at Bristol Motor Speedway – had more regional flavor than ever before, with Blount Partnership, the Greene County Partnership, Knoxville Chamber of Commerce, and Northeast Tennessee Regional Economic Partnership joining us along with regional and state economic development officials. Each of our guests complimented the regional cooperation they saw at the event and many of our partners have since reached out to work with us in other ways.

Our commitment to collaboration and cooperation has not gone unnoticed. For the better part of his career, Clay has worked in regional partnerships, which likely factored into his being named among the Top 50 Economic Developers in North America by Consultant Connect in January, as determined by site location consultants and senior economic developers. Later in the year, NETWORKS was recognized by the International Economic Development Council and the Southern Economic Development Council with awards for our Red Carpet Tour and Community Video, respectively.

These relationships pay off when launching successful projects, which is the central point of our work after all. While our job totals dropped off from last year's record 1,540, our total project count was up with eight announcements that represent 503 primary jobs. They also represent a very good year in terms of investment with a total of about \$52 million.

Within the pages of this year's Annual Report, you will find myriad examples of how we have built a winning, recognizable brand as Where Tennessee Begins Its Business Day, through partnerships with economic development groups and accepting leadership roles within professional organizations.

We must continue to work diligently to strengthen these partnerships, which show our dedication to the entire region's economic wellness and set the bar for other agencies with whom we work. We have built a solid reputation as a strong economic development team, and we will continue to work together for success.

Carolyn Ferrell
Carolyn Ferrell
NETWORKS Chairman

MARKETING & ATTRACTION

A year ago, NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership and its partnering agencies and communities participated in the announcement of a record 1,540 new primary jobs, which more than doubled the previous high-water mark. So, it would have been a stretch to think 2017 would match those numbers, but that was still the goal. Although the job total – this year's final tally came at just above 500 – fell short of that mark, investment held steady with more than \$52 million coming into the NETWORKS service area. The total number of projects, both worked and landed, was up as well. The outlook for 2018 is also strong, with several promising projects in the works.

"As we market our region and our communities, our brand is generating a great deal of interest," said NETWORKS CEO Clay Walker. "We continue to see an uptick in inquiries, leads, and requests for information and proposals. We also have been getting more leads directly from site location consultants over the past couple of years. As our marketing outreach continues, we expect that trend to continue as well. We're getting lots of attention and these efforts will certainly pay off with more projects in the short and long term."

MEADE TRACTOR

Meade Tractor announced, in July, that it would build its corporate headquarters and combine several sales offices in Kingsport. The facility, which represents about a \$4 million investment, will house 30 employees and be visible from Interstate 81 near its intersection with Interstate 26.

In addition to the corporate center, the facility will be home to the John Deere dealer's Tri-Cities Construction store.

"We chose the Kingsport/Tri-Cities Crossing area as our new corporate headquarters based on the excellent proximity for the Tri-Cities market and the potential for growth with access to two interstates," said Meade Tractor President Chuck Meade.

"We have locations in Nashville, Louisville, and Knoxville, but we chose Kingsport and the Tri-Cities market as our headquarters based on the region's excellent workforce, quality of living, along with the City of Kingsport's support."

Local officials touted the significance of the project for many reasons, especially that it demonstrates the region's ability to attract headquarters and front office operations.

"The expansion of Meade Tractor in Kingsport is a solid testimony to the confidence of our local industry in Kingsport's workforce," said Mayor John Clark. "The project includes an investment of over \$4 million in a new headquarters and regional training facility. As the first major construction in the Tri-Cities Crossing area, we expect that this will be a catalyst for new growth in this important regional hub. We thank Meade Tractor for seeing Kingsport as the home for its future."



Meade Tractor began operations in 2010 with the purchase of a John Deere dealership in Abingdon, Virginia. During the past seven years, the company has expanded and currently has 22 locations across Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, and West Virginia.

TURTLESON

Clothing company TurtleSon located its headquarters and distribution center in downtown Bristol in November. Relocating and consolidating operations from North Carolina and Georgia required an approximate \$1.5 million investment and will lead to 20 new local hires in addition to a few employees relocating to the Shelby Street facility. Company officials said that they hope to add an embroidery division here as well.

"In Bristol, there exists a tradition of not only a dedication to producing goods of the highest possible quality, but also a sense of pride in every step of the process, from production, to

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distribution, to cultivating lasting customer relationships," Mayor Jack Young said. "Turtleson has built its brand around unparalleled workmanship and a remarkable attention to detail. With the full scope of its operations coming together under one roof in Bristol, Tennessee, that commitment to these traditions is undeniable and we couldn't be happier to welcome them home."

For the past two decades, company co-founders Greg Oakley and Chet Sikorski have traveled the world to secure the best resources – fabrics, accent pieces, quality producers – to corral into the Turtleson brand which is known as the ultimate quality in fit and finish. Joined by President Andy Plate and Sales Manager Chris Warren, the team is built on trust, common interest, and dedication to true goals: the best goods, the best price, and no shortcuts.



MIYAKE FORGING NORTH AMERICA

In June, Miyake Forging North America announced its plans to build a new automotive bearing parts manufacturing plant in Phipps Bend Industrial Park in Hawkins County. Miyake will create 60 jobs and invest \$13.7 million in its first US manufacturing operation that will better supply the Japanese company's North American customers due to a growing product demand.

"I'd like to welcome Miyake to Tennessee and look forward to the company's future in Hawkins County," Tennessee Economic and Community Development Commissioner Bob Rolfe said at a groundbreaking ceremony. "Tennessee prides itself on craftsmanship and manufacturing excellence and I'm pleased Miyake has chosen to call Tennessee home."

By year's end, the 45,000-square-foot facility was nearly complete. The plant, which will be operational in early 2018, will manufacture automotive bearing parts through hot and cold forging processes.

"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 continue to grow and contribute our humble efforts to the prosperity of Hawkins County and the United States."

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

CITY OF BRISTOL BRANDING CAMPAIGN

Similar to individual race tracks having their own brand that market themselves without competing with the larger NASCAR brand, communities within regions work hard to differentiate themselves from the pack. No community should be more familiar with this concept than the home of the World's Fastest Half Mile. Such was the case in June when the City of Bristol unveiled its "Bristol Is" campaign, utilizing the third and fourth letters of the city's name. The brand sought to demonstrate the city's many and varied attributes, ranging from the Birthplace of Country Music to the aforementioned Bristol Motor Speedway, "Bristol Is" has the flexibility to cover tourism, business and industry, residential developments, and any other audience the city or its partners wish to target.

"Bristol can't be defined by using just one word because this is a community with deep roots," said, Billy Culkin, President and CEO of Cubic Inc., who the City and BTES commissioned to create the campaign. "Bristol is music, Bristol is bold, and Bristol is business, and a whole lot more. That's why we came up with using a logo and tagline that can be used into the future."

BRIMHALL FOODS

A West Tennessee-based company expanded its operations into Kingsport in the spring of 2017. Brimhall Foods, of Bartlett, won an auction in March to acquire the assets of Pure Foods after the Canada-based company filed for bankruptcy. Brimhall, doing business as Brim's Snack Foods, then assumed the capitalized lease with the Kingsport Economic Development Board (KEDB) of Pure Foods's previous home in Gateway Commerce Park.

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'TEAM TENNESSEE' PARTNERSHIPS PUT THE SPOTLIGHT ON OUR REGION

If there was a reoccurring theme to NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership's 2017, it was undoubtedly the organization's extended role in economic development organizations and efforts across the state.

"We discuss 'Team Tennessee' a lot, particularly in our social media posts. As cliché as this might sound, it is something that we take seriously and yields results," says CEO Clay Walker. "Having worked in Middle Tennessee for nearly a decade, you tend to take relationships with TNECD for granted a little bit; I suppose it's like that near any state capitol. You see those folks all of the time. When you're a few hours away, it makes a difference, so you need to be involved in state organizations and make it a point to visit with them regularly to remain in the front of their minds as they handle leads... plus, they're pretty good people who are fun to be around."

In 2017, that involvement included Walker serving as chairman of the Tennessee Economic Partnership (TEP), the state's main vehicle for marketing. TEP is funded by TNECD, TVA, various community and regional EDOs, and private businesses. As chairman, Walker attended every outbound and most inbound events, where he served as the "spokesman" for the state.

For the fourth consecutive year, NETWORKS hosted the Northeast Tennessee Red Carpet Tour, bringing top site location consultants into Sullivan County for three days of tours and meetings to familiarize them with the region, culminating with VIP treatment at the Bass Pro Shops NRA Night Race at Bristol Motor Speedway. While NETWORKS has always opened the event up to other regional EDOs, last year's event had a broader regional flavor than ever before. Blount Partnership, the Greene County Partnership, and Knoxville Chamber of Commerce signed on as partner organizations and, for the first time, the Northeast Tennessee Regional Economic Partnership accepted its invitation to participate.

"It was kind of neat, looking around the room and seeing all of those counties and cities represented," said Executive Project Manager Michael Parker, who serves as the director for the event. "With NeTREP representing Washington, Carter, and Unicoi counties and our representing Sullivan and Hawkins counties, we had this corner of the state pretty much covered. It made a very positive impression on our guests."

Once again, Walker was asked to participate on a panel at the 2017 Governor's Conference on Economic Development, held in November in Gatlinburg. TNECD Deputy Commissioner of Business, Community and Rural Development Allen Borden moderated the "Selling Your Site" session that also included Bryan Daniels of Blount Partnership, Mike Evans of Clarksville-Montgomery County EDC, and Brad Maul of TVA. Walker also appeared on panels in 2014 and 2016 on the subjects of "Branding Your Community" and "Regional Economic Development Best Practices," respectively.

"I want to thank NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership and Clay Walker for their role in this year's conference and for putting on a great session, Selling Your Site," Commissioner Bob Rolfe said. "NETWORKS and Clay Walker have been a part of the Governor's Conference for three out of the last four years and I appreciate their partnership and support."

The panel received coverage across the state with Walker being quoted in the Tri-Cities Business Journal and The Tennessean. While on the panel, Walker gave an example of regional success, citing the partnership between the Hawkins County IDB and NETWORKS.

A smaller example of working with other communities came in the summer when Greene, Hamblen, Sullivan, and Washington counties were all named to Southern Business Development magazine's "Dixie Dozen" – a list of the most successful Tennessee counties under a population of 200,000 in terms of new job announcements. NETWORKS reached out to the other three honored counties and Marketing Coordinator Dana Glenn oversaw the creation of a joint advertisement with the theme of "Greater than the Sum of Our Parts." She also designed a portal that linked to all organizations' websites for the magazine's website.

"Regionalism is a lot of different things, some large and many small," Glenn said. "We are fortunate to have great partners in our immediate region and across the state. We are always happy to be a part of the team and we never hesitate to take the lead whenever appropriate."





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"KEDB structured the deal with Pure Foods a couple of years ago so that the community was protected in the event that the start-up company did not succeed," said NETWORKS CEO Clay Walker. "KEDB purchased the spec building from NETWORKS and allowed the company to utilize a TNECD grant to build it out, using a healthy down payment from the company as a stop-gap if needed. While no one wanted to see Pure Foods fail, when it did, we had more than a year to find a new tenant for the property before having to come up with payments against the loan. Brim took ownership of the building in just a couple of months from the Pure Foods shutdown, so the deal worked just as it was designed to."

Brim's brand of snack foods includes pork rinds, cheese puffs, popcorn, and several varieties of potato and corn chips. The company was founded in 1979 and boasts of an employee turnover well below the industry average.

NOTE: Brimhall Foods's investment and job numbers were not included in NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership's year-end totals.

AEROSPACE EFFORTS

NETWORKS continued its focus on its primary industry sectors of Advanced Manufacturing/Automotive, Aerospace, Distribution, Food Processing/Agriculture, Plastics/Chemicals, and Steel/Metals utilizing many direct marketing avenues. Most of that focus remained on Aerospace. (Please see related story in Product Development section.)

"We've partnered with NETWORKS on several trade shows and other projects over the past few years," said Mark Canty, Director of Trade and Business Development at Tri-Cities Airport. "Their professionalism and knowledge on issues of importance to prospects is crucial in our efforts to develop Aerospace Park and their sincere enthusiasm for bringing good jobs to Northeast Tennessee and improving the quality of life for all in the region is apparent."

In addition to attending and exhibiting at select trade shows with Tri-Cities Airport, NETWORKS was able to secure story placement in several site selection publications, continued to bring site selection consultants into the region and onto Aerospace Park, and continued to present the property on many leads, coming through TNECD, TVA, or directly from site location consultants.



NORTHEAST TENNESSEE RED CARPET TOUR

For the fourth consecutive year, NETWORKS and its community partners hosted an inbound familiarization event for some of the nation's top site location consultants, the Northeast Tennessee Red Carpet Tour. To date, NETWORKS and its partners have landed three projects – including the HSN expansion this year – representing more than 1,000 jobs that can be directly traced to the event.

This year, the event took on even more of a regional flavor with several area economic development partners joining the effort (please see related story, "Team Tennessee..."), along with Oak Ridge National Laboratory. TNECD sent several staff members, including assistant and deputy commissioners, as well. This year, NETWORKS hosted consultants from the firms of Jones Lang LaSalle, Next Move Group, Atlas Insight, Webster Global Site Selectors, The Haskell Company, and Ryan LLC.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

NETWORKS's efforts did not go unnoticed as many professional organizations recognized its work throughout the year. The **International Economic Development Council (IEDC)** presented NETWORKS with an **Excellence in Economic Development Award** for the 2016 Northeast Tennessee Red Carpet Tour. The **Southern Economic Development Council (SEDC)** named NETWORKS a recipient of its **Award of Merit** for its Community Video. Walker was recognized by site location consultants and senior economic developers when he was included on **Consultant Connect's list of Top 50 Economic Developers in North America**. Marketing Coordinator Dana Glenn was named to the **Tri-Cities Business Journal's 40 Under Forty** list for her work with NETWORKS and community involvement.



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Sullivan County has long been known as a proactive community that invests in its own economic development outcomes, increasing its opportunities for success through many avenues. The county and its municipalities have invested in several publicly-owned industrial parks – including Kingsport's partnering with Hawkins County and TVA in the development of Phipps Bend Industrial park – and spent a great deal of 2017 in seeking and winning several grants to support improvements of some of those properties.

AEROSPACE PARK

Inarguably, the most notable community development story of the year was the region's support of the further development of Aerospace Park, the 166-acre site at Tri-Cities Airport. Sullivan and Washington County, along with the cities of Bristol, Kingsport, and Johnson City, will share in the expenses of \$8.5 million in site development of the \$20.2 million project. A 21-acre tract in the park has already been graded and is designated as a **Select Tennessee Certified Site**; it is the only such property in the state that has direct runway access.

Aerospace Park was one of two Sullivan County sites to receive grants through the **TVA Invest Prep program**, as it was awarded a **\$350,000 matching grant**. That money will be applied to the design and engineering phase of the project.



BRISTOL BUSINESS PARK

Bristol Business Park won two grants to develop a 35-acre site so that it will be ready to immediately accommodate a 420,000-square foot building. The park, owned by Bristol Tennessee Essential Services (BTES), was the recipient of a **\$500,000 Site Development Grant from the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development** and another **\$350,000 through the TVA Invest Prep program**.

"Having a large pad-ready site is a critical component in attracting a new large business to our community," BTES CEO Mike Browder said upon receiving the state grant. "We are looking forward to the opportunities this grant will provide BTES and the community team."

Bristol Business Park was one of 18 properties to receive a grant from TNECD, with more than \$6 million being awarded to improve publicly owned properties across Tennessee, as announced by Governor Bill Haslam and Commissioner Bob Rolfe in March.

"Providing more opportunities for citizens in rural Tennessee is one of our top priorities and with the assistance of the Site Development Grants, the rural communities receiving these grants will be ready for investment and economic success," Governor Haslam said. "We are strengthening our future workforce through programs like Tennessee Promise, and I look forward to seeing these 18 communities succeed and grow for the next generation of Tennesseans."

Later in the year, the TVA award was announced. Both grants will be matched by BTES per their respective requirements. An Atmos gas line is currently being installed in the park which will complete the infrastructure at the Select Tennessee Certified Site.

"These grants represent an exciting opportunity to partner with TNECD, TVA, BTES, and NETWORKS in a significant economic development project," Bristol City Manager Bill Sorah said. "This site provides us the ability to recruit larger projects, which will expand the employment opportunities for our region."

PARTNERSHIP PARK II

Bristol Business Park was not the only site within the city limits of the Birthplace of Country Music to be the focus of



PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

development plans. Just a stone's throw away, NETWORKS-owned Partnership Park II received preliminary approval for an **ARC grant in the amount of \$350,000** and is seeking another **\$1 million through TNECD's Rural Development High Impact Grant fund** for site work on a 35-acre, rail adjacent site, which is being discussed as a transloading facility to serve existing and future industries.

The concept is not new to our region as local economic development officials have been discussing the viability of a rail-served, multi-tenant logistics hub with several Tri-Cities employers and private development groups for some time. This project is intended to have the site pad-ready for such a facility or a major rail-dependent employer.

The park's **State Industrial Access (SIA) road** will soon be under construction to serve park tenant Bristol Metals. The grant from the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) was awarded to facilitate that company's expansion which was announced last year. The road will also serve the potential transloading facility site.

NETWORKS also completed the creation of its **Virtual Building Program** for a site within PP11, including a promotional video. This program will allow a company to build a 136,000-square-foot manufacturing facility on a 21-acre tract with minimal time lost for planning review and permitting as the basic structure has been pre-permitted by the City of Bristol.

BTES WINS MALCOLM BALDRIGE AWARD

BTES brought the national spotlight on the region in November as it became the first utility to be named a winner of the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award.

"This program is about much more than recognizing successful organizations or winning a single award," US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said in announcing this year's recipients. "The organizations which are given the Baldrige Award embody the competitive spirit which drives the American economy forward."

The Baldrige Award, established by congress in 1987, recognizes exemplary practices among American organizations and businesses including an unceasing drive for radical innovation, thoughtful leadership, and administrative improvement. Only five Tennessee-based organizations have claimed the award with three of them being in Sullivan County as BTES joined past winners Eastman and Pal's Sudden Service.

NORTHEAST STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS

A partnership between Northeast State Community College and **Milligan College** that gives students a more accessible start to earning a bachelor's degree in electrical or mechanical engineering was formed in September. Northeast students who plan to transfer to Milligan's engineering program can now co-enroll and take core pre-engineering and engineering courses.

"I think one of the big advantages to the program is co-enrollment," said NESCC President James King. "Students can co-enroll here and automatically feel comfortable. We are very pleased to offer this opportunity to our students."



Later in the year, Northeast State and **TCAT-Morristown** signed an articulation agreement to provide transfer opportunities for Aviation Technology students. The agreement allows students to apply for an Associate of Applied Science degree once they have completed the Aviation Maintenance program and earned a Federal Aviation Administrative Airframe and Power Plant license at the Tennessee College of Applied Technology-Morristown.

Northeast State also continued work on the RCAM expansion, the **RCAM Academy**. The 15,000-square-foot expansion's first floor will house a machine tooling lab with six classrooms and additional staff office space occupying the second floor. Domtar donated the land from its adjacent campus for the new building. The academy will be open for classes in January 2018.

BIRDSEYE SOLAR FARM

Clean energy provider Birdseye Renewable Energy celebrated the completion of a solar energy farm in Phipps Bend

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT



Industrial Park in June. The North Carolina-based company invested \$1.8 million in the project, which generates \$4,200 annually to the park in a land lease agreement. The power generated from the 3,000 panels is sold to TVA.

Steve Noe, TVA renewable energy program director, noted that the solar farm is part of TVA's clean energy initiative. About 55 percent of electricity produced by TVA is carbon free which has helped in the reduction of CO2 emission levels by 30 percent since 2005.

SILGAN APPRENTICESHIPS

Northeast State Community College and Kingsport-based Silgan Closures announced a partnership to launch a registered apprenticeship program in May. Four employees began the four-year program, receiving instruction at the Regional Center for Advanced Manufacturing (RCAM) and paid on-the-job training from Silgan. Once the program is completed, the workers will receive a US Department of Labor certificate of completion.



As a registered apprenticeship sponsor, the RCAM can put together a training program within DOL guidelines; while this program is available for companies of any size, it is especially valuable to small and mid-size companies that might not otherwise be able to offer an apprenticeship program.

"We're able to put DOL registered apprenticeship structure together for them and deliver it as a turn-key package," said Jeff Frazier, RCAM dean. "We can offer it to any size company whether it has one apprenticeship or 20. This allows them to take advantage of some of the same level of training as Fortune 500 companies."

NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership CEO Clay Walker says that in addition to providing a great resource for the region's existing industry base, having this program in place adds yet another differentiating advantage for Northeast Tennessee when recruiting advanced manufacturing companies.

"The RCAM's expertise and track record in customized training and its staff's understanding of manufacturing processes have been a remarkable asset to our attraction efforts," he said. "Having this program in place takes it to yet another level. Other communities can say, 'We can build an apprenticeship for you through our community college,' but we can say, 'We have that.' That's a much stronger statement."

The Silgan employees are enrolled in RCAM's mechatronics technician program where they learn critical maintenance and repairs on complex systems that use robotics, programmable logic controllers (PLCs), hydraulics/pneumatics, and electrical/electronic circuits

ETSU JOINS KINGSFORT CENTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

After years of discussion, which picked up significantly in the fall of 2016, the Higher Education Commission and Kingsport Board of Mayor and Alderman voted to approve an agreement that brought East Tennessee State University into the Kingsport Center for Higher Education.

"The strength of this milestone is a testament to our longstanding partnership with the City of Kingsport," ETSU President Dr. Brian Noland said.

KCHE is one of five buildings within the Kingsport Academic Village. The center is administered by Northeast State Community College and combines the resources of King University, Lincoln Memorial University, Milligan College, Northeast State, and now ETSU under one roof.

STREAMWORKS

STREAMWORKS, a nonprofit organization funded through the Eastman Foundation, that goes into local schools to teach kids about science, technology, engineering, and math, was launched in 2017. According to the program's executive director, Dennis Courtney, STREAMWORKS uses robots, drones, and Legos to blend competition into the learning experience. STREAMWORKS hosted its first such competition, where teams competed on an irrigation system utilizing Legos, in December. Courtney also occasionally dons a lab coat, mussed-up wig, and large glasses to become the program's mad scientist mascot, Professor Photon.

EXISTING BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

Companies that call **Where Tennessee Begins Its Business Day** home continued to reach milestone success in 2017, leading to several notable reinvestments and new hires. NETWORKS and its partners worked with five companies on successful expansion projects that were announced last year while reaping the benefits of another county's corporate growth in a very direct way.

"Industry expansions generally make up about 80 percent of job growth, so we pay close attention to our existing industry services in Sullivan and Hawkins counties; we want to make sure that our companies know that the programs we use in our recruitment efforts are there for them as well," said NETWORKS Project Manager Brian Ritz, who heads existing industry services, coordinating with local partners. "We have great existing industry relationships among our city economic and community development departments and utilities. We try to organize these efforts and fill in any gaps, most notably by organizing meetings with our primary job sector employers to understand their challenges and opportunities and work with them to continue to ensure that this is the most business friendly place in the country."

A major component of these meetings includes presentations by other resources such as the Work Ready Certification program, the Regional Center for Advanced Manufacturing (RCAM), services available through Northeast State Community College, East Tennessee State University, the University of Tennessee Center for Industrial Services (UTCIS), and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL).

HSN DISTRIBUTION CENTER



Piney Flats's HSN Distribution Center announced that it would continue its recent investment and job creation trend. The Home Shopping Network's warehouse and fulfillment operation invested about \$48 million in a highly automated storage and retrieval system and added 40 jobs in a 2014 project. The company followed up this year by adding another equipment upgrade at a cost of just under \$10 million, creating 165 additional positions.

"When companies continue to invest and reinvest in your community, it not only contributes directly to our economy, but provides us with a testimonial of sorts for other prospective corporate investment," Sullivan County Mayor Richard Venable said.

"We've worked closely with HSN for more than a decade and we continue to reap the rewards of an outstanding relationship."

COOPER STANDARD

In July, Cooper Standard, state, and local officials announced the expansion of the automotive supplier's Hawkins County facility. The company will invest about \$1 million and fill 98 new positions.

"We're proud that Tennessee remains a place where our dedicated workforce still makes things," Governor Bill Haslam said. "The automotive sector continues to be a major source of job creation in Tennessee and I'm pleased Cooper Standard has decided to add new jobs in Surgoinsville. This expansion is great news for Hawkins County and brings us closer to making Tennessee the No. 1 location in the Southeast for high quality jobs."

Cooper Standard manufactures coolant tube and hose assemblies, transmission oil cooling lines, and fuel and brake lines at its Northeast Tennessee facility. Prior to its expansion, the plant employed 340 people.

"This expansion is the result of additional Cooper Standard customers putting business into our Surgoinsville facility," said plant manager Joe Wood. "We are confident that we will be able to continue recruiting dedicated employees to produce the high-quality products our customers expect."

HOMELAND VINYL

State and company officials announced in May that Homeland Vinyl would add 50,000 square feet and 50 employees to its Hawkins County facility. Homeland Vinyl was the first company recruited under the NETWORKS-Hawkins County IDB partnership two years ago.

"In 2015, we were excited when we announced Homeland Vinyl decided to locate a facility in Phipps Bend Industrial Park," IDB Chairman Larry Elkins said. "Today's expansion by Homeland Vinyl proves it is committed to Hawkins County and manufacturing continues to thrive here."

EXISTING BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

Homeland Vinyl manufactures a diverse portfolio of vinyl profiles, including fencing, rail, and deck products. The Birmingham, Alabama-based company has operations in four states.

"We are excited for the opportunity to expand our business in Surgoinsville and appreciate the level of support from both the State of Tennessee and the local economic development authority," CFO Scott Smith said.

TECHNI-GLASS

Custom glass manufacturer, Techni-Glass announced in October that it was planning a \$1.5 million expansion of its Phipps Bend Industrial Park facility. The 15,000-square foot addition will make room for new equipment and the addition of 54 new employees.

"Techni-Glass opened in 1997 with only five employees doing only glass screen printing in a 15,000-square foot facility. I am thrilled Techni-Glass has grown so much in its 20 years in Hawkins County and is in its fifth expansion," said President and CEO Pat Murphy. "I am extremely thankful for the exceptional cooperation and support from the State of Tennessee and the individuals from NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership and the Hawkins County Industrial Development Board who assisted Techni-Glass in its expansion."

Techni-Glass offers many services and products, including: double edging, CNC cutting, CNC milling, roll coating, tempering and laminating glass products. The company's highly trained staff applies glass fabrication capabilities in a variety of ways and serves many industries including sports and recreation, food services, and home kitchens.

"I want to thank Techni-Glass for choosing to expand in Surgoinsville and for creating over 50 new jobs in Hawkins County," TNECD Commissioner Bob Rolfe said. "This is the third announcement we have had in Hawkins County since May, and it is great news that Techni-Glass is helping us continue this momentum."

EASTMAN

Kingsport-based Eastman was named one of **America's Most JUST Companies** by Forbes and JUST Capital; Eastman also made the list in 2016, the honor's inaugural year. Eastman was recognized for outstanding scores in categories valued the most by employees, such as worker pay and treatment, job creation, healthy products and communities, and environmental impact.

Earlier in the year, Eastman was named as an **ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year** by the US Environmental Protection Agency, extending that streak to six years. The sustained excellence awards are bestowed on a diverse set of organizations that have demonstrated continued leadership in energy efficiency, representing energy-efficient products, services, new homes and buildings in the commercial, industrial, and public sectors.



LANDAIR

One of the largest expansions in terms of employment numbers actually came courtesy of a Greeneville-based company. Although the company is based in nearby Greene County, the jobs created were at the company's Kingsport distribution hub. Company officials notified the state of Tennessee that they would add 210 jobs to their Sullivan County workforce.

"The Landair is a great example of how our regional economy works," NETWORKS CEO Clay Walker said. "We partner with the Greene County Partnership and other community EDOs on many marketing initiatives and have worked together on recruitment projects. When one of us wins in East Tennessee, we all win, as Landair clearly demonstrates."

NOTE: Landair's investment and job numbers were not included in NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership's year-end totals.

BHARAT FORGE

The year's first major existing industry news came in the form of a buy-out of one of the region's mainstay manufacturers by the world's largest metal forging company. India-based Bharat Forge purchased Walker Forge and its assets located in Hawkins County for \$14 million. Since the purchase and subsequent creation of Bharat Forge-PMT Technologies, LLC, employment at the plant has grown and the newly formed company has made several significant equipment upgrades.

"The acquisition of Walker Forge Tennessee creates a strategic manufacturing footprint in North America to leverage our customer relations," the company said in a press release, "while simultaneously enabling the company to address new end market segments and broaden the product portfolio."

RETAIL

Both ends of Sullivan County enjoyed significant growth in retail and community development last year. In Bristol, The Pinnacle surpassed the 750,000-square-foot mark in leased retail space. Aubrey's, Eddie Bauer, Just Jump, Outback Steakhouse, Starbucks, Torrid, and Verizon now call The Pinnacle home. CarMax is expanding its footprint, which will create 80 new jobs. Bristol's downtown saw significant growth in 2017, welcoming Bloom Café and Listening Room, Mercantile on State, That Cookie Dough, Angry Italian, and Elderbrew.

Downtown Kingsport saw over \$1.1 million in new retail investment, including the addition of 101 Cherokee and High Voltage, Berry's Pharmacy, Mercantile on Broad, and VIDA Hot Yoga. Along with retail development, Downtown Kingsport became home to News Channel 11/ABC Tri-Cities, Sync.Space, and Town Park Lofts – a 263-unit residential development with a \$32 million capital investment. The Fort Henry Mall kicked off a \$2.3 million makeover and welcomed Dunham's Sports and NCG Theater. Stone Drive welcomed JoAnn Fabrics and Burke's.



NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership is the economic development organization serving the North-eastern Tennessee communities in Sullivan – including charter partners Bluff City, Bristol, and Kingsport – and Hawkins counties. Our team of professionals is ready and able to assist you and your company reach your fullest potential here.

Where Tennessee Begins Its Business Day.

VOTING MEMBERS: Carolyn Ferrell, Robinette Co – **Chairman**; Bill Sumner, Bell Helicopter – **Vice Chairman**; David Wagner, Bank of Tennessee – **Secretary/Treasurer**; Dr. Michael Browder, BTES; Jerry Caldwell, Bristol Motor Speedway; John Campbell, AccelNow; John Clark, Mayor, Kingsport; David Golden, Eastman; Lea Powers, Bristol; Richard Venable, Mayor, Sullivan County; Irene Wells, Mayor, Bluff City; Eddie Williams, Sullivan County Commission; Jack Young, Mayor, Bristol

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS: Dr. Dwain Arnold, Kingsport City Schools; Jeffery Dykes, BrightRidge; Jeff Fleming, City Manager, Kingsport; Dr. Gary Lilly, Bristol City Schools; Jeff McCord, Northeast State Community College (RCAM); Evelyn Rafalowski, Sullivan County Schools; Bill Sorah, City Manager, Bristol; Rick Tunnell, AEP; Clay Walker, NETWORKS CEO

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