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aCORRIDOR News



VOLUME III, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2005

Quarterly News & Updates of Mount Rogers Development Partnership, Inc.

Carroll County attracts \$3 million plant

Governor Mark R. Warner announced in early February that AmerLink, Inc., a manufacturer of log homes, would invest \$3 million to open its first Virginia plant in Carroll County. The project will create 200 new jobs.

Richard Spoor, AmerLink's Chairman and CEO, said the company's new sales and manufacturing location along I-77 offers "high visibility, easy access to many of our building markets along the entire I-77 corridor, and a ready supply of economical raw materials."

"AmerLink will take advantage of two of Southwest Virginia's



Governor Mark Warner announces AmerLink's \$3 million investment in Carroll County. He presents a state flag to John Hill, Vice President, Sales, and Alan Carter, Vice President, Operations, AmerLink.

great assets: a vital forestry industry and a strong workforce," said Governor Warner. Virginia successfully competed with North Carolina for the project.

Headquartered north of Rocky Mount, NC, AmerLink, America's Log Home Company, has produced quality log home packages for customers worldwide since 1982.

Brian Spencer, chairman of the Carroll County Board of Supervisors, said the county hopes this is "a start of new growth in our economy based on our strengths in the forestry and tourism industries."

"Every citizen should be excited by the long-term economic impact that AmerLink offers us in deciding to make our county AmerLink's home," said Spencer.

Washington County sees expansions

Two Washington County companies announced expansions this spring with plans to add 84 new jobs.

Strongwell Corporation announced in March it is investing \$4 million to expand its Highlands manufacturing facility near Abingdon, creating 65 new jobs.

Alpha Natural Resources held groundbreaking ceremonies March 24 for a new corporate headquarters in Stonemill Business & Technology Park. (continued on Page 3)



Strongwell announces \$4 million expansion plans. From left, Sen. William Wampler Jr.; Sen. Phillip Puckett; Del. Joseph Johnson; John D. "Spike" Tickle II, President, Strongwell-Highlands Division; Keith Liskey, Executive Vice President, COO, Strongwell Corporation; Stan Banner, Tobacco Commission; and Mark Kilduff, Executive Director, Virginia Economic Development Partnership.

From My Perspective....



Andy Hall
Executive Director

Top executives in Chicago are going to hear about Virginia's aCorridor.

In person too. I'll be representing the aCorridor and the state, along with Governor Warner and 19 other companies or regions of the Commonwealth, at the Virginia Executive Reception at a private business club in Chicago in June. The Virginia Delegation, which includes the Governor and 20 host organizations, is targeting 150 top executives in the Chicago area

for this marketing event. This is an exceptional opportunity for the aCorridor to introduce itself to executives, letting them know what we have to offer businesses seeking a loca-

tion. We are a marketing organization, and our task is to create ways to reach our targets and let them know what the region offers. **Recently, the aCorridor applied for one of the 15 Virginia Opportunity Region grants for marketing programs.** Since we qualify for the Opportunity Region designation (high-stress communities), the aCorridor applied and received a \$10,000 grant.

We are using this grant to finance an aCorridor marketing mission to an industry-dense area of the U.S. First, we contract with an outside firm that makes calls and sets up appointments with companies we will eventually visit. Then I will travel to this designated area of the country, accompanied by a local economic developer, and we will market the region to companies with planned expansion projects.

We also continue to participate with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) attending marketing missions and trade shows.

The VEDP is a great marketing resource for our regional organization and for individual communities as well. Wythe County was awarded a

VEDP grant to offset part of the costs of "constructing" a virtual building at Progress Park. This marketing tool allows the county to accelerate the project timetable.



Computer-generated
virtual building on Lot 8 in
Wytheville's Progress Park.

Our website, a.corridor.com, continues to attract visitors, and we are updating the site on a regular basis. **Currently, visitors to the home page of the site are welcomed to the aCorridor by Merillat's Rick Lovorn, who is quoted about the Atkins plant's latest expansion.** Success stories seem to be the most visited pages of the website, and new existing industry profiles will be added to the website in the near future.

Because the aCorridor website is one of our most important marketing tools, we are planning to advertise the site address in online directories and in magazines to further promote awareness of our region through website traffic.

Our quarterly newsletter is another successful marketing communication effort. And, we are planning some changes. Beginning with the next edition—or Summer 2005—we will be offering the aCORRIDOR News as an email newsletter. So we need to get your email addresses! If you want to continue to receive the newsletter, please contact us at info@acorrridor.com and give us your email address.

We are making progress in marketing the aCorridor, and we're trying a variety of tactics. We're trying different approaches to reaching our target audiences.

Marketing Activity

Last year inquiries were slow in the first half of the year and then picked up momentum. A total of 26 companies paid

Virginia's aCorridor a visit. Six companies have visited so far this year, and we are seeing a jump in interest as well. Visitors to www.acorrridor.com, Virginia's aCorridor website, averaged nearly 2,000 a month in January, February and March.



We need your email address!

Beginning with the Summer 2005 edition of the aCORRIDOR News, we will begin offering the publication as an email newsletter. That means that you will receive important updates and information about Virginia's aCorridor from an email newsletter instead of a print publication.

We are in the process of converting our mailing list from physical addresses to email addresses. **If you want to continue to receive the aCORRIDOR News as an email newsletter**, please send us your email address at info@acorrridor.com or call 888-810-8343.

**aCORRIDOR
NEWS WILL
BECOME AN
EMAIL
NEWSLETTER
WITH SUMMER
2005 EDITION**

Strongwell, Alpha Natural Resources expand

(continued from Page 1)

Strongwell Corporation, headquartered in Bristol, Virginia, is the world's largest producer of fiber reinforced polymer composites and North America's largest polymer concrete pre-caster. The company will begin production of its Quazite® polymer concrete boxes, used to house telecommunications lines and equipment, at the Washington County facility.

Washington County and the Town of Abingdon teamed up to convince **Alpha Natural Resources**, a leading producer of high-quality Appalachian coal, to build a 46,000-sq.-ft. corporate headquarters in Abingdon, allowing the company to add jobs and consolidate its staff in one building.

The town and the Washington County Industrial Development Authority offered performance grant assistance and a discount on the purchase price of the site in Stonemill Park. Alpha, which completed an initial public offering in February, plans a \$6 million private investment and the creation of



Alpha Natural Resources breaks ground for a new corporate headquarters in Stonemill Business and Technology Park in Abingdon. From left, Chairman Washington County Board of Supervisors John Roberts; Alpha President and CEO Mike Quillen; Governor Mark Warner; Abingdon Mayor Lois Humphreys; Del Joseph Johnson; Sen. Phillip Puckett.

19 full-time professional jobs such as accountants, engineers and computer technicians. "This is a great location for our operations," said Michael J.

Quillen, Alpha's President and CEO. "We can reach our facilities in two hours or less, and there is a tremendous pool of talent here."

Around the aCORRIDOR...

Virginia's aCorridor communities led the state in economic development accomplishments in 2004, according to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership rankings. Alan Hawthorne, director of the Joint Industrial Development Authority of Wythe County, points out that Smyth County takes the No. 1 spot, Bristol is No. 2 and six of the top 14 spots (top 25%) in the rankings were captured by aCorridor communities. The VEDP rankings are based on an equal weighting of per capita job creation, investment and job announcements. Other aCorridor communities in the top 14 include Bland County (8), Grayson

County (11), Galax (12) and Wythe County (14).

The Guide to Appalachia, a full-color, fold-out map, a first-of-its kind tourism map being published by National Geographic, features 33 Southwest Virginia tourism sites, several in the aCorridor. The Appalachian Regional Commission and National Geographic created the map to support economic development in Appalachia through cultural and heritage tourism. **Virginia's aCorridor sites include:** Barr's Fiddle Shop/Galax; Blue Ridge Music Center/Milepost 213, Blue Ridge Parkway; Galax Old Fiddler's Convention; Mabry Mill/Meadows of

Dan; Martha Washington Inn/Abingdon; Virginia Creeper Trail/Abingdon; Virginia Heritage Music Trail-The Crooked Road/Southwest Virginia; Virginia Highlands Festival/Abingdon; Wayne C. Henderson Festival/Mouth of Wilson; Wolf Creek Indian Village/Bastian. For copies of the map call 1-888-SWVA-FUN.

The Tri-Cities is the third most affordable place to live in the country, according to Business Development Outlook magazine. The list, created by bestplaces.net, was based on the low costs of healthcare, homes, utilities and taxes, according to the magazine.



VIRGINIA'S **aCORRIDOR**
 access to markets, technology & transportation

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Virginia's aCorridor

is the region of southwestern Virginia that includes the City of Bristol and the City of Galax and the Counties of Bland, Carroll, Grayson, Smyth, Washington, and Wythe,

Around the aCORRIDOR...

Vaughan Furniture Company, Inc., based in Galax recently conducted a "what do you want?" survey of more than 600 consumers, according to an article in the Richmond Times Dis-

VAUGHAN FURNITURE CO patch. What the furniture manufacturer heard convinced it to introduce Guest Quarters, a domestically made bedroom collection geared toward second or vacation homes. According to the newspaper, Vaughan said the collection eventually could represent 25 percent of the manufacturer's sales.

Construction on a regional tourist center in Chilhowie could begin as

early as June, according to Chilhowie Town Manager Bill Rush. The plan is to convert the H. L. Bonham house in Chilhowie into a visitor's center to be operated by the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce.

The Crooked Road, Virginia's Heritage Music Trail, received awards at the 2005 Governor's Conference on Tourism. The musical heritage trail was honored as the Virginia tourism project that created the largest impact on a medium to large budget. Steve Galyean of the Abingdon Convention and Visitors Bureau and Matt Bolas, vice president of the Bristol VA/TN Convention and Visitors Bureau, re-

ceived the award in Richmond.

The long-awaited grand opening of the Crossroads Institute in Galax will take place on June 27. The Institute includes a business incubator, classrooms and about 100 computers for public use. Financed through more than \$6 million in grants and loans, most from federal sources, it is a project of Wytheville Community College and other educators in the City of Galax and the counties of Carroll, Grayson, Wythe, Bland and Smyth.

