

## CLEVELAND/BRADLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



*The Cleveland/Bradley Chamber of Commerce is a quality organization dedicated to the business development of our members, the economic growth of our region, and the highest quality of life for our community, the Ocoee Region of Tennessee.*

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## message from the CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD



Let's take a moment and go back in time. It's October 1925. The place is Cleveland, Tennessee. The Chamber, then known as the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, started with a focus on sales promotion, credit rating, industrial development, and publicizing the geography and statistics of interest to prospective industries. The prosperous outlook in Cleveland attracted a number of new businesses in the 1920s that competed with local merchants. Local industries began to attract other manufacturing plants because of the high standards maintained and the conditions for growth and expansion.

Fast forward to 2015. With the Chamber's assistance, many businesses and industries have located in Bradley County, adding jobs to the marketplace and enhancing the local economy. Cleveland is now a tourist destination, particularly as a place to rest and refuel while enjoying nearby rivers, lakes and mountains.

Throughout the Chamber's history, the ideas and foresight for what Cleveland could become originated not only from people who were born and raised here but by those who have relocated and remained here.

In 1966 my family relocated here from Albuquerque, New Mexico. I vividly remember my parents telling me at age 15 it was time to get a job. They explained, "It's more than getting a job and bringing home a paycheck. This will be the beginning of your working career. Everyone you work for, everyone you work with, will remember everything you do, good or bad. This job will be with you for the rest of your life, so earn respect and give respect."

Since my first job at Cooke's Food Store over 37 years ago, I've worked for three iconic local businesses: Cooke's Food Stores, East Tennessee Franchise of Panera Bread and Bender Realty—all long-standing businesses owned by community leaders from whom I've learned.

Although I have in no way brought to Cleveland the success stories of other past chairmen of the Chamber's board of directors, I have learned that through good leadership and by earning and giving respect, you can be a vital part of the success and future stability of the business community. I have learned the value of supporting local businesses and giving back so that other community and business leaders can be developed. I've learned that the key to success—which may not always be financial—is found in relationships with the people who support you in tough times and prosperous times.

My goal for our 90<sup>th</sup> year was that we reflect on the past, considering the investments that those before us have made, and then revel in the moment and what we as a Chamber have accomplished and will continue to accomplish. A review of this annual report alone will reveal that your investment pays greater dividends than you can even imagine.

One more time let me say, "Happy Anniversary!" It's been a great 90<sup>th</sup> year!

# Attracting investment and jobs

Our metro area ranks 15<sup>th</sup> out of 179 small cities in America, according to the Milken Institute's *Best-Performing Cities 2014: Where America's Jobs Are Created and Sustained*. This represents an improvement of 10 spots when compared to our 2013 ranking of 25<sup>th</sup> and an improvement of 104 spots over our 2012 ranking of 119<sup>th</sup>.

While efforts to attract new manufacturing, distribution and warehousing projects did not result in the announcement of new company locations for Bradley County in 2015, overall programming through the Economic Development Council and its staff remained focused on continuing improvement of the community's capacity to retain and attract investment and jobs. Once again our existing industry base, now including WACKER and Amazon, provided the community with healthy new investment and expanded employment opportunities for our citizens.

As we end the year, we can proudly say that our local economy is near, if not at, full employment with an October 2015 Bradley County unemployment rate of 4.9% and a Cleveland MSA (Bradley and Polk County) rate of 5.1%. Only the Knoxville and Nashville metropolitan areas have lower unemployment rates of 4.9% and 4.3%, respectively. Bradley County's October unemployment rate was the 11<sup>th</sup> lowest rate in Tennessee when compared with all 95 Tennessee counties, and the Cleveland MSA rate has dropped 1.1% over a year ago.

Existing industry continues to exceed expectations as companies such as WACKER POLYSILICON North America LLC, Mars Chocolate North America,

P&G—Duracell, and Whirlpool Corporation completed multiyear expansion and modernization plans. WACKER POLYSILICON North America LLC reached its peak construction workforce of 2,200 daily workers during the first half of 2015. As the year ends, the project is rapidly shifting from construction to the startup

phase with full production expected to begin in early 2016. Total project investment is \$2.4 billion, 60% larger than first announced, and the project has the distinction of being the largest single private investment by a company in Tennessee's history. The project will create 650 positions in the plant at full operation.

Whirlpool Corporation, Bradley County's largest employer with over 1,400 employees, completed the transfer of production lines from the old plant location to the new facility during the summer of 2015 and added a new powder paint system and production for microwave oven modules.

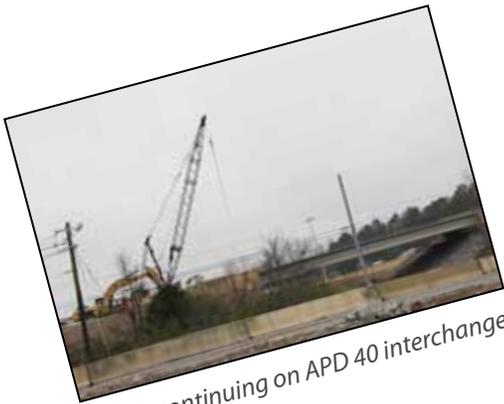
Other companies expanding operations over the past year include Mueller Company, Polartec Tennessee Manufacturing LLC, Hardwick Clothes Inc., Georgia Pacific, Eaton Hydraulics and Eaton Electrical. Excluding WACKER POLYSILICON, existing industries invested \$38.9 million and have or will create an additional 277 jobs.

## Prospect Inquiries

- ◆ **53 project leads** this year compared to 54 in 2014; this compares to 20 leads in 2013 and 18 in 2012.
- ◆ Site proposals submitted on **37 projects**; the community has been eliminated from further consideration by six projects this year.
- ◆ We could not provide acceptable site options for **16 project leads** or were determined to be incompatible with the community or existing industry base.
- ◆ Active project leads represent potential investment of up to **\$745 million and 3,530 jobs**.
- ◆ The largest single active project being recruited is a **\$200 million investment that will create 800-1,000 jobs** over the first five years of operation.

# Improving infrastructure

As everyone traveling to Interstate 75 via Exit 20 knows, the new Exit 20 interchange is finishing construction after two years, and the new APD 40 interchange providing direct access to the Spring Branch Industrial Park and area commercial properties is under construction and scheduled for completion in late 2016.



*Work continuing on APD 40 interchange*



*Exit 20 interchange*



*Part of the development landscape to provide access to Spring Branch*

The Industrial Development Board (IDB) and the Chamber of Commerce have worked diligently to secure the next phase of funding for the industrial park's development. As the year ends, both city and county officials are making progress toward their individual funding commitments that will allow the completion of the project. The IDB's goal is to begin construction of the internal roadway as well as off-site and on-site utility installation in the spring of 2016 so the park will be completed by the time the APD 40 interchange is operational. In the meantime, staff is moving forward with predevelopment permitting, the clearing of future development areas, and general property maintenance to prepare the site for active marketing and promotion.

The IDB projects the development of the industrial park will cost \$18,929,029 (including interest and maintenance expenses) and will provide \$56,300,040 in total land sales and property tax collections through 2037. Additional community benefits from the industrial park at build-out include 2,316 direct jobs and an additional 3,173 indirect jobs creating \$190,017,457 in new annual payroll, an additional \$1,638,498 in annual county and city sales taxes, and an increase in annual residential property tax collections in the county and city of \$2,420,028. The adjoining commercial development area is modestly projected to generate an additional \$1,437,072 in annual city and county property taxes upon completion.

# Preparing the workforce

In 2015, under the direction of Bob McIntire, chairman of the Economic Development Council, the Preparing for Workforce Needs Task Force was formed. The objective of this task force is to review currently offered programs in secondary and post-secondary schools and determine how they match industry's requirements and what needs are not being met. Through

meetings with school and industry representatives, this task force is determining what the Chamber's role will be to bridge the gaps that may exist in soft and technical skills for the current and future workforce. An effort is also being made to determine the best way to educate students and parents about advanced manufacturing careers.



## Career Awareness

**825**

9th-grade students

**45**

exhibitors

## Job Shadowing

**241**

11th-graders

**57**

business, industry and school hosts

## Senior Interviews

**500**

high school seniors

**28**

business professionals interviewing

## Teachers Academy

**3**

teachers placed with one local industry

Under the auspices of the Education & Workforce Development Committee, the Chamber of Commerce administers a variety of education programs to help achieve the goal to ensure a more qualified workforce for Charleston, Cleveland, Bradley County and the state of Tennessee.

# Strengthening industry

The Chamber promotes and facilitates the retention and expansion of existing local business and industry in Cleveland/Bradley County by providing staff support and technical assistance in addressing issues within the community that influence the performance and profitability of individual companies.

The Chamber's annual Industry Appreciation Luncheon, which recognizes all local industries were recognized for their economic and civic contributions to our community, moved from June to October to coincide with National Manufacturing Month. Over 100 individuals attended, and each attendee received a small token of appreciation created and donated by Mueller Company. An Industrial Showcase held prior to the luncheon allowed industries to display business products and/or services available locally to help match local manufacturers and businesses with local service and product suppliers. Chuck Carringer, Chuck Carringer Executive Coaching LLC, was the guest speaker.

The Cleveland/Bradley County Safety Council continued to provide increased

safety awareness in the workplace and the community by providing education and promoting safety awareness through such programming topics as TOSHA updates, Finding Sustainable Solutions, and Safety & Health Compliance. The Safety Council also offered a OSHA 10 Certification course in October with 24 participants taking the course and earning certification.

The Chamber of Commerce also co-sponsored the fourth annual Job Fair with the Cleveland Family YMCA and Southeast Tennessee Development District in October. The Job Fair was held at the YMCA with 59 businesses participating and 220 job seekers attending. This was the largest number of employers represented since the fair's inception.



Safety Council



Industry Appreciation 2015



Job Fair 2015

# ‘Making a difference’

National Manufacturing Day addresses “common misconceptions about manufacturing by giving manufacturers an opportunity to open their doors and show, in a coordinated effort, what manufacturing is—and what it isn’t.”

Cleveland Associated Industries, through an administrative services contract with the Chamber, coordinated a Make It Happen in October as part of National Manufacturing Day. Some 213 sophomore students from Bradley Central High School, Cleveland High School, Walker Valley High School and GOAL Academy took part in the event at Cleveland State Community College. Following keynote speaker Stacy Green, Cormetech’s plant manager, seven industries—Lonza, Olin, Cleveland Tubing, Eaton Electrical, Mars Chocolate, Cormetech Environmental Technologies and Mueller, along with OneSource Assessment Center—provided students with information about their product lines, the variety of career opportunities they offer job seekers, and the educational background and aptitudes they look for in potential employees. The event allowed local manufacturers the opportunity to address the shortage of skilled labor they face, connect with future generations of potential employees, and take charge of the public image of manufacturing to ensure the ongoing prosperity of industry as a whole.

Larry Burns at Cleveland State worked with CAI to create a video to generate awareness to area sophomore students about manufacturing. Two students from each high school were questioned about careers and manufacturing, and three industries—Cormetech, Lonza and Mars Chocolate—demonstrated industry processes and had company representatives speak on why they chose manufacturing as a career and the best thing about their job. They also encouraged students to participate in the Make It Happen event to learn more about the manufacturing field.



CAI also coordinated Make a Difference Day in October with 25 representatives from five CAI companies working with Dustin Tommey of Impact Cleveland in the Blythe-Oldfield community. The group organized a warehouse, built a greenhouse, assisted the Boys & Girls Clubs with the cleanup of their community Fall Festival, and helped with a roofing project on a home in the community. This was CAI’s second time participating in Make a Difference Day, and the organization will continue to make this part of the organizations goals and objectives.

In late July and early August, teachers and guidance counselors from Cleveland High School, Bradley County High School and Walker Valley High School were scheduled to visit various CAI member companies. These visits took place on a teacher in-service day, and all teachers and staff were required to attend. The purpose of these visits was to orient them on the following:

- ◆ Introduction to Manufacturing/Advanced Manufacturing
- ◆ Hiring Practices
- ◆ Salaries
- ◆ Benefits
- ◆ Plant Tour

By educating the educators, CAI’s goal is to increase manufacturing awareness so the teachers and guidance counselors can properly guide students to the world of manufacturing and be informed of the various jobs it holds for our future workforce.

# Advocating positive change

Throughout 2015 the Public Affairs Committee continued its support of the improvements planned for I-75, Exit 20, and the proposed new interchange on APD 40. The new interchange, planned between Exit 20 and Lee Highway (U.S. 11), will open access to a large area for commercial and industrial development. Exit 20 interchange construction is nearing completion. The APD 40 interchange is under construction with completion expected in late 2016.



Tennessee Department of Transportation Commissioner John Schroer met with members and invited guests to present a "State of TDOT" message, including how TDOT is funded and how the department carries out its mission across the state. He discussed numerous issues facing our state's transportation system, including flat revenue predictions juxtaposed against the rising cost of capital projects.

The Chamber, East Tennessee Development District, Workforce Investment Board and Cleveland State Community College finalized an agreement to move the Tennessee Career Center to the Cleveland State campus. The new facility opened this year. This will greatly enhance our workforce development efforts and will provide a much better facility and staffing for job seekers and our local employers.

The Public Affairs Committee also held information sessions on the negotiations between Ocoee River whitewater outfitters and TVA regarding their contract

regarding water releases for recreational use of the river. The contract expires in 2018.

Another information session on broadband issues was held with representatives of Cleveland Utilities, the Electric Power Board of Chattanooga, AT&T, Charter, Voiceopia, and VOLstate Inc. sharing their views on the issues surrounding this important topic.

*TDOT Commissioner John Schroer and Deputy Commissioner Paul Degges (pictured, left) addressed issues facing our state's transportation system. Gov. Bill Haslam was part of the team present to discuss funding for capital road projects in the Cleveland area.*



The Public Affairs Committee met with our state legislative delegation on a regular basis to keep abreast of activities in the state legislature. The committee also heard from representatives of Thrive 2055, a regional planning effort dealing with the region's transportation, education, natural treasures and economic development efforts for the next 40 years.

# Promoting the community

Current annual tourism revenue is \$132.7 million, the highest ever reported for Bradley County, Cleveland and Charleston. These revenues, and the just over \$10.6 million generated in local and state taxes, are important to our local economy and are a strong reminder that we must continue to promote our community to visitors.

The latest figures reported for Bradley County in the state of Tennessee's annual study, Economic Impact of Tourism on Tennessee Counties, showed a 4.6 percent increase in 2014 over 2013's numbers. This steady, healthy growth rate is on the heels of having the highest growth percentage in the state with the 2012 numbers (9.43%) and the second highest in 2011 (13.1%).

Promotion is crucial for tourism. The Tourism Development website and social media efforts were in need of a fresh design and improved function. We launched a new look on our [www.visitclevelandtn.com](http://www.visitclevelandtn.com) site featuring responsive design. Following the trend in travel marketing and using our dollars most effectively, we contracted with a social media manager to begin strategically using social channels. We now have more than 5,000 Facebook fans, up from 200, and have added an Instagram account. Some of our posts have generated more than 20,000 impressions, and we are posting multiple times per day.

Promotion also included participation in a FAM (familiarization) tour for the Tennessee Welcome Centers staff focusing on Cherokee heritage sites. In addition, we hosted the new Tennessee Commissioner of Tourist Development, Kevin Triplett, on a tour of Bradley County, Cleveland and Charleston.

The Ocoee Region offers many reasons to come here, stay longer and return often, including a recreation trail, a music trail and a harvest festival.



*A Red-back Hymnal singing highlighted the permanent exhibit opening at the Museum Center.*

**Recreation trail**—Tourism staff assisted the Charleston-Calhoun-Hiwassee Historical Society in a successful applications for a \$200,000 federal Recreation Trails Program (RTP) grant in 2013 for the first section of the National Historic Trail Experience plan. The contract is expected to be issued the first quarter of 2016, and work can begin on the outdoor interpretation. We are also planning for expansion of the existing heritage center to add an exhibit hall and education classroom. Fundraising is still underway for this expansion with the goal in sight.

**Music trail**—A recent announcement by the Tennessee Department of Tourist Development showed Cleveland as one of the cities to be featured on a music trail to highlight the diverse musical heritage across Tennessee. Our community is included thanks to urging by the Tennessee state historian, two years of hard work from local gospel music experts and commitment by the Museum Center at Five Points to host a permanent exhibit, “The Red Back—America's Best Loved Hymnal,” which opened in November 2015.

**Harvest festival**—The fourth International Cowpea Festival and Cook-off in Charleston saw crowds of at least 5,000 throughout the day. The harvest festival garnered extensive coverage in local and regional media and attracted quality sponsors. The event raised \$15,000 for the Hiwassee River Heritage Center operations, almost tripling what was raised in previous years. The event is a great tool to attract people to our community and show them what we have to offer visitors.



# Connecting and educating members

## Educational programs

- ◆ “Passion for Service” workshop by Bill Drury—60 attendees
- ◆ “How to Manage Problem Employees” by Glen Shepherd—46 attendees
- ◆ Leadercast® simulcast, under the theme “The Brave Ones,” in partnership with People for Care & Learning—300 local leaders from across business, education and nonprofit organizations in the community.

## Communications

Communications efforts blended traditional media, electronic media and social media with print publications and press releases; postings on the Chamber website; a new economic development website; the *e-NEWS*; Facebook, Twitter and Instagram; and an online community calendar.

## Networking

- ◆ Mel Bedwell Small Business Person of the Year award luncheon—
  - Greg Hicks, Impressions Catering, honored with the Bedwell Award
  - Tennessee’s Economic Development Commissioner Randy Boyd provided keynote address
  - Members exhibited tabletop displays for business networking
- ◆ “Food for Thought”—Topics of interest to members
  - Sheriff Eric Watson on the changes in the County Sheriff’s department.
  - Economic Development Vice President Doug Berry on Exit 20 developments
  - Dr. Linda Cash, new director of schools for Bradley County, on the school system’s partnerships with local businesses.
- ◆ Women’s Council—Successful program focused on “Communicating Like a Pro”
  - “Not Another PowerPoint”—How and when to use PowerPoint presentations
  - “Huh? What Did You Say?”—Listening skills
  - “To rite with care is quite a feat”—Writing well for the workplace
  - “I’m on LinkedIn—Now What?”—Setting up and completing a LinkedIn profile
- ◆ Young Professionals of Cleveland (YPAC)
  - Hosted six lunches and/or after-hours mixers with average attendance of 10
  - Review group interest to direct events toward professional growth and development

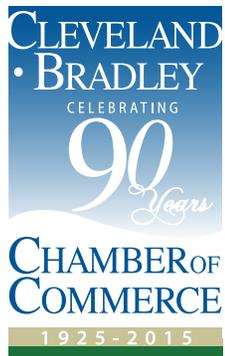
## Member-to-member activities

- ◆ Membership Coffees
  - Average attendance 110
  - Sponsors committed for 2016
- ◆ PrimeTime Business EXPO
  - Moved to Bradley Square Mall in October
  - 48 businesses shared products and services to members and the public
- ◆ Ambassadors welcomed businesses at 32 ribbon cuttings/groundbreakings in 2015. Several were recognized at the December Coffee for exceptional efforts:
  - Platinum—Lauren Gaylor and Melinda McIntire
  - Gold—Gail Gray
  - Silver—Marilyn Chesnutt Marilyn Chesnutt, who is retiring, was also recognized for more than 35 years of service to the Chamber.

Membership retention numbers for 2015 were skewed when the record number of members who joined in 2013 were asked to renew their membership. We retained 39% of those members, beating the national Your Chamber Connection average of 25% retention. Outside of the membership event numbers, over 85% of members renewed for 2015. New members joining in 2015 numbered 58.

# Working for you

The Organizational Development division of the Chamber of Commerce, chaired by the incoming Chairman of the Board, focuses on the internal operations of the organization. Programs in this area ensure good governance, maintaining a professional staff and optimum participation by members of the board of directors.



The 89th Annual Meeting convened on Jan. 29 convened in the spacious Omega Center International. The Chamber presented the prestigious M.C. Headrick Free Enterprise Award to brother and sister duo, Mark Johnson and Julia Scoggins, of Hardee's. The Robert W. Varnell Jr. Leadership Award was presented to Pat Fuller, Orange Blossom Boutique.

The Chamber's 90th anniversary was highlighted throughout the year in Chamber publications and in the media and was celebrated at a joint anniversary dinner

in November with Cleveland Associated Industries and Junior Achievement of the Ocoee Region, both of whom were celebrating their 50th anniversaries.

Past Presidents and past Chairmen of the Board met for breakfast at Café Roma in April for an update on economic development activities. This annual event provides an opportunity for the current leadership to reconnect with past leaders and stay informed about Chamber activities.



*Past Presidents/Chairmen of the Board at Café Roma*

Staff members embarked on a strategic planning process in 2015 with the goal of determining priority objectives and identifying the metrics to measure progress in achieving those objectives. Outcomes were incorporated in the 2016 Program of Work.

An orientation session for incoming board members, held in January, introduced them to program goals for the year prior to the beginning of their term and included an organizational overview.

The board met for a half-day retreat in late October to review progress on the strategic planning process and other items critical to the future of the organization.



*89th Annual Meeting at Omega Center International*



*Margaret Schenck presents Headrick Award to Mark Johnson and Julia Scoggins, Hardee's.*



*Varnell Award winner Pat Fuller, Orange Blossom Boutique, with Mrs. Robert Varnell*

# Board of Directors

## Executive Committee

Robert Bradney, Bender Realty, Chairman of the Board

Ken Webb, Cleveland Utilities, Treasurer

Shannon Ritzhaupt, Café Roma, Chairman-Elect

Debbie Melton, Don Ledford Automotive Center—Chevrolet, Buick, GMC and Cadillac, Immediate Past Chairman

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Jeffrey Cocks, Corporate Networking Solutions, Vice Chairman, Community Development

Matt Ryerson, United Way of Bradley County, Vice Chairman, Public Affairs

Scott Taylor, Hampton Inn Cleveland, Tennessee, Vice Chairman, Tourism Development

Bob McIntire, McIntire & Associates Insurance Inc., Economic Development

Gary Farlow, Cleveland/Bradley Chamber of Commerce, President & CEO

## Directors

Konrad Bachhuber, WACKER POLYSILICON North America LLC

Andy Brown, William J. Brown & Associates

## Directors (cont.)

Joe Burton, Mars Chocolate North America

Kimberly Casteel, USA Mortgage Inc.

Cason Conn, Tri-Con Inc.

Jill Culpepper, Whirlpool Customer Experience Center

D. Gary Davis, Bradley County

Andy Figlestahler, Ed Jacobs & Associates

Matt Hurst, BB&T

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Sharon Marr, MainStreet Cleveland

Lou Patten, Cornerstone Insurance Group

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