



Tennessee's governor keynotes Chamber's 90th annual meeting



*Tennessee's Governor
Bill Haslam*

Gov. Bill Haslam praised the local community for its growth as part of his keynote address at the Chamber of Commerce's 90th Annual Meeting on Jan. 21.

"Cleveland and Bradley County have done a wonderful job attracting and working with large employers as well as small businesses," Haslam said. "They have also pressed hard on working with us to get Exit 20 completed, which we think will be another economic driver in the area."

Speaking without notes, the governor pointed out, "If we don't set up the environment where people feel comfortable putting their capital at risk, jobs are not going to grow. I

love it when you have a spirit of free enterprise that encourages growth. We see that happening here [in Bradley County], and we are so pleased to be part of those efforts."

Stephen Wright awarded Headrick Free Enterprise Award

Stephen D. Wright is the 2016 recipient of the M.C. Headrick Free Enterprise Award, the highest recognition presented by the Chamber of Commerce. The award honors the memory of one of the most outstanding business executives Cleveland/Bradley County has ever produced who believed wholeheartedly in the fundamental concepts of the free enterprise system.

Wright is president and CEO of Wright Brothers Construction Company Inc. and Wright Brothers Contracting Inc. His father, Robert W. Wright, received the prestigious Headrick Award in 2012.



*Stephen Wright, 2016
Headrick Award winner*

Wright Brothers Construction Company, formed in 1961, performs site preparation, grading, excavating, and highway and heavy construction services, and is one of the biggest contractors in the southeastern United States. The company has actively employed Stephen Wright for almost 40 years in every position from laborer to corporate officer.

"Stephen would go to work with me all day whenever he could from the time he was 10-12 years old," Robert Wright recalled. "I can remember him going with me when we were working on Northgate Mall in Chattanooga and when working on I-75 just

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Wright awarded Headrick Free Enterprise Award

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north of Lower River Road. He would work all day helping the oiler/mechanic by loosening the bolts and nuts to change the cutting edges, handing them tools, fueling and oiling the equipment, or helping the powder man with the drilling and filling the holes, or riding along on the equipment.”

Wright’s father continued, “We [began] to depend on him being there whenever he was not in school. One of the mechanics even suggested getting him a motorcycle so he could get from one place to another faster because he was so helpful.”

Stephen Wright began at the company in 1978 in various positions, including heavy equipment operator to grade and pipe foreman and company pilot. In 1983 he moved to project manager for numerous public projects for the Departments of Transportation of Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Virginia, along with many nonpublic projects.

Wright became vice president-in-charge of operations for the company from 1993 to 2008. He then became



Stephen Wright: “honored and humbled”

president and chief executive officer for Wright Brothers. Sales volume in 2007 was \$88.8 million and rose to \$124.7 million in 2015. The company, now 55 years in continuous operation, has grown from its lowest at 252 employees in 2009 to 404 in 2015.

His interests in his industry give him credibility as a business owner and entrepreneur. He is past chairman of the board of directors of the American Road & Transportation Builders Association, a position he describes as a “means of paying back an industry

that has been good to the Wright family.”

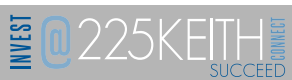
As an industry leader, Wright is unparalleled, having served through the years on multiple boards.

In the local community, Wright is a member of First Cumberland Presbyterian Church and is a former member of the Board of Elders. He chaired the board of the Cleveland/Bradley Chamber of Commerce in 2012 after serving on the board of directors.

He also served a term on the board of directors of Southeast Tennessee Development District and as a commission member of the Tennessee Department of the Transportation Division of Aeronautics as well.

Wright is widely recognized for his work ethic and integrity, but he also places high value on family. Bob Card, nominator, noted the following: “Many people helped Steve reach his success, but I should point out that two of them were invaluable—his sister, Cindy Freeman, who is an excellent CFO, and his wife, Lou Ann, ‘the wind beneath his wings.’”

His father summarized, “Stephen has become a well-respected man in his field for his abilities and his character. He always tried to do the right thing and to treat others with respect and integrity. I am so very proud of him and the man he has become.”



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Address: 225 Keith St SW, PO Box 2275, Cleveland TN 37320-2275
 Phone: 423-472-6587
 Fax: 423-472-2019
 Email: info@clevelandchamber.com
 Website: www.clevelandchamber.com

Ask Dave




David Hudson is director of the Tennessee Small Business Development Center at Cleveland State Community College.

Q. What should I do to cover ongoing business expenses during slow sales cycles?

A. Most businesses will experience some type of seasonal ups and downs. Once the busy holiday season has passed and shoppers begin scaling back on purchasing products or services, businesses may find themselves in a low cash flow position. These are the times that test your business plan. Remember that work of love you put together when you started your business? It is really supposed to be a living, breathing document and plan that you work on through the year as you experience different sales cycles and market conditions. How have you planned to handle overhead expenses when sales dip?

Perhaps you have discovered that you might need to change gears a bit to deal with ongoing expenses. Now what? You still have your lease, insurance, employees, inventory expenses and so on to cover. First of all, do not “borrow” from payroll taxes to cover other expenses. This is a very bad idea. In essence, the business holds those funds in trust for the government until they have been remitted. The employer is the fiduciary in this scenario and can be punished mightily for misusing government funds.

This also goes for any sales tax that has been collected but not yet paid to the city, county and state. We at the SBDC hate to receive frantic phone calls from business owners whose doors have been padlocked by revenue agents. There is little we can do for owners at that point other than suggest they contact their accountant for assistance and advice.

When facing shortages, be proactive. Contact your bank, your property owner and your vendors prior to becoming delinquent. Waiting for the situation to reach crisis level will not endear you in the eyes of your creditors. Explain the situation and propose a plan. Be as specific as possible about how and when you will be able to cover your payments. If you have opened a line of credit, this might be the time to use some of those funds. You may need to look at a short-term signature loan, a loan from a family member, or even use of a credit card to get over the hump. These are short-term options and not long-term solutions.

Once the crisis has passed, go back to the business plan and take a look at what went wrong. Was this a foreseeable issue? Identify the slow times in your particular industry and develop ways to counter low cash flow months. A savvy business owner should make sure to have enough working capital to sustain the business through slow cycles. Often this will require discipline and strong planning skills. No one ever said owning a business would be easy, but it can be most rewarding if you have a contingency plan for the leaner times. The business specialists at the SBDC are here to help you develop your plan!

The Small Business Development Center, located at Cleveland State Community College in the Technology Building, has three small business specialists there to help you. Services are free and confidential. Call 423-478-6247 to set up an appointment to discuss ways to improve your business.



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Cheryl Dunson recognized with Varnell Award

Cheryl Dunson, executive vice president of marketing for Santek Waste Services Inc., received the Robert W. Varnell Jr. Leadership Award during presentations at the 90th Annual Meeting of the Chamber of Commerce.

The Varnell Award recognizes someone whose life represents the passion in business, church and community leadership reflected in Robert Varnell's life.

Cheryl Dunson and husband Charles have been Bradley County residents since 1991. They live and work on a farm raising dogs, chickens, goats, a donkey and other assorted four-legged family members.

However, her life most assuredly is not confined to the farm.

The Dunsons are members and active participants of Kinser Church of God. According to her pastor, the Rev. Guinn E. Green, Cheryl has a great passion to help others in their time of need, serving with time, talent and treasure.

"Cheryl has a servant's heart, and I have the highest esteem for her compassion and work for God's kingdom," Pastor Green said. "We are honored to work with her in our church and through community projects. What a blessing she is!"

More recently, Cheryl has fulfilled a calling as a hospice volunteer, according to nominator Margaret Schenck, executive vice president of operations for Polartec Tennessee Manufacturing.

"Even with family demands, farm chores, club meetings and a very busy work and travel schedule, Cheryl still makes time to visit her hospice patient weekly," Schenck said. "Not only does this wonderful person minister to the patient but to their family as well. She has been known to cook meals for the families even after the patient has passed."

This year's Varnell Award winner has worked for Santek for more than 25 years, first as public relations director and now as executive vice president of marketing.

"Customers who deal with Cheryl on a regular basis know that she is as good as her word—a true straight shooter who lives by her Christian beliefs," Schenck said.

Bradley County Mayor D. Gary Davis said, "... A limited few can 'talk trash,' make it interesting, preserve the environment, achieve profitability for all involved, encourage those who just hear her speak, and then still have the time and energy for life on a working farm at the end of a day like Cheryl Dunson."

"Her dedicated and exceptional service has not only helped this private enterprise," Mayor Davis said, "but our community and all of the communities across nine states. From construction, to acquisition, to management, to financing, her unstoppable energy has been vital to help their public partners remain in control of their landfills."

Cheryl's community involvement is legendary. A member of Cleveland Associated Industries, she currently serves as the manufacturing organization's president. She is an active participant and board member of Cleveland/Bradley Keep

America Beautiful. She also served as a vice chairman and board member for the Chamber of Commerce.

Cheryl is a 10-year board member of Junior Achievement of the Ocoee Region and served two terms as its president. In 2010, she received Junior Achievement's highest award, "Above and Beyond," for exemplifying integrity, respect and excellence.

Described as "the heart of Bradley Sunrise Rotary," Cheryl has held membership in this civic club since March 1999. A sustaining Paul Harris Fellow and member of the Paul Harris Society, she has served as an officer and board member for many years. She oversaw and coordinated the club's first major fundraiser, the Goff-Hall Hope Builders Golf Marathon, which raised more than \$45,000 the first year.

She was recently selected to a three-year term as assistant district governor for District 6780, the first assistant district governor selected from Bradley County.

According to Steve Montgomery, Prospect Elementary School principal, this year's Varnell Award winner also has been instrumental in connecting business with public education through the Chamber's BEST partnership



*Cheryl Dunson, 2016
Varnell Award winner*

Chamber donates hats, gloves to area schools

The Chamber of Commerce purchased in December its third "mitten tree," a live Christmas tree available from People for Care and Learning (PCL), as part of their "Buy a Tree, Change a Life."

"This was our third Christmas tree purchase to support the efforts of PCL," Nancy Neal, vice president for communications, explained. "PCL raises funds to make a difference in the lives of children globally and locally. Because their focus is on children, we

chose again to decorate our tree with mittens, gloves, hats and scarves to donate to local schools for students who may need extra warmth during our subfreezing temperatures."

Chamber staff undecorated the tree after Christmas and delivered a box of warm accessories to Arnold Elementary and Waterville Community Schools prior to January's drop in temperature.

"Thanks so much for the gloves, mittens, hats and scarves," Marsha Wallace, Arnold Elementary family coordinator, said in a note to the Chamber staff. "It was a special blessing to get them for our students. I think our cold weather is finally here for a couple of months."

Waterville secretary Tina McCracken also expressed appreciation for the donation, noting that students often come to school without gloves or hats in cold temperatures.



Sherry Crye visits Arnold Elementary and donates winter accessories for students who may have a need to Principal Michael Chai.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT your investment in Chamber membership for 2016? Now is a great time to invest in a new year focused on economic and community development.

You can even pay online....

Be sure we have your correct information too.

Have you changed your business name? Moved to a new location?

Hired a new manager?

Visit www.clevelandchamber.com to confirm the accuracy of your membership listing and/or call us with any changes.

All investments and updates MUST BE RECEIVED BY FRIDAY, FEB. 26, 2016, to be included in the print version of *The Resource*.



Ambassadors honored

At the December Coffee at Life Care Centers of America, the Chamber annually honors those Ambassadors who have gone above and beyond throughout the year to volunteer their time helping with various Chamber programs. One Ambassador was omitted when we recognized the list of honorees. We would like to thank Ryan Strother, managing partner of Workout Anytime Cleveland, for his service this past year. He received silver-level honors.



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KEVIN MOORE, CLU, AEP of AXA Advisors LLC in Cleveland, accepts the Council of Excellence Award on behalf of the Estate Planning Council of Chattanooga. The presentation was made at the National Association of Estate Planning Council's annual conference in Amelia Island, Fla. The Estate Planning Council of Chattanooga is an interdisciplinary organization for professionals involved in estate planning dedicated to promoting cooperative efforts among attorneys, CPAs, and insurance and financial advisors to improve public education and service regarding estate-planning concepts. Moore serves on the Council's board of directors.

VEC's VECustomers Share Program awards grant

The Volunteer Energy Cooperative's VECustomers Share Program recently awarded the Chamber of Commerce a grant valued at \$1,000. This grant will assist with funding of the 11th grade Job Shadowing program. Job Shadowing, in its 19th year, gives 11th graders an opportunity to shadow a career of interest to them. The students are selected through an application process, placed with a company and bused to the location for a four-hour shadowing experience. Because of this successful workforce development program, students are able to be more certain about their future career path.

The VECustomers Share Program is funded when member-owners agree to have their electric bills rounded up to the nearest dollar to support this program. If you

member memo

... **CLEVELAND STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE** recently



Rick Platz

welcomed a new yet familiar face to its Institutional Advancement Department. **RICK PLATZ** joined the department as development officer and will assist the college in a variety of efforts. Platz retired as director of the Small Business Development Center located on CSCC's campus in 2010 and has since served as an

adjunct instructor for the college. "I was really drawn to this position," Platz said of his new role. "I have a long association with the college, having worked in the SBDC for about 10-12 years and continuing to teach as an adjunct instructor, and I value its role in the community. I see education as the key to making for a better community and, on a more practical level, for jobs and the economy. I think CSCC plays an integral role in this five-county service area."

... **TROUSDALE SCHOOL** is hosting a community art show titled "From My Perspective: An Art Exhibition Featuring Artists With Special Needs." The show is open to ALL artists, with or without disability, ages 14 and older. Artists will receive awards and certificates of recognition and will be able to sell their work in a silent auction if they desire. The show is open to the public on Thursday, March 17, beginning at 6 p.m. Awards will be presented at 7 p.m. For details about the show, contact Trousdale School at 423-479-7130 or email Sarah Bailey at sbradley@trousdaleschool.org.



are a Volunteer Energy customer, please check to see that your electric bills are being rounded up. This program enables them to award grants to assist with programs such as Job Shadowing.

The Chamber would like to say a huge thank you to Volunteer Energy Cooperative for their support of workforce development programs.

Welcome new members

The Chamber board of directors and staff welcomed the following new Chamber members on Jan. 13, 2016. Please welcome them with your business.

Ahlberg Audiology and Hearing Aid Services

Tiffany Ahlberg, Owner/Doctor of Audiology

2401 N Ocoee St Ste 201

Cleveland TN 37311

423-641-0956

www.ahlbergaudiology.com

Hearing Aids

LED Gear

Kendall Seals, Owner

1216 King St SE

Cleveland TN 37323

423-458-2719

www.led-gear.com

Entertainment

South Cleveland Church of God

1846 Volunteer Dr SW

Cleveland TN 37311

423-476-6382

www.southcleveland.org

Churches & Ministries

Economic Indicators

November Unemployment Rate				
	2014	2015		
Bradley County	5.8%	5.0%		
Tennessee	6.8%	5.6%		
United States	5.8%	5.0%		
December Building Permits				
Residential	2014	2015		
Number Issued	21	24		
Permit Value	\$3,928,469	\$3,263,360		
YTD Number Issued	367	378		
YTD Permit Value	\$50,433,799	\$55,124,224		
Commercial	2014	2015		
Number Issued	24	11		
Permit Value	\$3,528,465	\$3,995,195		
YTD Number Issued	91	80		
YTD Permit Value	\$23,315,486	\$47,880,090		
Local Sales Tax Collected				
	Dec 2014	Jan-Dec 2014	Dec 2015	Jan-Dec 2015
Local Sales Tax	\$2,254,266	\$27,529,565	\$2,424,537	\$29,372,719
Retail Sales				
	June 2014	Jan-June 2014*	June 2015	Jan-June 2015*
Bradley County	\$117,760,341	\$689,943,374	\$119,039,325	\$695,408,915
Tennessee	\$8,280,856,165	\$47,583,583,730	\$8,618,414,276	\$48,145,537,801

*Unemployment rates, local sales tax and retail sales figures are the latest state-provided figures. Numbers for building permits are obtained from city and county records.

Members sought for new Membership Programs Committee

The Chamber is creating a group of active, invested members who want to help develop Chamber membership programs. Members of this group would evaluate potential programs and opportunities presented to the Chamber. Their recommendations would then be made to the Chamber's board of directors.

"We do not anticipate service on this committee having a large time commitment," Aaron Weatherford, membership director, said. "Members would meet on an as-needed basis to help shape future programs of the Chamber."

If you are interested in serving on the committee and would like to voice your opinion on future Chamber membership programs, contact the Chamber at 423-472-6587 or email aweatherford@clevelandchamber.com.

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Nancy A. Neal, Editor
Gary Farlow, Publisher

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Dunson named Varnell Award winner for 2016

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program (Business & Education Serving Together). Eight years ago, Santek and Prospect became BEST partners and forged a unique relationship.

“I have been impressed with her attitude toward learning and children,” Montgomery said, noting that she is personally involved in every project that involves Prospect. “She wants to make sure that every child has the same opportunity and resources no matter their economic station in life, often funding projects personally if they are not Santek projects. However, with Mrs. Dunson, it is not just about giving money; it is about making sure that all children have equal experiences.”

As Mayor Davis says, “Our community has been blessed by her vast and unstoppable love for her faith, family, career and community.”

Things you should know ...

- **Feb. 9, 8:30 a.m.—Chamber Coffee**, Bradley Square Mall
- **Feb. 15, Presidents Day—Chamber offices closed**
- **Feb. 22, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.—Women's Council**
- **March 8, 8:30 a.m.—Chamber Coffee**, Garden Plaza of Cleveland
- **March 16, 5 p.m.—Salute to Education**, Chamber Conference Center
- **March 17, 11:30 am.-1:30 p.m.—Food for Thought**
- **March 24, 8:30 a.m.—New Member Orientation**



Cleveland/Bradley Chamber of Commerce



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