

CALHOUN

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

HAWORTH SEATING & KIDZ WORLD PROVIDE A POSITIVE BOOST

In these very difficult economic times, Calhoun County is very fortunate to have a company expansion and an entrepreneur with an idea for a new business. Both Haworth Seating and Kidz World added almost 200 new jobs to our economy last year, at a time when we desperately needed it. And future prospects for both look good.

HAWORTH SEATING

In Bruce, Haworth Seating (previously United Chair) added 123 new jobs, as part of a plant expansion. Haworth selected their Bruce plant for the expansion because it is one of their safest and effective plants, with first rate workers who produce quality products.

One of their biggest challenges was finding skilled workers to fill the jobs. They hired one worker for every five applications reviewed, including checking backgrounds and references. Approximately 75% of the new jobs were filled by Calhoun County residents. New workers are cross trained on each job in the work cell and are trained to understand the metrics that drive the company's safety, quality, cost, schedule, culture and environmental protection.

Since the initial expansion, office seating production has almost doubled, from 8000 chairs/week to about 15,000 now. The plant went to 2 shifts from 7 AM to 3:30 PM, and 10 PM to 6:30 AM.

As the expansion continues in 2010, Haworth plans to hire another 80 people and increase production another 20 to 25%. They hope to get more training assistance from Three Rivers and would like to see the county improve workforce skills in areas like lean welding, upholstery and computer skills. Another key need is for the city/county to complete road improvements.

KIDZ WORLD

Kidz World started operations last year in Calhoun City, as the brain child of Mr. A. D. Blount, owner of Med Lift & Mobility. What a great success story so far and a great example of entrepreneurship at its best!

In just six months, starting with an idea for building and selling furniture for children, Kidz World grew to over 50 employees, producing 3000 pieces of furniture/week. This new business now produces more than five styles of chairs along with chaise lounges, skirted benches, ottomans, storage boxes, head boards and video rockers.

Alison Nichols, President, Justin Nichols, Vice-President of Production and Chris Lee, Operations manager, with the help of some outstanding workers, run a very efficient operation. And prospects for future growth look very good.



The County Corner

Billy Q. McCord- Bruce

After graduating from Ole Miss with a degree in education, I obtained my first teaching job at Horn Lake High School in DeSoto County. I had never been to Horn Lake, but I soon discovered that business, industry and people were flooding into the county. I also found that jobs paid much more than those available in my native County of Calhoun. Soon after becoming the first Principal of Southaven High School, the growth spurt became so great that keeping up with building schools for the students was difficult. I wished for good paying jobs and growth in Calhoun which I already knew was a good place to live.

After 31 years in DeSoto County I returned to Calhoun determined to do anything I could to improve the economics of the county. I wanted badly for the county to have a Vocational Technical Center. I was elected to the Calhoun County School Board, and the Vocational Center became a reality much sooner than I expected.

I have confidence that a good education system and the ability to market our county will eventually bring more and better paying jobs. I am proud of what Terry Fales and CEDA are doing to bring attention to Calhoun County. CEDA deserves our support.

From The Director's Desk : Terry Fales

From my perspective, this year's CEDA Banquet was our best. Tim Weston, TVA's Field Operations Manager delivered a great message, Suzanne Oakley, along with some of the cast of the play, "Oklahoma" provided top notch entertainment, and the Methodist Women (UMW) of Lewis Memorial UMC and Juniorettes prepared and served an outstanding meal. Some of North Mississippi's great economic developers attended in support of CEDA: Joe Geddie, Director of NMIDA, Mike Armour, Director of ARC, John Byers from TRPDD, Joy Foy of the MDA and Chris Berryman of TVA. About 85 CEDA members and guests were in attendance.

This year the CEDA Board has again set goals of 200 new jobs and 100 members. While we achieved our jobs goal last year thanks to Haworth and Kidz World, this year will be a challenge. We will continue to get a boost from Haworth, as they intend to continue hiring people in support of their expansion; and Kidz World is hopeful that they will see some growth opportunities. But reaching our goal will likely require some help from an economic recovery.

CEDA membership has been relatively flat over the past two years (currently at 80 members), but we are hopeful that current members will help us recruit new members.