

*For Immediate Release*

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# Strengthening the Davie County Workforce – Economic Development is a Team Sport

Dozens of Human Resources Managers from companies across Davie County met during the last week of January at the Triple J Manor House in Mocksville to discuss the state of the County in terms of workforce development.

Sustained growth in the number of manufacturing and industrial jobs being created in Davie County over the last 5 years is putting pressure on HR managers to attract and retain the talented workforce that is necessary to compete successfully in a growing economy.

As with most challenges in Davie County, local leaders are stepping up to the plate to develop plans of action to address this pressure before it becomes a limiting factor for continued economic development. The Davie County Economic Development Commission, the Davie Chamber of Commerce, Davidson County Community College and the Davie County School System worked together to host a “Lunch and Learn” meeting on Wednesday, January 25 with manufacturing and industry HR managers from across the county.

## **Apprenticeship Programs in North Carolina**

Dr. Pamela Howze, from the North Carolina Department of Commerce and NC Works delivered the feature presentation, “Apprenticeship Programs in North Carolina.”

Many are familiar with “OJT” or On the Job Training and an apprenticeship program works in much the same way. The expert shows the apprentice how to do a task, watches as the apprentice practices portions of the task, and then turns over more and more responsibility until the apprentice is proficient enough to accomplish the task independently. According to Dr. Howze, there are 400K apprentices across the USA in more than 1,000 occupations with 150,000 employers.

Apprentices start at a low wage scale and as they make progress their wage is increased. Many are very productive in their second year of Apprenticeship. A 2009 Return on Investment Study says that for every dollar spent on Apprenticeship training, an employer receives a benefit, on average of \$1.47

The State of North Carolina is currently supporting apprenticeship initiatives by offering free community college tuition to any North Carolina workers that enter an apprenticeship program. The North Carolina Department of Commerce has also submitted a \$1.3 million grant proposal to grow apprenticeship programs across the state.

After the presentation by Dr. Howze, HR managers engaged in a substantive period of brainstorming and lively discussion with Dr. Howze and with representatives from Davie County Schools, Davidson County Community College and local temporary agencies who were also on hand in support of the HR managers and Davie County Industry. Discussion was wide ranging, exploring a number of options and arrangements were made by several companies to continue the discussion with local leaders after the meeting.

**In Davie County, Economic Development is a Team Sport**

As Terry Bralley noted, “Economic Development is a team sport. As we move forward as a community, we must create a local awareness that we are in competition with the world.”