

## DISPATCH

# Opportunity Chatham Draws Big Crowd

Nearly 300 community, business and government leaders gathered October 20 in Pittsboro to learn and share about economic development efforts and progress in Chatham County.

The event was Chatham Economic Development Corporation's 9th annual Opportunity Chatham meeting, presented this year by MOSAIC at Chatham Park and Triangle Community Foundation.

Kyle Touchstone, president of Chatham Economic Development Corporation, gave an overall good report. "We've heard that growth is coming to Chatham County," Touchstone remarked. "The reality is, growth is here." Touchstone talked about ongoing projects in Chatham County, including Briar Chapel and its commercial development, Mountaire Farms in Siler City, Chatham Park, the Moncure

Megasite and the Chatham-Siler City Advanced Manufacturing Site.

The event was keynoted by Dr. Michael Walden, a professor and economist at North Carolina State University. Dr. Walden talked about economic trends, such as millennials moving to urban areas, and the strength of the Research Triangle region to adapt to shifts in the economy.

To close the event, Amanda Hoyle, a regional director for Metrostudy and former staff writer for *Triangle Business Journal*, moderated a panel of state and regional economic development leaders.

The panel included Napoleon Wallace, deputy secretary for rural economic development and workforce for the North Carolina Department of Commerce; Patrick Woodie, president of the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center; Dan Gerlach, president of Golden LEAF Foundation; Ryan Combs, executive director of the Research Triangle Regional Partnership; and Susan Sanford, executive director of the Research Triangle Cleantech Cluster.

The panel discussed their ongoing efforts to address economic issues, including workforce development, access to capital, regional collaboration and the Amazon HQ2 proposal.

A question from the audience about broadband access received an enthusiastic applause from the crowd.

"Broadband drives innovation and small business growth," Woodie said. "It's time to fill the gap in broadband access for our rural communities."

Opportunity Chatham sponsors were: Presenting sponsors: Mosaic at Chatham Park and Triangle Community Foundation; Gold sponsors: Atlantic Power Solutions, Briar Chapel, Chatham Park, Durham Tower, ECS Southeast, Hobbs Architects, McGill Associates, McKim & Creed, MHA Works, NAI Carolantic Realty, Randolph Electric Membership Corporation, S&ME and Sanford Contractors. Silver sponsors: Aqua NC, Brookwood Farms, CenturyLink, Duke Energy, Messer Construction, Pittsboro Roadhouse, SEPI Engineering, Wilson Brothers and WithersRavenel; Bronze sponsors: Central Carolina Community College, Central Electric Membership Corporation, Chandler Concrete, Chatham Hospital, Dewberry, First Bank of Pittsboro, Freese and Nichols, Landmark Builders, O'Brien/Atkins Associates, Orange Chatham Association of REALTORS® and PSNC Energy.

—Alyssa Byrd

## BRIEF

### Chatham County bosses bag trash at Jordan Lake

During the annual Chatham County Department Head retreat on Tuesday, October 17, 2017, the department heads participated in a clean-up of Jordan Lake State Recreation Area. Francis DiGiano, with Clean Jordan Lake, led the group to two coves to clean up trash that has washed up or was discarded on the shore.

Twenty-one department heads collected 32 bags of trash and two tires in two hours. They were able to clean up about one quarter mile of the shoreline. "Since the level of the lake has been low lately, there was trash way up in the woods we were able to clean up," says Lindsay Ray, Chatham County Clerk to the Board.

After lunch they were taken on an educational pontoon boat tour of Jordan Lake and saw two adult bald eagles, one juvenile bald eagle, a beaver dam, and several blue herons. While on the tour they spotted a tire and large blue planter and pulled the boat over to the shoreline to collect those items as well.

"I learned a lot about the lake that I did not know," said Ray. "It was an awesome day."

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Chatham County Line is a community newspaper serving all of Chatham County as well as the southern part of Orange. Our mission is to inform our community by providing a forum "where all voices are heard." We seek all views and ideas about our community, and we report on important matters — including our cultural life — comprehensively and in-depth. Our commitment is to create the best-written, best-edited and most stylish community newspaper anywhere. Chatham County Line is published ten times a year.

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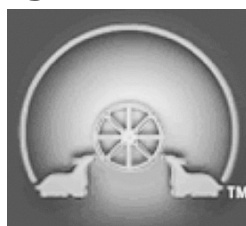
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