

Columbia County, FL Industrial Development Authority
March 2010 Column

The March Issue of Florida Trend has a good story on the Intermodal Logistics Centers being proposed for the State of Florida. One of those Centers will be located on Plum Creek property east of Lake City on U S 90. The ILC's will be the means for moving goods and services to the end users in the southeastern United States and also in exporting goods to other parts of the globe.

Terry Huddleston, Principal of Columbia High School, is working on establishing a career academy for logistics and distribution at CHS. Our young people are required to establish career paths starting in the 9th grade and updating that plan on a yearly basis. Mr. Huddleston believes that it is important for our young people to be aware of the careers that are available locally and what it takes to be prepared to obtain employment in that area.

The Employ Florida Banner Center is housed at Lake City Community College. The Banner Center is charged with developing a state wide curriculum for logistics and development that can be utilized by educational institutes across the State of Florida. The Banner Center is under the direction of Elaine Puri and has an advisory council comprised of industry experts, government contacts and educational representatives from across the state and the country. There are several local representatives serving on the advisory council.

Green is going to be a major driving theme for industry in the years to come. Technology exists and is continuing to be developed that will enable less waste and environmental friendly business in the years to come. Columbia County is in the mix with plans for manufacturing, recycling and research and development companies looking to locate in the county. Green technology will maintain clean air, clean water and eliminate a lot of waste. That is a winning strategy for the years to come.

The IDA is working to develop a first class web site to anchor the marketing efforts of Columbia County. The IDA Board along with the Rudder Team will be working with the IDA staff to insure that the web site represents Columbia County in a professional way. The site will be designed to provide updated information on sites, incentives, and other information that is required to bring good industry to the area in the future.

Columbia County has long been aware of its strategic location for transportation. There is no doubt that having two interstates, two railroads, an airport and access to a deep water port are an advantage. In the past, the key to landing good companies was location, location, location. In the future, the keys will be transportation, workforce and taxes. Our community leaders know that it is important that we excel in all three.

The other key is infrastructure. Our community needs to have water, waste water, natural gas, roads and broadband in the right areas to provide the necessary services required for growth. The North Florida Economic Development Partnership was successful in obtaining a \$31 million grant to assist in improving broadband access to the rural communities like Columbia County. That was a major accomplishment for our region. All that were involved deserves thanks. The real work starts now in bringing broadband availability to the area.

The IDA Board recently elected Suzanne Norris, Mercantile Bank, to serve as Chair of the Board and Donna Brown, James Moore and Company, as Vice Chair. They are joined on the board by Marc Vann, Brown Vann Carpet One, Jeff Simmons, FPL, Carlton Jones, Cochran Forest Products, Gus Rentz, Rountree-Moore Toyota and new member Chuck Hall, Lake City Community College.

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