

July 2008

**Herzlich Willkommen, Volkswagen, to the Tri-State Region!****Georgia Tech Energy & Sustainability Services**

Georgia Tech has a full staff of engineers located around the state of Georgia, focused specifically on improving the competitiveness of Georgia's industries. Some of the services offered are aimed at reducing the energy usage and environmental footprint of industrial facilities.

For small industrial clients, the Industrial Assessment Center (IAC) Program provides a one-day site visit to review the facility for potential energy-saving opportunities, at no direct cost to the client.

For large industrial clients, the Save Energy Now Assessment Program includes a three-day assessment of one facility system (steam, compressed air, process heating, or pumping system), at no direct cost to the client.

The Environmental Network Meetings are open to the public, and include discussions on sustainability, regulatory compliance, and occupational health and safety.

Georgia Tech also provides training and implementation assistance for Environmental Management Systems, such as ISO 14001. Depending on the size and location of the facility, these services may be highly subsidized by the federal and state government. Please contact **Jessica Brown** at (423) 827-6230 or via email at [Jessica.Brown@innovate.gatech.edu](mailto:Jessica.Brown@innovate.gatech.edu) for more information regarding these services, and other services available from Georgia Tech.

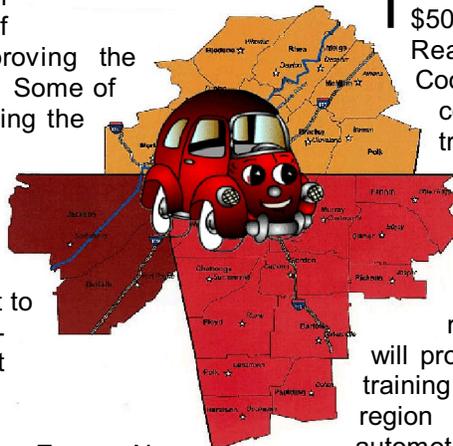
**Federal Minimum Wage Increase**

Effective July 24, 2008, the Federal Minimum Wage for non-exempt employees increases from **\$5.85 to \$6.55 per hour.**

**Auto Alley Initiative**

The Northwest Georgia region has received a \$500,000 grant from the Governor's Work Ready Initiative for its Auto Alley Initiative. Coosa Valley Technical College will provide coordination of the technical colleges' training activities, and Coosa Valley Regional Development Center will administer grant funds.

The grant will be used to profile advanced manufacturing automotive-related jobs, and local technical colleges will provide Work Ready assessments and gap training for individuals. The Northwest Georgia region has over 100 businesses involved in automotive-related manufacturing, and one out of every seven existing automotive manufacturing jobs in Georgia are located within Northwest Georgia. "Auto Alley" is an apt description for the project and the region.

**Auto Alley meeting at Northwestern Technical College.**

L to R, back row, **Jim Owen**, Manager Nissin Brake Georgia; **Pres Jenkins**, HR Manager Blue Bird North Georgia; **Rich Hammond**, Auto Alley Project Manager; **Jeff King**, Interim President Northwestern Technical College (NWTC); **Pete McDonald**, VP Economic Development Coosa Valley Technical College; **Al Hutchison**, VP Economic Development NWTC; and **Greg Laudeman**, Project Manager Community Innovation Services of Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute; L to R, front row: **Patty Hart**, Work Keys Center & Job Profiler NWTC; **Donna Henderson**, Economic Development Programs NWTC; and **Lyneisa Atchley**, HR Manager Gill Industries.

**Rich Hammond** is the Project Leader. Rich retired with nineteen years experience working for Bekaert Steel and thirty-eight years experience overall working in manufacturing. Businesses desiring more information about "Auto Alley" can contact Rich at [AutoAlley@bellsouth.net](mailto:AutoAlley@bellsouth.net).

## Extended Unemployment Compensation

A bill granting extended unemployment compensation has been signed by President Bush. For eligible individuals, the new law provides additional weeks equal to one-half of the claimant's original maximum benefit amount. The maximum extension will be for 13 weeks. Claimants will be paid the same weekly benefit amount allowed on their most recent claim.

Claimants must meet the same benefit eligibility requirements as for regular claims. For extended benefits, claimants must:

- have filed a valid, new initial claim on or after May 2, 2006;
- have exhausted benefits on that claim or have an expired benefit year on that claim; and
- not be eligible for benefits under any regular Unemployment Insurance program.

Local Department of Labor/Career Center offices will be providing additional information.

## Entrepreneur Friendly

Murray County is the latest Georgia county to be named Entrepreneur Friendly. The designation is earned when a community has developed an environment that is welcoming to small businesses and entrepreneurs. To earn the distinction, Murray County analyzed its entrepreneurial and small business environment and developed strategies to help foster its growth under the guidance of the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD).



Murray County Chamber celebrates its new designation.

By earning the distinction, the county becomes eligible for a 50% match Entrepreneur Friendly Implementation Fund (EFIF) grant to help implement programs that support entrepreneurs and small businesses. Qualified entrepreneurs and small business owners in the county can also receive customized market data to help them become more competitive.

*"When one door closes another one opens; but we so often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones which open for us"*

- Alexander Graham Bell

## Sales Tax Holidays

School will be starting in a few weeks so start planning now to take advantage of the Tri-State area's sales tax holidays.



Alabama  
August 1 - 3, 2008

Georgia  
July 31 - August 3, 2008

Tennessee  
August 1 - 3, 2008

## FMLA Military Expansion Bill

The US Department of Labor (DOL) has issued a Notice concerning the military family leave amendments to the Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA) signed into Law by President Bush in January.

"Eligible employees are entitled to up to 12 weeks of leave because of 'any qualifying exigency' arising out of the fact that the spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee is on active duty, or has been notified of an impending call to active duty status, in support of a contingency operation."

In addition, "an eligible employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of a covered service member who is recovering from a serious illness or injury sustained in the line of duty on active duty is entitled to up to 26 weeks of leave in a single 12-month period to care for the service member."

The FMLA web site contains additional information on the amendments. The web site can be reviewed at [http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/NDAA\\_fmla.htm](http://www.dol.gov/esa/whd/fmla/NDAA_fmla.htm).

## Save the Date

The next **Tri-State Regional Workforce Alliance Meeting** will be held on August 28 at Cleveland State Community College. The program will focus on the Green Industry and creation of Green jobs. More information will be forthcoming.

The Business Informer is a publication of the Tri-State Regional Workforce Alliance. For more information about the Alliance contact Gwen Dellinger, Northwest Georgia Workforce Development Director, Coosa Valley Regional Development Center, 706.295.6485; Mike Kennemer, Director Workforce Development, Northeast Alabama Community College 256.228.6001, or Phyllis Casavant, Director Workforce Development, Southeast Tennessee Development District, 423.266.5781. Suggestions or articles to contribute - contact Karen Howell, 706.277.7466 or Vandy88@aol.com. An Equal Opportunity Program. Auxiliary aids and services available upon request. Published by Coosa Valley RDC, Rome, Georgia.