

syncTM Highlights from the North Carolina Department of Commerce



Packaging Company's Expansion to Bring 48 New Jobs to Moore County

Governor Pat McCrory, N.C. Commerce Secretary John E. Skvarla III and the Economic Development Partnership of N.C. announced April 7 that Reliance Packaging, LLC will expand its operations in Moore County and create 48 new jobs over the next three years. The company plans to invest \$3.5 million in the town of Aberdeen over the same period.

"It is always great news when one of our employers makes the decision to grow its presence here in North Carolina," said Governor McCrory. "These new jobs being created by Reliance Packaging are just one more part of the 'Carolina Comeback.'"

Reliance Packaging is part of the Sigma Plastics Group which is headquartered in Lyndhurst, New Jersey. The company manufactures and supplies printed bags and rollstock to a variety of companies including the lawn and garden market. Reliance Packaging currently has 12 employees in Aberdeen. With this expansion, the company will relocate its manufacturing operation to North Carolina.

"This is another example of how our existing companies recognize that North Carolina is a great state in which to do business," said Secretary Skvarla. "Reliance Packaging clearly sees the value of expanding its operations here in North Carolina."

The project was made possible in part by a performance-based grant from the One North Carolina Fund of up to \$52,000. The One NC Fund provides financial assistance, through local governments, to attract business projects that will stimulate economic activity and create new jobs in the state. Companies receive no money up front and must meet job creation and investment performance standards to qualify for grant funds. These grants also require and are contingent upon local matches.

In addition to the [N.C. Department of Commerce](#) and the [Economic Development Partnership of N.C.](#), other partners that



Secretary Skvarla greets two employees from the UI Tax Department, Tracy Whidbee (center) and Manuela Seymour during his March 31 visit to DES

Secretary Skvarla Praises Transformation Work at DES

North Carolina Commerce Secretary John Skvarla visited the Division of Employment Security (DES) headquarters in Raleigh March 31 to applaud the team working to optimize performance in state government.

"Everyone has to marvel at what DES has done," said Secretary Skvarla. "It's been truly remarkable. We have to thank everyone in the organization from the top to the bottom and from the bottom to the top. The beautiful thing about it is, there is room to continue to improve and everyone has their eyes set on a continuing improvement goal."

Secretary Skvarla listened as team members shared department activities and then later, as employees passed through a receiving line to introduce themselves and discuss their role in the agency. He gave credit for the improvements at DES to each and every employee.

Secretary Skvarla also said DES employees should be inspired by the hard work that has led to so many achievements in a short amount of time.

"It's transformations like this that make it all worthwhile. I just hope all employees realize the tremendous accomplishments that have occurred here at DES and are proud of the

helped with this project include: [North Carolina Community College System](#), [Sandhills Community College](#), the [North Carolina Department of Transportation](#), [Aberdeen Carolina & Western Railroad](#), [Moore County Partners in Progress](#), [The Town of Aberdeen](#) and [Moore County](#).

[Read more.](#)



A lighthearted fitness promotion featured Southeastern Health's executive team - engaged leaders are an important factor in company wellness initiatives

Health System Walks the Walk

Robeson County, in the southeast corner of North Carolina, is the state's unhealthiest county, according to the latest Robert Wood Johnson Foundation rankings. Joanne Anderson, CEO of Southeastern Health, takes that infamy as a challenge. "As the healthcare provider in our county, we should set ourselves up as an example of healthy living," said Anderson. "With an employee base of 2,500, we can influence even more people by living healthier lifestyles ourselves."

Two years ago the highly motivated Southeastern Health staff took on WorkHealthy America, setting monthly goals for improving the organization's grades in tobacco, nutrition, physical activity and overall culture. In one year the medical center jumped from B's and C's to straight A's and the Excellence Recognition - an unprecedented pace for making workplace changes. "Employee engagement has improved and a number of employees have lost significant amounts of weight, and are happier and healthier," said Amanda Roberts, coordinator of employee health and wellness.

Support from the top is one key to success. As CEO, Anderson made workplace wellness one of the organization's strategic goals. She and her vice presidents participate in many of the fitness activities. Healthy initiatives at Southeastern Health include:

- Providing "fitboxes" to hospital departments that include hand weights, stretch bands, and exercise suggestions so that time-strapped nurses can exercise during their 10-minute breaks without having to leave their floors.
- Quarterly lunch-and-learn cooking demonstrations, biweekly exercise and nutrition classes, and monthly stress management classes.
- The "stoplight" method in the cafeteria, encouraging employees to eat healthier items, which are marked

role they played in those accomplishments. It's inspiring and everyone who is in state government should be inspired by what has been done here."

Employment Security Call Center Celebrates First Year of Helping Employers

The Employer Call Center (ECC), a bank of experts that help employers navigate the ins and outs of the state's employment security system, celebrates its first year of operations this month.

In its first year, the center answered 54,400 telephone calls and responded to more than 6,300 email inquiries. The call center is a service of the Division of Employment Security, an operating unit of the N.C. Department of Commerce.

"We took a small group of knowledgeable staff and tasked them with being the front line for employers," said Dale Folwell, Assistant Secretary of Commerce. "They have succeeded by answering thousands of questions by phone and by email. No matter the question, this group is dedicated to helping the employer."

Employer Call Center agents are trained as universal guides to unemployment insurance knowledge from the perspective of the business owner. The agency maintains another call center for citizens needing assistance with personal unemployment insurance questions.

Employers can reach the ECC by calling (919) 707-1159 or toll-free at (866) 278-3822.



The 900-megawatt Harris Nuclear Plant, located in Wake County, is one of the generation facilities involved in the legislation

Governor McCrory Signs Bill that Will Lower Electric Rates in Eastern North Carolina

Governor Pat McCrory signed legislation April 2 that is expected to lower electric rates for consumers in eastern North Carolina and help attract new jobs to the region. The governor signed the legislation (SB 305) at the Wilson Operations Center.

green and priced less than "yellow" moderate foods and "red" unhealthy items.

- Offering an online forum where employees can ask questions about physical activity, nutrition, and stress management that they might not want to ask in person; an expert in that field replies.
- Starting a garden where employees can learn about growing herbs and vegetables, learn how to incorporate them in their own cooking, and bring samples home to taste test.

True to Anderson's pledge to set an example for the community, employees and community members built a walking trail at Southeastern's new ambulatory surgery center. Health system employees also partnered with an elementary school for a walkathon.

Healthy Places Change Lives is a partnership between the N.C. Department of Commerce and Prevention Partners, a nonprofit based in Chapel Hill. Prevention Partners guides schools, workplaces, hospitals and clinics to address the leading causes of preventable disease. The non-profit's Healthy Together NC initiative aims to reach at least 10 organizations in all 100 counties of the state by 2025. Learn more at ForPrevention.org/HealthyTogetherNC



City of Brevard Awarded \$200,000 for Downtown Renewal Project

A new office and retail facility is on tap for downtown Brevard, thanks to an award from North Carolina's Main Street Solutions Fund.

The N.C. Department of Commerce has awarded Brevard up to \$200,000 to construct a new office and retail facility located at 43 South Broad Street for phase two of the Aethewold Development. Phase one of the development rehabilitated the historic Aethewold hotel, transforming it into residential units and retail space.

"We applaud the city of Brevard for its commitment to revitalizing an historic hotel and using this award for new construction on an empty lot downtown," said Commerce Secretary John Skvarla. "This visionary initiative will help breathe new life into a wonderful downtown area."

"We are very excited about this new project," said Liz Parham, director of the North Carolina Main Street Center. "The project in Brevard allows for the expansion of an existing architectural firm. The new facility will serve as additional office and retail space, four residential units and much needed parking."

North Carolina Main Street and Small Town Main Street have experienced \$2.2 billion in public and private investment and a net gain of more than 19,000 jobs since the inception of the program in 1980.

Brevard is one of 35 Nationally Accredited Main Street programs in North Carolina.

The new law will allow Duke Energy Progress to purchase generation assets from the 32 cities and towns that make up the North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA). The \$1.2 billion purchase will significantly lower the agency's debt load from \$1.9 billion to approximately \$480 million.

"This purchase provides a private sector, market-driven solution to a major economic development obstacle we faced in eastern North Carolina," Governor McCrory said. "The lower electric rates this purchase should produce will save consumers money and make the region more attractive to job creators who want to take advantage of the region's talented workforce and special quality of life."

The new law also allows NCEMPA members to issue bonds to refinance approximately \$480 million of debt after this purchase is complete. It also allows NCEMPA power agencies to enter into purchase power agreements to replace the electricity previously provided by the generation assets they are selling.

The proposed purchase has the approval of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the North Carolina Utilities Commission and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The 32 cities and towns that make up the NCEMPA must also vote to approve the sale.

Film & Entertainment Grant Recipients Named

Three film productions will receive funds from the newly established North Carolina Film and Entertainment Grant, state Commerce Secretary John Skvarla and the Economic Development Partnership of N.C. announced April 3. The three productions altogether are expected to have direct in-state spending of more than \$60 million across North Carolina this year.

"The grant recipients reflect a good mix of productions that will film on our coast, in our mountains and in a major metropolitan area," said Secretary Skvarla. "These productions will showcase our state's amazing diversity of resources."

The film and entertainment grant recipients include:

- **Under The Dome** will be based out of Wilmington for the filming of its third season in North Carolina. The CBS series is a take on the popular novel by Stephen King and examines how residents react when a giant dome is placed over their town. The television series uses the cities of Burgaw,

For additional information about the Main Street Solutions Fund, visit ncommerce.com/MainStreet, or contact Liz Parham, director of the North Carolina Main Street Center at 919 715-0527.

[Read more.](#)

Innovation Grants for 13 North Carolina Businesses Total Nearly \$611,000

New innovation grants will assist 13 North Carolina companies in bringing new, cutting-edge products to the marketplace. Governor Pat McCrory and North Carolina Commerce Secretary John Skvarla announced the One North Carolina Small Business Fund recipients March 31 along with awards totalling \$610,997.

The recipients are developing products that would be used primarily in the fields of medicine and technology.

"These grants help small businesses to innovate and expand, producing high-paying jobs for North Carolina's future," said Governor McCrory. "This early stage funding is especially important for developing new technologies and processes that will be transferred to commercial applications."

One North Carolina Small Business Fund grant recipients must first have been awarded a highly competitive federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) or a Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) award. Federal funders for this round of grantees include the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Army and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The state matches up to half the federal money, with a \$50,000 maximum per grant. The budget for this program is \$2.5 million for fiscal year 2015.

"It is clear that part of our state's bright future lies in high-tech, high-paying jobs," said Secretary Skvarla. "These funds are a smart step towards realizing this future."

Grant recipients include:

- **3-C Institute for Social Development, Inc. in Cary:** \$50,000 to build an interactive Internet program that aims to increase employment for students with intellectual disabilities.
- **Baebies, Inc. of Durham:** \$50,000 to produce a new test for coagulation issues related to blood clots in newborns, thereby improving treatment for such conditions.
- **Bioptigen, Inc. of Durham:** \$50,000 for the creation of software and hardware for a new imaging system used during eye surgery, providing clearer three-dimensional cross sections of the eye structure.
- **Curl Bio, LLC of Durham:** \$50,000 for development of new drugs to treat metabolic diseases, including type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, fatty liver disease, and cancer.
- **Eno River Technologies Co., LLC of Chapel Hill:** \$50,000 to develop a low-cost, high-speed true random number generator using off-the-shelf components, with possible applications in data encryption, machine learning, financial risk management, and big data.
- **Innovation Research and Training, Inc. of Durham:** \$50,000 to create an interactive, multimedia web-based program to educate children about the advantages of participating in clinical trials.
- **Integrated Laboratory Systems, Inc. in Research**

Southport and Wilmington to create its fictitious town of Chester's Mill. The eligible grant amount is \$5 million.

- **Lionsgate Television** will also receive funding for an untitled project and is expected to shoot in Western North Carolina. The eligible grant amount is \$4 million.
- **Late in the Season** is a story of a 31-year old Seattle stockbroker with a mysterious past who walks on to a small North Carolina college basketball team and inspires his struggling teammates' lives with hope as they reach for a championship. The production will use the picturesque Davidson campus as its main location and will base in the greater Charlotte area. The eligible grant amount is \$1 million.

The North Carolina Film and Entertainment Grant provides financial assistance to attract productions that will stimulate economic activity and create jobs in the state. Companies receive no money up front and must meet direct in-state spending requirements to qualify for funds.

N.C. in the News

This Week's Highlights

- [Ex-N.C. Commerce Secretary Sharon Decker named to UNC Charlotte board](#) (*Charlotte Business Journal* - April 13)
- [Raleigh tops 'American Cities of the Future' list](#) (*Triangle Business Journal* - April 13)
- [Port support \(Gov. Visits Morehead City\)](#) (*Carteret County News-Times* - April 10)
- [Battleship NC Commission Announces Public Campaign To Fund Ship Repairs](#) (*WilmingtonBiz* - April 9)
- [Greensboro Partnership names next CEO](#) (*Triad Business Journal* - April 8)
- [New independent state entity to recruit jobs to NC](#) (*Asheville Citizen-Times* - April 6)
- ['A monumental day'](#) (*Wilson Times* - April 2)
- [McCrory signs bill authorizing sale of power plants](#) (*Rocky Mount Telegram* - April 2)
- [MetLife reaches hiring goal in Charlotte. 1,300-plus jobs now filled](#) (*Charlotte Business Journal* - April 1)
- [Inside N.C.'s failed recruitment for the new Mercedes-Benz headquarters](#) (*Triangle Business Journal* - April 1)
- [\(Charlotte\) Partnership optimistic about interaction with Charlotte Chamber](#) (*Charlotte Observer* - March 31)
- [NC keeps AAA bond ratings, treasurer says](#) (*News & Observer* - March 31)

Triangle Park: \$50,000 for developing new tests to screen chemicals for their potential damage to human DNA.

- **Kyma Technologies, Inc. of Raleigh:** \$31,500 for growing, fabricating, and testing new semiconductors for radio-frequency devices.
- **Nocturnal Product Development of Cary:** \$42,000 to develop a new generation of catheters for treatment of irregular or abnormal heart beats associated with a lower quality of life and a higher death rate.
- **NovaTarg, Inc. of Research Triangle Park:** \$50,000 for development of a new drug for Hepatocellular Carcinoma - the most common type of liver cancer and the third-leading cause of global cancer deaths.
- **Qualiber, Inc. of Durham:** \$50,000 to develop nanoparticle formulations for treating leukemia and other cancers while reducing the toxicity of existing drugs.
- **Symberix, Inc. of Durham:** \$50,000 for improving chemotherapy results by minimizing harmful activity of beneficial intestinal microbes without harming these microbes.
- **Vadum, Inc. of Raleigh:** \$49,999 for development of efficient, high power, and versatile mechanisms to detect metal in battle situations.

For more information about the One North Carolina Small Business Fund and how to apply and qualify for the grants, visit the N.C. Board of Science and Technology's website at www.nccommerce.com/sti.

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