



Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Economic Development Group Holds First West Tennessee Regional Meeting

Tennessee Industrial Development Council, a professional association for those involved in economic development, held a regional meeting at the University of Tennessee at Martin. The January 19th meeting was the first West Tennessee regional meeting of the statewide organization that for 39 years has promoted economic development initiatives and aided the professional development of its members.

“TIDC is strengthening all aspects of its economic development platform and will continue to provide more services, such as this meeting, to our members,” said Kyle Spurgeon, current TIDC president. Spurgeon is Vice President of Customer Service for Jackson Energy Authority and has had a long career in economic development.

“We have introduced regional meetings to address regional concerns and to allow our members easier access to updates on issues affecting economic development and to professional development between statewide meetings. The people at the forefront of bringing jobs to our communities in a global competition need this type of networking and reinforcement.”

At the opening of the meeting, Nick Dunagan, Chancellor of UT Martin, spoke on the topic of “Want a Great Job, Get a Great Education.” He stressed the importance of education in recruiting new industry and the economic impact it has on West Tennessee.

Another UTM staff member participated in the program. Steve Holt, Assistant Director of UT Martin Information Technology Services provided tips on how to utilize the newest

technology to keep you ahead of the game and how critical technology is as a key component of the infrastructures needed by today's large companies.

Three current economic development practitioners lent their insight to the program. Allen Hester, Certified Chamber Executive and CEO, Dyersburg/Dyer County Chamber, provided information on how to become a Certified Chamber Executive and the national Chamber Accreditation programs. Paul LaGrange, Assistant Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development, gave an overview of the issues before the state legislature this session that will affect economic development.

Melissa Rivers, Director of Regionalism for the Memphis Regional Chamber, gave an update on the regional Workforce Analysis and Economic Target Identification study that is underway for a 52 county region that encompasses all of West Tennessee. The study will help transition the regional workforce for a higher skills-based economy and identify the most productive targets for economic developers to pursue.

The event was sponsored by the West Tennessee Industrial Association (WTIA), an economic development association representing electric power distributors in West Tennessee and Forcum Lannom Contractors, a Dyersburg based commercial and industrial contractor. Both WTIA and Forcum Lannom are long time members of TIDC.

Hollie Holt, West Tennessee Director, who serves as the Coordinator for the Regional Entrepreneurship & Economic Development Center, helped to plan and coordinate the regional meeting. "We were extremely pleased with the turnout and level of participation for this meeting. Many West Tennessee Communities were represented and we even attracted some TIDC members from other regions."

An East Tennessee regional TIDC meeting will be held January 25 in Knoxville. A Middle Tennessee regional meeting was held on December 07, 2005 in Manchester, TN.

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