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Weekly highlights from the
North Carolina Department of Commerce



(Left-right) Terry Bralley (seated) of the Davie County Economic Development Commission; Ashley Chairman of the Board Ron Wanek; Ashley President and CEO Todd R. Wanek; N.C. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary and COO Dale Carroll and U.S. Senator Richard Burr (seated)

Ashley Furniture to create 550 jobs in Davie County

Governor Bev Perdue announced on April 20 that Ashley Furniture, a manufacturer and distributor of home furnishings, will locate a new manufacturing and distribution facility in Davie County. Ashley Furniture expects to create 550 new jobs over the next five years and invest \$80 million in land, buildings, machinery and equipment. The announcement was made possible in part by a state [Job Development Investment Grant](#) and a [One North Carolina Fund](#) award. N.C. Department of Commerce developers [Melissa Smith](#) and [Ken Allen](#) were involved in this project. Other partners include the [Piedmont Triad Partnership](#) and the [N.C. Ports Authority](#).

"North Carolina continues to attract manufacturers that are drawn to our top-ranked business climate and highly-skilled workers," said Perdue. "These companies choose North Carolina because of our past investments in education, economic development and in quality infrastructure."

Todd R. Wanek, Ashley's president and CEO said, "As we see Ashley's global demand for its products increase, Ashley continues to make long-term investments in all of its facilities as well as the continued education of all employees to meet consumer demand. North Carolina's strong furniture manufacturing tradition, along with the cooperation of



At the ribbon-cutting ceremony for an electric vehicle charging station at the 2012 Sustainable Energy Conference in Raleigh. In the foreground, the silver vehicle is being charged.

Sustainable Energy Conference takes place in Raleigh

The Energy Division of the N.C. Department of Commerce held the ninth annual [Sustainable Energy Conference](#) at the McKimmon Center in Raleigh April 19-20. The more than 1,000 attendees heard from experts on natural gas exploration and "fracking," the expansion of wind energy, sustainable agriculture and how North Carolina can meet more of its energy needs with sustainable resources. Keynote speakers included American Wind Energy Association Senior Vice President for Public Policy Rob Gramlich, Bayer CropScience International Head of Sustainability Nick Hamon, Dan Peaco of La Capra Associates, discussing "N.C. Renewable Energy Policy: Compliance and Options for the Future;" and former director of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection John Hanger on "What North Carolina Needs to Know about Pennsylvania's Energy Exploration Experience."

The conference featured 28 break-out sessions on the state's Utility Savings Initiative, achievements of the energy-related federal Recovery Act funded programs and financing sustainable energy project and ventures. In addition to the conference panels and speakers, the event also featured the ribbon-cutting on two new electric vehicle charging stations on the N.C. State campus

Governor Bev Perdue, the Department of Commerce and Davie County Economic Development Commission, has made this project possible."

Ashley Furniture has been in business since 1945. It began manufacturing furniture in 1970 in Arcadia, Wis. Today, Ashley, which has been showcasing its products at High Point Market for close to 40 years, is the largest manufacturer of home furnishings in the world. The company currently operates manufacturing facilities in Wisconsin, Mississippi, Pennsylvania and California and has a distribution warehouse facility located in Brandon, Fla. Today Ashley employs 12,000 employees in the United States. All of Ashley's manufacturing operations are equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and technology to maximize efficiencies to better serve its customers' needs. Ashley is a global company doing business in 123 countries. [Read more.](#)



(Left-right) N.C. Department of Commerce Economic Developer Melissa Smith, Ashley President and CEO Todd Wanek, Jimmy Yokeley of N.C. Ports and Ashley Chairman of the Board Ron Wanek

[Ashley Furniture to open facility this year in Davie, creating up to 1,100 jobs](#) (*The Business Journal of the Greater Triad*, April 20)

[Ashley Furniture to open plant, create 550 jobs in Davie Co.](#) (WGHP - Greensboro, April 20)



(Left-right) Facebook Vice President of Site Operations Tom Furlong, N.C. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary and COO Dale Carroll, N.C. Senator Wes Westmoreland, former N.C. Senator Debbie Clary, N.C. Senator Ralph Hise, Rutherford County

as well as an exhibit of alternative-fueled vehicles – including the all-electric Chevy Volt and Nissan Leaf; several hybrid vehicles and a compressed natural gas-powered dump truck.

Power Point presentations from many of the panel sessions are already posted on the [conference website](#). Audio and video of the four keynote speakers will soon be available on the web, as well.

Workforce Development



Professionals Month

May proclaimed as Workforce Development Professionals Month

Governor Bev Perdue has proclaimed May as Workforce Development Professionals Month. This month-long recognition will be a salute to the work done by our workforce professionals across the state. North Carolina employers and the economic development community rely on workforce professionals to help them recruit and retain a competitive workforce, and to upgrade the skill sets of their incumbent employees.

Workforce Development Professionals will be recognized at the May 16 meeting of the North Carolina Commission on Workforce Development.

For more details about activities during Workforce Development Professionals Month, visit www.ncwdpmonth.com or the [Facebook page](#).



Commissioner Julius Owens and Forest City Mayor Dennis Tarlton.

Facebook celebrates grand opening of WNC data center

Facebook's Forest City Data Center celebrated its grand opening in Rutherford County April 19 after completing the site's first building and beginning to serve user traffic from the facility. The N.C. Department of Commerce's [Margie Bukowski](#) was the original developer on this project.

Facebook's Vice President of Site Operations Tom Furlong and Data Center Manager George Henry joined N.C. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary and COO Dale Carroll, members of a legislative delegation, Rutherford County Commission Chair Julius Owens, Forest City Mayor Dennis Tarlton and more than 300 "friends" for a celebration at the facility.

"Our Forest City data center is among the most advanced and most energy efficient facility of its kind," Furlong said. "We want to thank the thousands of people involved, in North Carolina and beyond, for coming together to build and staff a world-class facility in less than a year and a half. This is an amazing accomplishment, and it wouldn't have been possible if we hadn't worked so well together."

"We are proud that Facebook chose to make North Carolina a 'friend.' The feeling is certainly mutual," said Governor Bev Perdue in the event release. "The data center has come together with remarkable speed, thanks to the strong relationship between the company and our state and local resources. The investment and jobs at the data center is a boon to that region of the state and helps confirm North Carolina's distinction as a global business destination." [Read more.](#)

[Facebook opens data center](#) (The Shelby Star, April 20)



(Left-right) Assistant Secretary for Tourism, Marketing and Global Branding Lynn Minges, Lorrie Love of the Outer Banks VB, N.C. Tourism Office German representative Deborah Theis, International Marketing Manager Heidi Walters, Brandy Larrick of Visit Charlotte, Dianna Pierce of Asheville CVB and Mike Butts of Visit Charlotte

USA launches first global marketing campaign to attract international travelers

Brand USA, the new tourism marketing entity responsible for promoting the United States to world visitors, unveiled the USA's first-ever comprehensive marketing campaign today during a press conference at International Pow Wow, the

(Left-right) Karlsruhe Chamber of Industry and Commerce CEO Hans-Peter Mengele and Central Piedmont Community College President Tony Zeiss. (Photo courtesy of CPCC)

CPCC is first in U.S. to offer German certifications

Higher education institutions in North Carolina offer unique programs that complement evolving workforce needs of the state's business and industry. The state's universities produce skilled graduates each year and the community college system is recognized nationally for its customized workforce training programs.

Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte signed an articulation agreement on April 18 with IHK-Karlsruhe, a German regional chamber of industry and commerce. According to the college's press release, CPCC is the first U.S. community college to offer IHK-certified job-training programs. Starting in August, CPCC students will be able to earn IHK-endorsed certificates in five programs, making them more attractive to about 200 German companies currently doing business in the Charlotte region. [Read more.](#)



(Left-right) N.C. Furniture Export Office Director Mike Padgen and State of North Carolina Hong Kong Office Foreign Trade Representative William Chu network with China National Furniture Association President Zhu Changling in China.

Trade division participates in four furniture trade fairs in Asia

The N.C. Department of Commerce's International Trade Division participated in the International Furniture Fair in Singapore and the Dongguan Famous Furniture Fair, the Guangzhou China International Furniture Fair, and the Shenzhen International Furniture Exhibition, all in China. All four shows took place from mid- to late March and are considered major venues for entry into local and international markets. Several ITD clients participated in these shows, including The Phillips Collection, Century Furniture, La-Z-Boy, Bernhardt, The Hooker Furniture Companies, and Edward Ferrell+Lewis Mittman. China is becoming a major consumer of North Carolina furniture and was

largest U.S. travel trade show held this week in Los Angeles. The campaign showcases the diversity of experiences available in the United States in a fresh and unexpected light, inviting visitors to "Discover this land, like never before." The launch marks the culmination of a five-year effort by the tourism industry—including the Division, partners across the state and colleagues around the country—to increase international visitation to the U.S. through a unified marketing campaign. Assistant Secretary Lynn Minges, chair of the National Council of State Tourism Directors, and International Marketing Manager Heidi Walters were at the announcement. [Learn more.](#)



(Left-right) BRP USA Executive Frank Bailey receives a state flag from N.C. Department of Commerce Deputy Secretary and COO Dale Carroll.

Advanced manufacturing company to create 70 more jobs in Spruce Pine

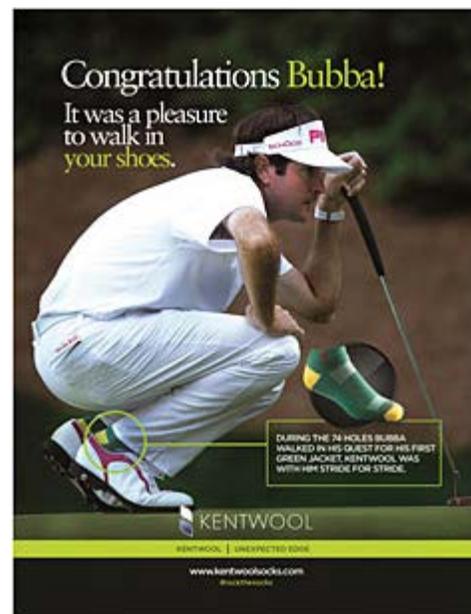
On April 17, Governor Bev Perdue announced that BRP, a leading manufacturer of motorized recreational vehicles, will expand its operations in Mitchell County. The company plans to create 70 jobs and invest \$1.1 million over the next three years in Spruce Pine. The project was made possible in part by a \$210,000 grant from the [One North Carolina Fund](#). The N.C. Department of Commerce's [Bill Payne](#) was the developer on this project. [Read more.](#)

PENCCO to locate new facility in Middlesex

[PENCCO, Inc.](#) has selected a five-acre site in Middlesex in Nash County to build their newest facility. The company was established in 1984 and owns and operates three plants and a fleet of tanker trucks for PENCCO products. PENCCO manufactures non-hazardous liquid ferric sulfate used in public wastewater treatment systems. The company plans to invest \$1.5 million and create seven to 10 new jobs over the next year.

the state's third largest export market for furniture in 2011.

Singapore is also another key market, as it is the doorway to the [ASEAN](#) nations that are just now beginning to grow their imports of North Carolina-made products. The North Carolina companies' show rooms at the trade shows generated a lot of excitement, attracting a large number of customers and potential customers, many of whom do not get a chance to visit High Point. In addition, Mike Padjen, director of the N.C. Furniture Export Office, attended several offsite tours of furnishings malls to see U.S.-produced furniture on display and to discuss its relevance to the Chinese market. Over 100,000 visitors attended each of the China shows, with more than 60,000 attending in Singapore.



Bubba Watson's socks developed in N.C.

When Bubba Watson won the 2012 Masters Tournament in Augusta earlier this month, he did so wearing a pair of socks developed by the Catawba Valley Community College's [Manufacturing Solutions Center](#).

Six years ago, sixth generation hosiery manufacturer Mark Kent set out to "create the world's best golf sock." An avid golfer himself, the owner of [KentWool](#) turned to the experts at the center.

With more than 20 years of experience and hundreds of success stories, the MSC specializes in product improvements through R&D, 3D prototyping new products, analyzing material, product testing, and providing hands-on guidance for international marketing and sales.

Director Dan St. Louis and his team knew



N.C. Department of Commerce International Trade Director Jean Davis (sixth from the left) cutting the ribbon with Puerto Rico Governor Fortuño (fourth from the left) on the USA Pavilion at the Expocomer trade show in Panama City last month

Commerce participates in Panamanian trade mission

N.C. Department of Commerce International Trade Division Director Jean Davis took part in the Southern Governors Association 2012 Trade Mission to Panama March 20-23. SGA Chairman Luis G. Fortuño, the governor of Puerto Rico, led the mission. The group toured the new Panama Canal, met with Panamanian President Ricardo Martinelli and members of his cabinet, and participated in the opening ceremonies of the USA pavilion at the Expocomer trade show, which showcases food, textiles, construction, technology and services.

Science museums, Commerce partner to boost STEM economy

The [Grassroots Science Museums Collaborative](#) is the nation's only statewide partnership of 34 museums dedicated to inspiring and educating youth and adults in science and technology in order to keep North Carolina competitive in the future. Transferred from the N.C. Department of Natural and Environmental Resources to the N.C. Department of Commerce's state aid program in 2011, the science museums collaborative is pursuing the opportunity to partner with Commerce to expand on the museums' estimated \$100 million combined economic impact on the state's communities and knowledge industries. From STEM-based workforce preparedness to the almost 4 million visitors that travel to experience these unique and interactive environments annually, this collection of diverse science museums is a growing economic driver.

Grassroots science museums are located in communities across the state and serve millions of citizens annually providing engaging STEM education experiences, raising student interest and achievement in STEM studies, and inspiring careers. As emphasized in the 2011 State of the Workforce Report, these STEM-based educational resources play a vital role in the workforce preparedness pipeline cultivating North Carolina's future knowledge workers and advancing the state's economic development efforts with 21st century skills. The collaborative is working with Commerce's Office of Science & Technology to raise awareness of the importance of science and technology for North Carolina's economy.

exactly how to help Kent achieve his goal. They located the right materials, developed the correct construction and prototyped the sock. MSC staff also worked with KentWool's marketing staff to develop a consumer friendly marketing strategy.

Not long after the product launch, the company signed Bubba Watson as a staff player. He also wore KentWool Tour Profile socks en route to winning the PGA Tour's Zurich Classic of New Orleans at TPC Louisiana in Avondale. It's been named to the [Top 12 Coolest Items in 2012](#) by *Golf Digest*.



N.C. State's Biomanufacturing Training and Education Center on Centennial Campus

N.C. biotech cluster featured in MedCity News report

MedCity News recently tapped North Carolina's biotechnology cluster for insights into the role of biomarkers in the development of personalized medical treatment. While risk factors play an important role in the treatment of disease, they are based on data collected from groups of people. Each individual person, however, carries his or her own set of tendencies that may or may not fall in line with typical risk factors.

For example, the article discusses Duke University Medical Center cardiologist Dr. Kristin Newby's clinical practice. Daily she tackles the task of determining treatment plans for her patients. Risk factors aren't always congruent with an individual patient's health. Biological markers, or biomarkers, could potentially provide cardiologists like Dr. Newby with more accurate patient information, resulting in more individually tailored treatment plans that are potentially more effective. [Read more.](#)

Charlotte Chamber to host DNC brainstorming event

The Charlotte Chamber has invited members of the creative economy to an event on April 25 called "Creative Crowdshare" to build connections, share information and generate ideas for the Democratic National Convention Creative Hub. Creative Crowdshare will feature Tracy Russ of the 2012 DNC Host Committee and presentations by Charlotte innovators including Manoj Kesavan of [The PPL](#). The hub will showcase key areas of Charlotte's entrepreneurial innovation and artistic creativity as an important force for economic development in the region. The chamber seeks to turn ideas into an action plan. The event is 1-4:30 p.m. at the Mint Museum Uptown in Charlotte. Registration is \$15 for advance tickets, which can be purchased on the [Chamber's website](#).



(Left-right) IBM Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs Manager Steve Pearson, N.C. Commission on Volunteerism and Public Service Executive Director Lou Anne Crumpler, and N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco (Photo courtesy of IBM)

Crisco honors IBM for volunteerism

N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco, on behalf of Governor Bev Perdue, spoke at IBM's volunteer recognition luncheon at the company's campus in Research Triangle Park on April 18. The event, held during National Volunteer Week, culminated IBM's year-long commitment to volunteerism, during which its CEO and over half of its workforce pledged to participate in public service efforts as part of the company's 100th anniversary. In total, IBM employees performed over 82,000 hours of community service in 2011. "We want to commend Big Blue for its big heart," stated Crisco. In addition, IBM was honored on April 19 at the Governor's Medallion Ceremony for its dedication to volunteerism.

Commerce partners with MerleFest

The N.C. Department of Commerce's Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development has partnered with MerleFest organizers to help promote the 25th anniversary of the event since February via featured event listings on [VisitNC.com](#), as well as in Division Events eBlasts going out to more than 75,000 subscribers weekly during that timeframe. During March and April, the Division prized tickets to the music festival via their Twitter Trivia Tuesdays occurring bi-weekly via [@VisitNC](#). The Division will also staff a booth at the

Workforce commission announces grant awards

The N.C. Commission on Workforce Development recently announced grant awards totaling \$167,868 through the Incumbent Workforce Development Training Program. The 13 grantees, located across the state, were selected from 25 proposals submitted by 12 local Workforce Development Boards. Of the 13 businesses awarded, 92 percent are small companies with fewer than 300 employees throughout North Carolina. Funding will allow businesses to support educational and occupational skills training for their workers. These businesses are investing \$319,700 of their own resources to supplement the training funds. [Learn more](#) about the Incumbent Workforce Training Program.

March Economic Overview released

The N.C. Department of Commerce's Labor and Economic Analysis Division released its Monthly Overview of North Carolina's Economy for March 2012. Most of the latest data included is from February 2012. The purpose of the overview is to summarize and analyze important economic indicators.

North Carolina experienced another unemployment rate decline in February. The continued decline in unemployed workers combined with an uptick in workers helped bring the unemployment rate down to 9.9 percent. Tourism activity continues to grow, with recorded hotel occupancy rates 3.3 percent higher than the totals from last year. Sales of existing homes and housing authorizations were up compared to February of last year, a good sign for the housing market. Temporary hiring is approaching pre-recession levels, which may indicate that businesses are interested in adding workers in the future. [Read the overview](#).

Year-to-date Metrics

Below are year-to-date metrics tracked by the N.C. Department of Commerce's Division of Business and Industry Development that illustrate some of the recent activities of the Division. The metrics include the number of new economic development projects assigned to B&I development staff; the number of economic development project announcements; the number of announced jobs created and capital invested; the number of interactions existing industry staff had with businesses throughout the state; and the number of contacts received by the Business Link North Carolina/Business ServiCenter.

Jan. 1 - April 24, 2012

New projects assigned:

132

festival to offer travel assistance and information about North Carolina economic development. N.C. Department of Commerce Secretary Keith Crisco and Assistant Secretary for Tourism, Marketing and Global Branding Lynn Minges will also meet with economic development officials in Wilkes County during the event.

Commerce releases Article 3J Wage Standards for 2012

The N.C. Department of Commerce's Labor and Economic Analysis Division released its Article 3J Wage Standards for 2012 last week. For the 2012 wage standards most counties in the state saw an increase in their wage standard and county average wage.

To calculate the weekly private wage for counties, LEAD uses the most recent second quarter wages. The 2012 wage standards used the 2011 second quarter wages, while the 2011 wage standards used 2010 second quarter wages.

Weekly wages for the counties were \$10.60 higher in the 2012 wage standards compared to last year's standards. Twenty-four counties experienced a decrease in wages, two were unchanged, and 74 counties had a wage increase. The average wage for North Carolina increased from \$740 in the 2011 wage standards to \$774 in the 2012 wage standards. Tier 1 counties do not have a wage standard. For Tier 2 and 3 counties, the Wage Standard is either 90 percent of the county average wage or 110 percent of the State average wage, whichever is lower. [View the Article 3J Wage Standards.](#)

Projects announced:	41
Jobs announced:	5,400
Capital investment announced:	\$1.40B
Industry visits by existing industry staff:	391
Calls to Business Link N.C.:	6,730

N.C. in the News

This Week's Highlights

- [RTI International looking to hire 400 at call center](#) (*Triangle Business Journal*, April 20)
- [County awards \\$200,000 grant to business who plans to hire 10 workers](#) (*Gaston Gazette*, April 18)
- [Cumberland County's Workforce Development program a success since move to Fayetteville Technical Community College](#) (*The Fayetteville Observer*, April 17)

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