

DESTINATION RUTHERFORD

by **Bill Jones**

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Destination Rutherford was created as a public/private initiative of the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce to improve the economy and livability of the community by attracting significant capital investment and expansion of existing business and industry, creating better opportunities and jobs.

Since its inception in 2002, Destination Rutherford has been the leader for economic development in Rutherford County. The third campaign, *Innovating Our Economic Future*, continues to focus on increased tourism and new business attraction, retention, and expansion while embarking on a critical assessment of current and future workforce needs.

The economic impact of Destination Rutherford has been significant. Between 2007 and 2010, the program facilitated the creation of 5,081 new direct jobs, generated direct earnings of \$199 million, and brought in over \$2.9 billion in new capital investment. Expanded tourism efforts have resulted in an average economic impact of \$230 million annually.

It's no secret that every community's

success is tied to jobs, and in order to compete in the arena of economic development, all pieces of the infrastructure puzzle need to be in place. Workforce development is a crucial element, and Destination Rutherford is committed to working with key leaders to identify needs and create and implement a plan to foster success for the future of our workforce and our community.

Specific goals of the current campaign include the creation of 5,000 jobs, over half of which would pay at or above the county average. In addition to wages, the new jobs could generate \$274 million annually throughout the county in consumer expenditures.

Rutherford County is third in the nation in employment growth. An accomplishment such as this doesn't happen by accident. Destination Rutherford has positioned the county to capitalize on its many strengths and advantages and foster an environment for significant economic growth. Through its initiatives, the program will allow the county's economic future to remain bright for generations to come. ■