

# BUILDING A SKILLED WORKFORCE

## To Support a Thriving Rutherford County

by **Sandy Ponder**

*Vice President of Workforce Development, Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce*

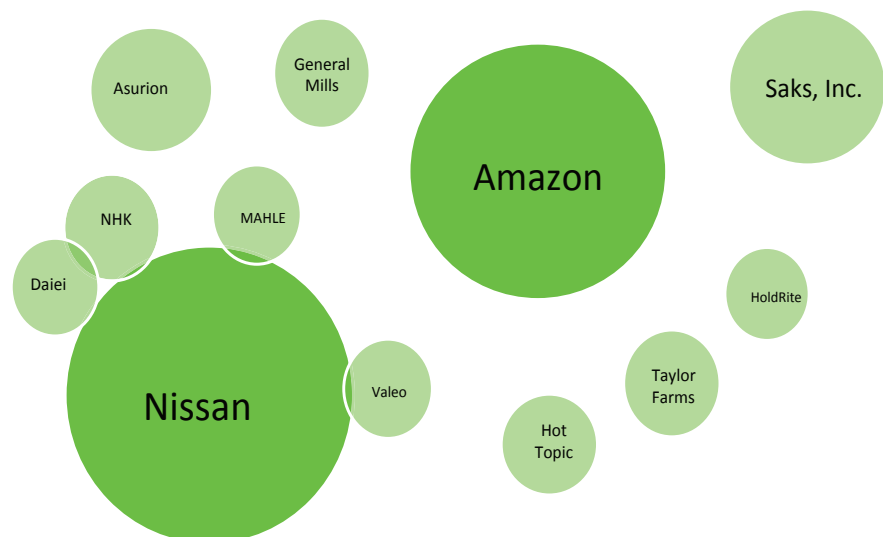
**[October 2012 data]**

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**W**e are fortunate to live in a thriving community with access to quality education. We have top-rated public education systems and postsecondary education organizations including the Tennessee Technology Center, Motlow State Community College, and Middle Tennessee State University. We've experienced tremendous growth in the past decade, and our estimated 2012 population is 274,278 with an average age of 34.

According to a recent report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Rutherford County is in the nation's top echelon in terms of employment growth. While national employment, measured by the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, is up 1.8 percent, Rutherford County demonstrated an impressive 5.3 percent increase, making it third in the nation for percentage increase in employment. In addition, the report showed that

### Job Creation



Rutherford County had a 5.9 percent increase in average weekly wages, surpassing the U.S. average of 5.4 percent, and placing the county in the top 45 percent of large U.S. counties included in the ranking.

**Major Industrial Companies**

Amazon opened in 2012 and employs 1200+ employees. Saks recently located in Rutherford County and employs more than 300 employees. Nissan continues to expand and add employees. The top six industrial companies are:

- Nissan (6000+),
- Ingram Content Group (1500),
- Amazon.com (1200+),
- Asurion (1050),
- Bridgestone (900), and
- Schneider Electric (900).

**Job Predictions**

The Nashville region continues to be an area of consistent, strong growth in population and favorable employ-

ment and economic growth prospects. According to the Nashville Chamber’s Workforce Study, these sectors will continue to grow in the next decade:

- healthcare headquarters,
- construction,
- advanced manufacturing,
- finance and shared services,
- distribution and logistics,
- creative economy,
- information technology, and
- hospitality.

It is predicted that by 2019, the Nashville area will add nearly 151,000 jobs. About 45 percent of these new jobs will require some form of post-secondary experience. More than 67,500 workers will reach retirement age in the next decade, and the projected gap by 2019 in the Nashville area is 23,688.

On the Jobs4TN website, there were 3,350 job openings in Rutherford

County in October 2012. These openings were in healthcare, manufacturing, logistics, education, and the service industry. This number does not include temporary-employment listings or companies that do not post their jobs publicly.

The most difficult positions to fill are skilled technical positions. There is a particular demand for skilled maintenance workers. In order for our manufacturing industry to continue to grow, we must identify ways to fill these positions and begin filling the pipeline for future growth.

**Development Activities**

In response to the demand for skilled workers, specifically maintenance and engineering, Motlow and Bridgestone formed a partnership to offer a mechatronics program. Mechatronics combines mechanical systems, electronic systems,

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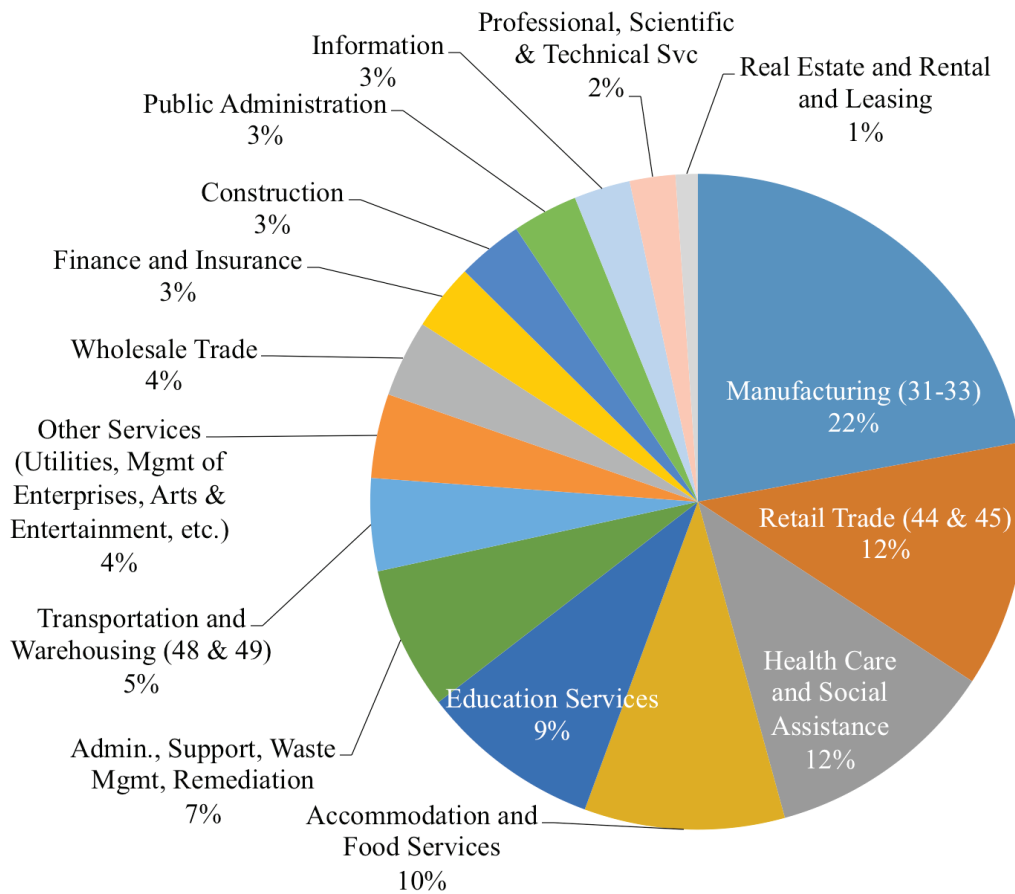
# Rutherford County Job Openings



Source: Jobs4TN

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# Workforce by Industry Sector



**TN Dept. of Labor  
2nd Quarter 2012**

*continued from page 3*

computers, and control systems. At the Bridgestone training center, the mechatronics program has two labs full of state-of-the-art equipment made by the same companies that furnish the gear for the automated assembly lines at modern manufacturing plants such as Bridgestone and Nissan. Students attend classes five hours a day. In addition to benefiting Bridgestone and Nissan, the Motlow program will help train workers for plants that make products such as household appliances

and other consumer goods. This program is about teaching high-tech skills for advanced manufacturing, promoting critical thinking and problem-solving, and it offers international certification through Siemens. It will soon be the only one in the United States to offer a three-step pathway for advanced-manufacturing education. The first two steps are a one-year mechatronics certification and a two-year associate's degree, both through the Motlow program. The third step will be a continuation of the program at Middle Tennessee State University

that will lead to a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering.

## **Veterans Network**

In the past several months, one short to mid-term recruitment strategy was developed: a veterans workforce recruitment strategy. The Veterans Welcome Home Network targets service men and women who are six months from military separation. The goal is to increase the number of skilled workers to meet the growing demands of industry. These skilled veterans have many desirable skills to meet our industry needs. The Ten-

# Nashville MSA Job Gains, Losses (2nd quarter 2012 over the year)

Sector	Job growth (thousand)	Growth Rate
Total Nonfarm	10.2	1.4%
Professional and Business Services	7.1	6.8%
Leisure and Hospitality	2.3	2.9%
Durable Goods Manufacturing	2.0	4.8%
Retail Trade	1.5	1.8%
Other Services	1.2	3.7%
Financial Activities	0.4	0.8%
Information	-0.1	-0.4%
Mining, Logging, and Construction	-0.2	-0.6%
Non-Durable Goods Manufacturing	-0.3	-1.3%
Transportation and Utilities	-0.3	-1.1%
Education and Health Services	-0.6	-0.5%
Wholesale Trade	-0.7	-1.9%
Government	-2.0	-2.0%

Source: Business and Economic Research Center, MTSU

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nessee Technology Center is in the process of hiring a coordinator for the program who is a veteran. He or she will be able to easily connect with other military personnel and actively engage with them by visiting military bases and recruiting at job fairs. The Tennessee Technology Center, Chamber, industry, city, county, and state are partnering to coordinate efforts to recruit these skilled workers to Rutherford County.

## **BEP**

The Business Education Partnership (BEP) Foundation was formed in 1988 with the help of the Rutherford County Chamber of Commerce. Using innovative programs for teachers, counselors and students

in Murfreesboro City and Rutherford County Schools, the BEP brings schools and businesses together to prepare today's youth to be leaders in tomorrow's world. The following are three of these programs.

- **State Farm Summer Business Camp** is a two-week entrepreneurship camp for middle school students. Students learn about the different parts of a business, work in teams to create a business plan, and present their plan to a panel of judges on the last day in a competition. Many students from this program have gone on to careers in business, medicine, law, and education.
- **Bc3 Academy for Math/Sci-**

**ence Study Enhancement** is a state-approved STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) professional development program for sixth through 12th grade math, science, and technology teachers that helps them to understand the link between classroom curriculum and jobs.

- **Express Yourself Arts Conference** gives creative students in Rutherford County's high schools the opportunity to explore careers in the arts or arts-related fields. ■

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