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TOUGH ON DRUGS

Welcome to Spirit of Rowan

rom small start-ups run by entrepreneurs with big dreams to large, multi-national manufacturers with hundreds of local employees, we are a community of industry - of makers, of doers, of thinkers. We are Rowan County, and we are open for business.

We live in a place that attracts visionary leaders at the forefront of technology and yet remains home to generations of farmers, as well as those blossoming in emerging areas of agriculture, including the state's booming wine industry.

We are a county that cares about the health of its residents, with a hospital always striving for improvement and always looking toward advances in medical care, whether those are measured in strides of technology or in human knowledge.

We are a community dedicated to training the workforce of now and of the future, home to a community college whose mission is to be nimble enough to do just that.

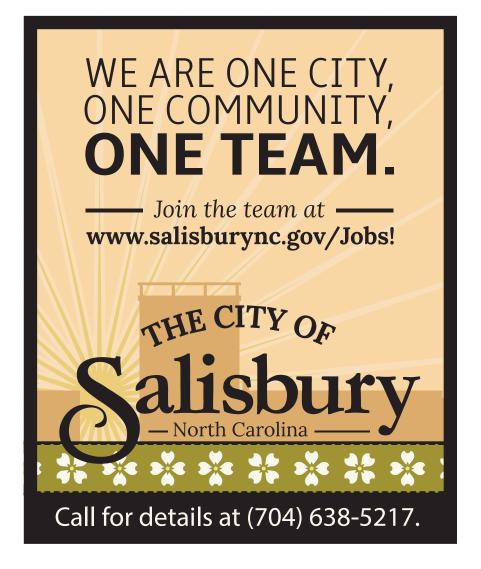
We shop local, supporting the merchants, service professionals, restaurant owners who make their home here, and we welcome larger retail, the kind that keeps Rowan residents shopping right here at home instead of going elsewhere.

We value the businesses that have been here a century and welcome those that have been here a day — as well as with the ones that don't yet call this place home, but will. We are Rowan County, and we are open for business.



On the cover: Geoffrey Ellis checks the height of a sheet of formed aluminum to make sure it meets the correct specifications at Agility Fuel Systems. The facility builds Compressed Natural Gas fuel cells for tractor-trailer engines. — Photo by Jon C. Lakey.





Contents

How far we've come

The economic progress overview of Rowan County



10

The 21st Century manufacturer

Automation becoming more commonplace in companies



In training

RCCC is educating for the new workforce



Who's the biggest of them all?

Largest employers include Food Lion and Freightliner





32 Up to date

Novant Rowan keeps pace with health care changes



38 Retail trends

New businesses set up shop in Rowan



21st Century farmhand

Technology finds its place in agriculture



46
Bright future

Rowan no exception to state's solar energy boom

Advertising index

Fisher Insurance	
Fortner, Donald R	
Godley's Garden Center	49
L. Goodnight & Sons	40
Granite Knitwear	
Harrison's Florist	
Hearing Solutions	
Hospice Carecenter	
Hydraulic Depot	
ntegro Technologies	
limmy Cleans Express Car Wash	24
lolly, Dr. James	20
Key Real Estate	35
andis Plumbing	
aurels of Salisbury	
exington Medical Center.	
inn-Honeycutt Funeral Home	
.PL Financial	
Marketing & Media	17

Meals on Wheels	42
Medicine Shoppe	
Mid-South Tractor	49
Mynatt, Ben	43
Nazareth Child & Family Connection	26,27
No Way Jose	
Novant Health	33
Par 3 Life	36
Piedmont Neurosurgery	38
Piedmont Players	
Rock Steady Rides	
Rowan Animal Clinic	
Rowan County Dan Nicholas Park	
Rowan County Sheriff	
Rowan/Kannapolis ABC	
Rufty-Holmes Senior Center	
Salisbury Chiropractic	
Salisbury Emporium	50
Caliabania Makal Fabriaatian	

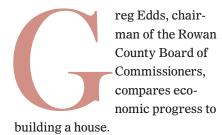
lisbury Motors
lisbury Orthpaedic42
lisbury Salon & Spa50
nple Solutions of NC30
tchin' Post
out's Heating & A/C
e Candy Shoppe on Main
e Forum of Salisbury
e Water Whole
wn of China Grove40
tory Wealth Management
Illace Realty 2
Ilmart Stores
bb Road Flea Market42
itley's Funeral Home
ndsor Gallery
ir Kitchen Store & More 25



How far we've come

The economic progress overview of Rowan County

Written by AMANDA RAYMOND | Photography by JON C. LAKEY



"The first few weeks of construction are not real exciting," he said.

Right now, Rowan County is in the brush-clearing, foundationpouring stage.

"Our hope is that really soon, we're going to see walls start going up," Edds said.



Fdds

In the 2014-2015 fiscal year, more than 3,200 jobs were created and \$240 million in investment was announced. Unemployment is at 6.3 percent,

which is more than 50 percent less than it was at the end of 2009. New manufacturing, restaurant and retail companies have moved in. In fact, tourism spending has increased by 5.8 percent in the county, now representing \$153 million of the annual fiscal impact.

Although some have shut their doors, it's looking like companies and businesses are starting to see Rowan County as fertile ground.

BIG COMPANIES MAKING A BIG IMPACT

Twelve companies have announced, completed or are in the midst of completing significant projects in Rowan County.



Van Geons

Robert Van Geons, director of Rowan-Works, said Agility Fuel Systems moving into the area was one of the biggest signs of the county's revival.

The natural gas fuel systems manufacturer contracted to build a new 300,000-square-foot manufacturing headquarters in Salisbury, and the building was completed less than a



year later. The company began hiring in June of this year and now employs 75 people. It plans to employ 250 by next spring.

Other companies have moved their operations to the area as well. Composite Panel Technology is

creating sleeper cabs for Daimler Trucks in a new facility in Salisbury. New Sarum Brewery plans to finish a new facility next year, which will add 14 high-paying jobs and more than \$2 million to the tax base. Granite Quarry has a new industrial park with 92 acres for additional

industrial development. Over in Spencer, the Zoning Board of Adjustment approved a solar farm to be built along Hackett Street.

Two formerly vacant Salisbury buildings have been filled. JP Capital, a plastics extrusion and recycling company, expanded its operations into a building on Old Concord Road, and Bonded Logistics, a third-party logistics company, leased a building on Airport Road.

Companies that have already

found a home in Rowan County have announced expansions and new projects.

Gildan Yarns, a subsidiary of Gildan Activewear, finished its second location in the county and added more than 365 jobs to the area.

Jessica Butler

installs plumb-

ing on a Behind The Cab fueling

system. Agility

Fuel Systems

opened a

manufacturing

facility to build

Compressed Natural Gas fuel

cells for tractor-

Integro Technologies, a machine vision integration company, added 20 high-paying jobs to its operation. Daimler Trucks added the Western Star Line to its Cleveland facility. Imperial Brown, a walk-in cooler and freezer manufacturer, has invested more than \$2 million in new equipment

and upgrades, along with adding more than 150 jobs since merging with Imperial Manufacturing two years ago.

And Fibrant, Salisbury's fiber optic network that provides internet at high speeds, made Salisbury the nation's first 10 gigabit city.

SHOPPING LOCAL JUST GOT A LITTLE EASIER

According to the City of Salis-

bury's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2015, more than 90 percent of the first floor business and retail space in Salisbury's downtown area was occupied. There was a net gain of 14 new downtown businesses and 16 facade renovations.

Paula Bohland, executive director of Downtown Salisbury Inc., said in an email that there was a net gain of 42 new full-time jobs and a net gain of 37 new part-time jobs in the last fiscal year. She also said that since July 1, 2015, at least six more downtown businesses have opened and four have expanded.

Some of the new businesses include Abigail's Bakery, which has the perfect cake waiting on North Main Street, the Kitchen Store and More, which offers almost every kitchen item a heart could desire on Innes Street, and 10Thread, which offers collaborative office spaces and conference rooms on Fulton Street.

As far as big name retailers, Dick's Sporting Goods, Hobby Lobby, Mattress Firm, Five Below and



One of the final steps in the manufacturing of the walk-in coolers produced by Imperial Brown is to set up the panels and doublecheck for quality assurance. Chad Archer (right) pieces together a larger project.

Kirkland's, as well as newly opened Salsarita's, have all moved into the Shoppes at Summit Park shopping plaza along Julian Road.

Edds said the new retail opportunities are decreasing the retail dollars that leave the county.

"For the first time ever, especially when you look at Christmas time, we have got choices here in Rowan County that we've never had." he said.

Other big names coming in the near future include Breakfastime, a restaurant that people cannot seem to get enough of at its two other locations, and possibly Lidl, a popular German supermarket.



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THE FUTURE OF ROWAN COUNTY

As the county looks towards the future, Van Geons said there is a need to continue getting sites ready for potential new businesses.

"That's our biggest challenge right now," he said. "Our biggest hurdle is we just don't have any real buildings of size available for companies, considering that 85 percent of projects start with a building."

A part of that push for site readiness is getting the necessary infrastructure in place.

Edds said there is a lot of available land in the county, but without the necessary infrastructure, it's virtually useless to incoming companies.

"You can have tens of thousands of acres of flat useable, available land, but if there's no water/sewer to it, it's nothing more than a nice corn field," he said.

The necessary roadways, includ-



One of the new-

est large chain

stores to set up a retail store is the

Oklahoma-based

Hobby Lobby. The

new store is locat-

ing the Interstate 85 projects and the Old Beatty Ford Road interchange, will have to be there, too. Edds said it looks like those projects are gaining momentum.

And many companies like to ship their product through the air, which is why developing the Rowan County Airport is so important, Edds said.

To keep up with the new industries coming into the area, the workforce has to be educated and the N. steps in the Shoppes at Summit center on Julian Road.

Van Geons said it is vital for lo-

cal Rowan County citizens to have the skills that the companies are looking for.

"We have to have the workers that our companies need," he said.

Edds said moving from an unskilled labor force to a skilled one has been a big challenge for the county. He said the educational system needs to be able to respond to today's economy, which is where organizations like

the N.C. Manufacturing Institute steps in.

The Institute has been work-

ing to create the trained, certified production technicians that the manufacturing businesses are asking for.

Twenty-seven certified production technicians graduated from three, eight-week training classes held in June, August and September, and 20 of those graduates were hired within one month of the institute's interview fairs.

In 2016, the institute is planning more interview fairs and opportunities for employees to receive certificates in safety, quality assurance, manufacturing process and maintenance awareness.

Both Edds and Van Geons think the county is becoming a place that businesses want to move into.

"Rowan County is rapidly developing a reputation for being business-friendly, aggressive, positive and proactive," Van Geons said.

If economic progress is like building a house, then that house may be built and ready to move into sooner than we think.



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The 21st Century manufacturer

Automation becoming more commonplace in companies

Written by AMANDA RAYMOND | Photography by JON C. LAKEY

t's easy to feel small when you walk onto the production floor of a manufacturing company. There are high ceilings and open spaces, tall piles of material in different corners waiting to be picked up and manipulated into different shapes and sizes. The high-

pitched sound of drills and the hum of machines serve as background music, and the goggled, uniformed workers know every step to the dance.

There used to more steps to the dance. Employees were expected to create and

build the products by hand, trying their best to create as many of the same product in the exact same way every time. But they were only human after all, and no matter how precise they tried to be, there was bound to be some variation from part to part. And they could only build so many parts in a day.

Things are different today; machines and computers have taken over many of the jobs human beings used to be expected to do. The way employees are trained is different. Automation has allowed manufacturing to produce quality products faster, more efficiently and cheaper, which is great for employers because it saves them money. But as with almost everything else in the world, there are some negative aspects to having technology in the manufacturing business. Employers just have to trust that the good outweighs the bad.

QUALITY INSPECTORS

Stan Honeycutt, a certified production technician professor at the N.C. Manufacturing Institute, said when it comes to the changes that have occurred in the manufacturing industry, the short answer is automation.

Instead of manufacturing employers relying on people to create



Above: Melvalene Walls operates the high density rail machine at the Imperial Brown plant. Imperial Brown makes walk-in coolers and cold storage components for commercial refrigeration and many other applications. Opposite: Jason Sales uses a computer to operate equipment at Agility Fuel Systems.

products by hand, they now rely on employees to be able to input a program into a computer or machine to manipulate materials the right way.

Honeycutt said many manufacturing employees just need to know how to set up the machines and what the product is supposed to look like in the end.

"You really become more like a quality inspector and machine operator," he said.

Although the assembly process still requires human labor, manipulating and preparing the raw material is highly automated in the manufacturing business today.

"We have operators loading parts into fixtures, equipment for laser machines to laser cut and brake presses to shape and form the parts," Shawn Adelsberger, director of operations at Agility Fuel Systems, a natural gas fuel system manufacturer, said.

Out on the production floor, you can actually look through a window into a machine and see the lasers cutting holes into the metal parts.

There are computers at different stations with employees working with specific programs to make the machines bend, cut and notch the materials in specific ways.

There are also machines that can check if the product was created correctly, like the roamers, a portable measuring device, that employees at Agility Fuel Systems use. The operators could still check the measurements of the holes and the angles of the bends manually, but the roamer



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can do it quicker and more efficiently.

Over at Imperial Brown, a walkin cooler and freezer manufacturing company, there are presses to cut rails into the perfect lengths and Euromac machines that punch different patterns of holes into the material. The machines even stick a label on the materials so that the employees know exactly what to do with it.

On top of new machinery, there are also gadgets to help with other day-to-day things, like inventory counts. Honeycutt said employees can now keep track of the amount of material they are using, and when it gets down to a certain level, the computer can, in most cases, automatically order more product. That means companies don't have to worry about wasting money by ordering too much material. And it also means employers don't have to hire another employee to specifically handle inventory.

So, according to Honeycutt, technology saves companies money in two big ways — replacing what people used to get paid for with faster, more accurate machines cuts down on labor costs and having machines that can do it right the first time, every time, cuts down on waste and reduces raw material costs.

Justin Sandall, president of Imperial Brown, said the best thing about technology is the ability to avoid human error and other personal issues



Above: A pair of Compressed Natural Gas saddle tanks at Agility Fuel Systems that will go on a tractor-trailer.

Below: At Imperial Brown, James Peebles assembles a corner panel on a freezer.





Jessica Blumenthal, MD, James Murphy, MD & Holly Stevens, MD

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people may have.

"The biggest pro to technology is computers don't make mistakes," he said. "They don't make mistakes, they don't call in sick, they don't have all of the personal issues that employees are plagued with."

Adelsberger said companies can give their customers high-quality products that can only get better as technology advances, like trucks that have the ability to run on natural gas or smart freezers that can change the clarity of its glass door from crystal clear to opaque at the touch of a button.

The people behind the machines

A drawback of having technology that is always advancing is the constant need to train employees to use it, Adelsberger

"When you've been around one product for a certain time

frame and now you have a design change or a new product coming down the line, you have to have flexible equipment, you have to have flexible people to adapt to that," he said.

For Sandall, the way employees are trained can sometimes be a negative thing. Today's workforce doesn't need to know as much as they used to have to know to do their job, which can be challenging for products that need to be very customized. He said it can be difficult to take the knowledge that the more experienced employees have and give it to the new employees while giving "them a reason to care about it and feel a need to know that information."

The educational requirements for today's manufacturing employee have definitely changed. Now instead of being specially trained on certain manufacturing processes, students



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are trained to be able to go into any manufacturing field, whether that is working for a company that produces coolers or one that produces fuel systems.

Honeycutt said machine operators need to have general computer skills, and the more mathematically minded he or she is, the better he or she will do. The N.C. Manufacturing Institute tries to create the employees that manufacturing employers want — employees who are reliable, punctual and can work independently or as part of a self-directed group. Many employers want employees who can come into their work place and learn the procedures and processes relatively quickly.

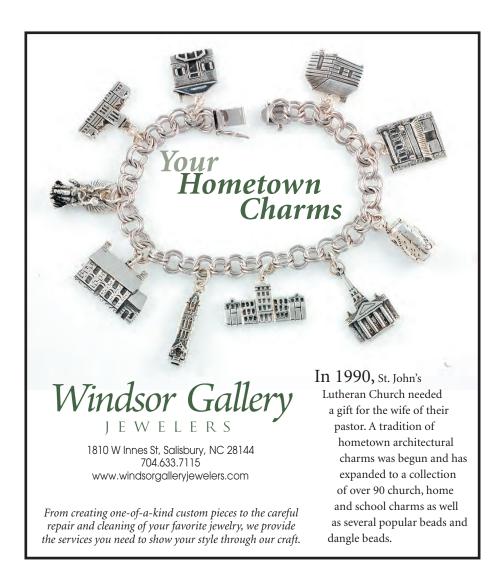
Having skills that are transferable can be a good thing. If a company shuts down or lays people off, the workers' skills aren't made obsolete like they once were. They still have skills that they can take to another manufacturing company.

Adelsberger said because his company, like many others, offers so much training, any capable person can have a good career.

"If people have a technical aptitude with a high school diploma, they can find themselves a successful career with our company," he said

Even though there is a lot of automation, machinery and computers in the manufacturing world today, people are still very much needed. They are needed to put all the pieces together in the right way. They are needed to program the machines and use the computers and tools to create the products. They are needed to inspect the final product and making sure everything was done correctly.

Technology has replaced some of the jobs human beings used to do, but it hasn't taken people totally out of the equation; it's purpose is to make people's jobs easier, faster and better.



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In training RCCC is educating for the new workforce

Written by REBECCA RIDER | Photography by WAYNE HINSHAW

he North Campus of Rowan-Cabarrus Community College is quiet and unassuming. The yellow stone of the buildings doesn't stand out, and students move to and from their classes with little fuss.

From the outside, it's hard to tell what the school is hiding.

"I think people don't think of us as being a high-tech school, but we are," Rowan-Cabarrus Community College President Dr. Carol S. Spalding said.

Rowan-Cabarrus Community
College was named as one of the
2014-2015 Top Ten Digital Community Colleges in the country by the
Center for Digital Education, Spalding said. And recently, the school
has put a lot of effort into improving technical aspects of the campus, as well as giving its curriculum a facelift to prepare students for the world waiting for them after graduation.

Perhaps the most obvious project RCCC worked on this year is the renovation of North Campus's 600



building. Driving down Interstate 85 it's hard to miss — the new face gleams. Its old hallways and lab tables are being reworked and remodeled to provide new, higher-tech labs and facilities for those students who are on the science track.

But when it comes to academics, the college has been far from idle. It's not just the 600 building that's shiny and new — the information technology program also got a

makeover.

RCCC is now one of only two community colleges in the state and one of 42 in the country to offer a cyber security program, Spalding said.

Not only does this equip students to enter a high-demand, high-paying field, but it also offers them incredible internships. The program partnered with several local businesses and banks, as well as the National Security Agency, to provide training

and job experience opportunities, Spalding said.

But in a fast-paced, ever-advancing world, sometimes it takes more than some tweaking—sometimes it

Program
chairman and
instructor Colin
Robinson holds
an aluminum
light bulb cut on
a computerized
Haas Milling
Center machine
in the RCCC
Machinist Technology Department.

takes something new. The leaps and bounds and increasing technology involved in staple manufacturing jobs have prompted Rowan-Cabarrus to rev up a new program: The

North Carolina Manufacturing Institute. And it's entirely thanks to community demand, Craig Lamb, vice president of corporate and continuing education, said.

"The North Carolina manufacturing institute is really a reaction to a couple of different things. One's a change in technology and in jobs, and the other is a change in the job market," he said.

Manufacturing is no longer the simple career it used to be, he explained. Now, entry-level manufac-



turing jobs require a lot of technical knowledge and specialized training.

"But the workforce didn't really have a vehicle for getting that advanced training," he said.

Unable to fill job openings or find techsavvy workers, local corporations
approached RCCC and offered to
collaborate. Craig said the school
was approached by local corporations who were unable to fill job
openings, and collaborated with
community groups to start a scholarship program.

The result was the North Carolina Manufacturing Institute, a scholarship program that trains its students over eight weeks to become certified production technicians. Over "What the course of the class, students must have that we perfect attendance, pass a drug test, and pass thing—four national certification exams.

"This is a standard that we're teaching to that the demand side, the employers, have already defined," Lamb said. When students finish the program, they're slated to start work with one of RCCC's local partners. If they pass employer approval and stay on the job for at least 90 days, the manufacturer pays the scholarship back to RCCC, enabling another hopeful to enter the

program.

Above: Student

David Ortiz oper-

ates the WaterJet

machine. Right:

Second-semester

student Josh Simp-

son gets measurements on an older

style manual lathe.

All students learn

"It means that employers know exactly what they're getting,"
Lamb said, "it means that employers only pay when they get value...
. and that the community is investing in its future workforce."

It's a new way of looking at learning, curriculum and programs of study, and it's a direction that community colleges, RCCC in particular, are moving towards.

"What a college has traditionally done is that we prepare people, generally, for something — for a job. And then as a student, you graduate and you look for a job," Dr. Michael Quillen, vice president of academic programs said.

But that model doesn't work anymore





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— not for students, and not for employers. Instead, Quillen says, employers want their future workforce to be certified and to have the knowledge to perform a specific job. Which, on the school's end, results in a much more focused form of learning.

"It is an approach that we're going to take, and that we are well under way of taking, in all of our technical programs. If there's national certification or accreditation, we will pursue it," Quillen said.

To that end, RCCC is trying to offer as many accreditation and certification programs as it can. This year, the school received accreditation for its computer integrated machining program from the National Institute for Metalworking, Quillen said, and hopes to add many more.

The entirety of RCCC's curriculum now revolves around helping students choose and succeed on a career path. The school offers a variety of internships, and makes sure to tie in practical experience with every class, such as asking students to shadow, research or interview someone from their prospective field.

"That direct connection with the workforce is really a thing that is driving our thinking about how curriculum should be designed," Lamb said

The abundance of internships and shadowing opportunities means that local employers are able to provide RCCC with instant feedback that allows the school to tweak its programs.

It works well for local employers, who are able to get to know students while they're still in school and can be able to offer them a job immediately after they've graduated.

"We know that when a student walks through the door, there's a company that's sitting at the other end," Quillen said.

But many students who walk

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July 1st Shop, Dine, Stroll

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through the arch at RCCC aren't looking for a local job — its associate in arts transfer program is the school's largest, Spalding said. Currently, RCCC receives its accreditation from the Southern Association of Schools and Colleges, which means that its credits transfer anywhere. But partnerships and transfer agreements like the one RCCC has with Catawba College means that a history credit will transfer as a history credit instead of an elective.

This year, the college signed a similar transfer agreement with the University of North Carolina at Charlotte — its first in the UNC system — and is working on agreements with other schools.

"What we're really trying to do is make sure that students can come here, they can get a high-quality education, and they can take it anywhere they want to take it. And we want to make that as seamless as possible," Quillen said.

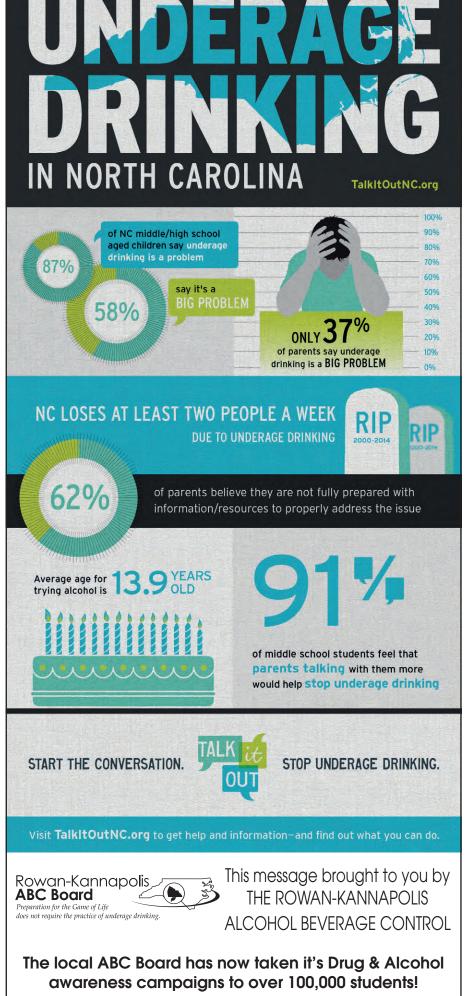
Two new programs, occupational therapy and physical therapy assistant, were also launched in 2015. And RCCC is always focused on honing its dental, radiography and nursing programs, Spalding said.

"We know those are high-paying, good careers, so we have put a lot of our effort into building on the success of the programs we already have," she said.

Looking towards the future, RCCC's north campus has big plans. School officials are currently raising money to building an outdoor learning area, a solar project and an advanced technology center. They're focusing on moving more degree programs online - currently they have seven — along with offering 24/7 online tutoring to ensure that education doesn't have to wait due to a busy schedule.

"It's fully within the grasp of every student to come here, graduate with a good job, locally, debt free," Lamb said.

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BIC-CEST of them all?

Largest employers include Food Lion and Freightliner

Written by ELIZABETH COOK | Photography by JON C. LAKEY

hen forecasters called for snow across the region back in January, one of Rowan County's biggest employers was directly impacted.

Patel rings up

son's groceries

ping Center on

Jake Alexander Boulevard in

at the Food

Lion store at Westland Shop-

customer Teresa Wilker-

Food Lion store managers knew they would be swamped with shoppers eager to stock up on milk, bread and other storm essentials. It was all hands on

Cashier Vedika

And Food Lion has a lot of hands.

deck.

All told, the supermarket chain includes 1,100 stores in 10 Southeastern and Mid-Atlantic states and employs more than 66,000 people.

In Rowan, birthplace of the chain, some 3,200 people work for Food Lion and parent division Delhaize America, both head-quartered here.

They include 1,800 employees in corporate offices on Executive Drive, 775 in its massive distribution center on Harrison Road and 625 in stores sprinkled across the county.

LARGEST NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

Employer	Employees	Туре
1. Food Lion	3,200	HQ/Call Center/Distribution/Retail
2. Rowan Salisbury Schools	2,847	Education
3. W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center	2,100	Health Services
4. Daimler Trucks N. America Freightliner	1,600	Vehicle Manufacturing
5. Novant Health Rowan Regional/clinics	1,449	Medical Services
6. Rowan Cabarrus Community College	768	Community College
7. Rowan County	761	Municipality
8. Continental Structural Plastics	544	Manufacturing
9. Piedmont Correctional Institute	450	Correctional Facility
10. City of Salisbury	464	Municipality

"We have had great success being able to attract talent," says Tracy Stone, Food Lion's vice president of talent, diversity and organizational development. "I think the power of the brand attracts talent. ... We're really deeply rooted in the Salisbury community."

That puts Food Lion in the top tier of Rowan

employers, along with the Rowan-Salisbury School System, Daimler Trucks-Freightliner and the Hefner V.A. Medical Center, all of whom have more than 2,000 employees.

Freightliner announced temporary layoffs totaling 1,500 workers in earlier this year, bringing its workforce at the Cleveland plant down to

1,600, but the heavy truck manufacturer remains a major driver of the local economy.

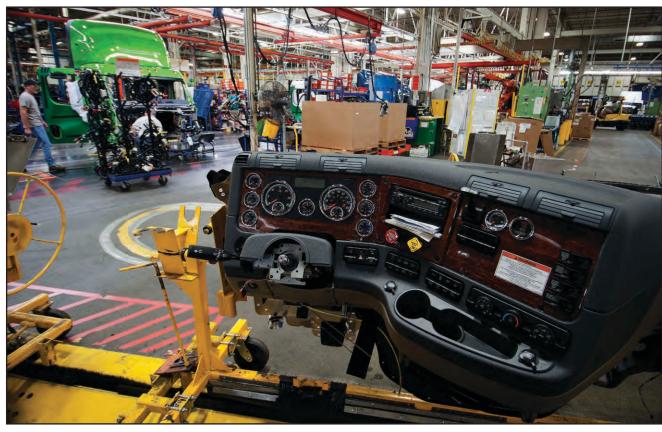
Meanwhile, several local industries are in a growth mode, according to Robert Van Geons, executive director of RowanWorks economic development.

Gildan Activewear recently opened its second yarn-spinning plant in Rowan. A company spokesman said the two Rowan plants now employ more than 400 people.

Textiles no longer dominate the local economy, but they still matter quite a bit. Other textile companies operating in Rowan include Parkdale Mills and Tuscarora Yarns.

In 2014, Continental Structural Plastics, or CSP, bought the Magna Composites plant on U.S. 70, which continues to be a major employer. Universal Forest Products completed its second Rowan County facility a year or two ago.

"One of the county's newest companies is Agility Fuel Systems, which is up to 100 employees as of



A completed dash assembly waits to be installed into one of the truck cabs at the Daimler Truck North America plant in Cleveland.

my last conversation with them," Van Geons says. "Also, last year, we helped locally grown, Custom Plastics/ Custom Golf Cart move to the former Mi Windows building on Heilig Road. They've quietly

grown into a substantial manufacturing employer."

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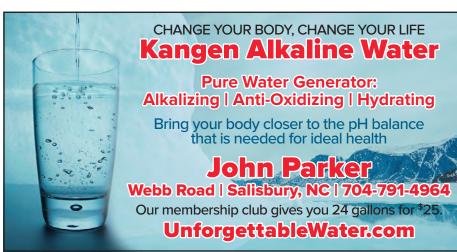


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Tenants of the Salisbury Business Center share resources allowing them to focus on their core business initiatives. The Salisbury Business Center offers keyman space, office suites, and individual offices ranging in size from approximately 275 to 4,800 square feet. There are a limited number of executive offices and suites available for new residents.

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The Spirit o

Serving children and families since 1906



Yesterday

For more than 110 years, Nazareth Children's Home has been providing a safe haven for Children & Families during their most desperate times of need. Founded in 1903 by the Rev. & Mrs. J.M.L. Lyerly, PHD, along with the support from the Reformed Church, the Spirit and Vision of Nazareth Orphans Home was to provide a family and home for those who had lost theirs. On December 1st, 1906, Miss Mary P. Abbott and 4 children moved into the McNairy home and constituted the formal opening of the orphanage. The first decade of service was filled with growth, change and betterment for the surrounding community. Land was purchased, housing and buildings were secured and lives were changed.

During the first few years, Nazareth grew rapidly and 25 children called it home. The McNairy home contained 85 acres that included a farm, barns, pastures, and orchards. It was hard work for the children and staff, who worked each day from sun up to sun down. Their harvests provided for their immediate needs, as well as extra income for the home. Children learned the value of hard work. were educated in church and in school, and were prepared for adulthood. Bonds that would last generations were formed between Nazareth and her supporters in the community. These bonds still exist today.

As growth continued, change was always a common theme. Changes in society and in the values of the American home dictated that the services in which Nazareth provided for decades needed to change as well. Children were no longer being orphaned by parental deaths and disease, and child welfare offices were created.

Recent Times

In the 1960's, children began being taken from their homes and placed to live with us, due to neglect, abuse and in many cases, abandonment. Local public schools were integrated, which meant all of Nazareth's children could attend school together. Nazareth made efforts to hire married couples to work as house parents, and began teaching and parenting as a 'family', within each cottage.

As the family unit began to change and experience dysfunction, behaviors of the children in those homes changed as well. Again, Nazareth adapted programs and services to meet the needs of the children who came to them for help. We believe that the family structure is essential to every child and the adult they will grow to become. Every effort is made to heal what is broken, to repair the lives that have been torn apart, and to provide a bright future to those who once thought that to be an impossibility. Today, we not only work to serve the disadvantaged or trouble child, but also their

family, when willing. We have found that these adaptive new services were desperately needed in our communities.

In 2012 Nazareth successfully acquired Carolina Counseling and Consultation, LLC to provide the valuable resources for our children's success. Over 1.000 clients receive treatment on an outpatient basis at one of our current three locations. Clients range in age from birth to 62. They include children, mothers, fathers, families and other family members who struggle with Mental Health, Substance Abuse related conditions and Developmental Disability needs. With programs and services expanding and changing to meet the needs of all those we serve today, our Board of Trustees and Leadership began what would be a four year process/journey of rediscovery, focusing on the future of Nazareth Children's Home.

Relevance & Clarity

What does a 110 year old agency named Nazareth Children's Home do when residential childcare becomes only one of the many services they provide? They adopt a new name, "Nazareth Child & Family Connection", that states more clearly where their focus lies. "I've been affiliated with Nazareth for over 60 years, and for some time now, I've felt that our name only described a small portion of the services that we actually provide to the community", said Board Chairman Harold C. Earnhardt. "Changing the name Nazareth was never an option because our Christian roots and our long history in Rowan County and throughout the State. Being a loving home for children remains one of our highest priorities, but it's our hope that this change will help us in our efforts to continue providing the best services possible for the entire family unit. There's only so much you can do in the life of a child, if you don't address the entire problem. This includes Mom, Dad, Grandparents, and other family members as well", said Earnhardt. Nazareth is and will continue to be a source where connections are made and or reestablished between the children and families who come to us for help. Whatever the need may be, Nazareth's relevance has never been clearer. We are the connection for hope in the lives of Rowan County's most vulnerable and marginalized citizens and hope can be found within our home, amongst our services and through our caring and qualified staff, whose mission is to Change lives and Transform Futures.

Residential Level II Program (ACE):

North Carolina has undergone major changes in its child welfare system. It has created a need for specialization in childcare facilities. Nazareth Children's Home has targeted a specific population of North Carolina's children and developed a program that specifically address deficit areas children may exhibit in their home environment, educational setting, and in the community. Residential Level Il provides mental health services for those individuals who has documented struggles in the above environments and has a mental health diagnosis that helps to define the reasons for the



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f Connection

Nazareth Child & Family Connection

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socially unacceptable behaviors displayed. The program provides short-term therapeutic group home care for those individuals referred by the Care Coordination Team at Cardinal Innovations, current clinical homes, and DSS. Along with the campus Case Manager, the family, DSS Social Worker when they are involved, and the clients, the goal is to successfully reunite these individuals with their families equipped with the tools they need to better cope with challenges in their lives.

Be a part of the Connection

The Adoption and Family Foster Care programs at Nazareth Children's Home are designed to find adoptive or foster homes for legally free and atrisk children, who over a period of time have been unable to return to live with their birth parents or with other family members. Once children are available for adoption, their foster parents are the first ones given the opportunity to adopt. This process is called "fostering to adopt". There are many benefits to this process. First, you already have an established relationship with the child. Secondly, you already have had the contact and possibly



relationships with extended family and birth parents of the children. Thirdly, it is significantly less expensive to adopt a child who is already placed in your home as a foster child.

Carolina Counseling and **Consultation Division:**

Carolina Counseling and Consultation, with offices located in Salisbury, Lexington and Concord, North Carolina, is a growing outpatient clinic serving individuals with mental health, substance abuse, and developmental disability needs.

The staff works together to assure patients optimal care through collaboration and mutual respect. We welcome and respect the diversity of our patients by providing services in a safe, supportive, and confidential environment. We do this in an atmosphere supporting a culturally diverse community through awareness training and cultural affirmation.

Carolina Counseling and Consultation operates daily by appointment, though emergency walk-ins may be accommodated as needed. Hours of operation are flexible to assure that patients receive services at the times most often requested.

It is the goal of our practice to provide the best therapeutic atmosphere possible to facilitate progress and growth in order to meet patient needs. Agency professionals offer comprehensive, evidenced based practices and regularly participate in continuing education to maintain a high standard of treatment competencey. Our therapists provide a wide range of outpatient services including individual, couples, family, and group therapies.

Through our expansion of outpatient care we are now able to care for all the needs of the families and children we serve. Focus is not just on residential care but also preventing the separation of families. Our partnership allows for expansion of services across the state and mental health services can be offered in most of the central counties of North Carolina. These services are provided by Physicians, and a large staff of Mental

Health Professionals with a variety of backgrounds. Services are also provided in local public schools to decrease the amount of time a child is out of the educational setting.

Crescent **Academy**

Our Crescent Academy day treatment program is a

successful partnership between Nazareth and the Rowan Salisbury School System. We currently have two elementary sites and have recently added an additional site at Henderson Independent for middle school students. The program is designed to work with students who have struggled in a traditional classroom setting learn appropriate behaviors and social skills along with traditional academics, so that they can be successful when they transition back to a regular classroom setting. This is done by taking a therapeutic approach to interacting with students and parents.

In addition to attending during the school year, students are able to participate in a summer program that provides a safe, structured environment to learn and grow in. Last summer students participated in a reading program as well as hands-on activities such as swimming, hiking, roller-skating and arts and crafts. We are looking forward to continuing the fun this summer. This valuable service meets the needs of many children who struggle to be successful in the traditional educational system.

As our agency continues to meet the needs of the communities we serve, our legacy will continue to grow and be a change for good.

How can you support our Legacy of Change?



There are multiple ways to support our legacy and every effort provides an impact.

Financial Contributions can be made by visiting our website or by contacting our office. These funds go to support daily operations and provide the resources necessary for success with our residents and clients.

Join us on our Annual Fun Fest Day at our campus in Rockwell. The event occurs on the first Saturday in June of each year and this year will be held on June 4th.

Become a Foster Parent, this commitment not only can change the life of a child in need but provide a rewarding experience for your family. Interested parties can contact our office for more

Leave a Planned Gift, there are multiple ways to create and structure a planned gift to Nazareth, that will benefit. Simply contact our Development office to learn more about how you can leave a lasting legacy.

Shop at or donate to our Salisbury Outlet Store. 100% of the income from our Outlet Store supports Nazareth. This location also provides our residents with a place to gain job related skills.

Nazareth Child & Family Connection is a non-profit 501(c)(3) and donations are tax deductible.

fc.org

RowanWorks and updated information from some companies, Rowan County's Top 10 employers are a mix of industry and government (see chart).

The two local hospitals alone
— Novant Health Rowan Medical
Center and the Hefner VA Medical
Center — employ more than 3,500
people in Rowan. Carolina HealthCare also has a presence in Rowan
with 57 full-time employees in Rowan
clinics and practices. Add home
health care and assisted living, and
it's clear health care is a hefty part
of the local economy.

Education is a big sector, too, between the public schools' more than 2,800 employees (as well as 377 substitute teachers), RCCC's 768 employees, plus people working at private schools, Catawba and Livingstone colleges, Hood Theological Seminary

Government is a larger sector still, as it is in most communities.



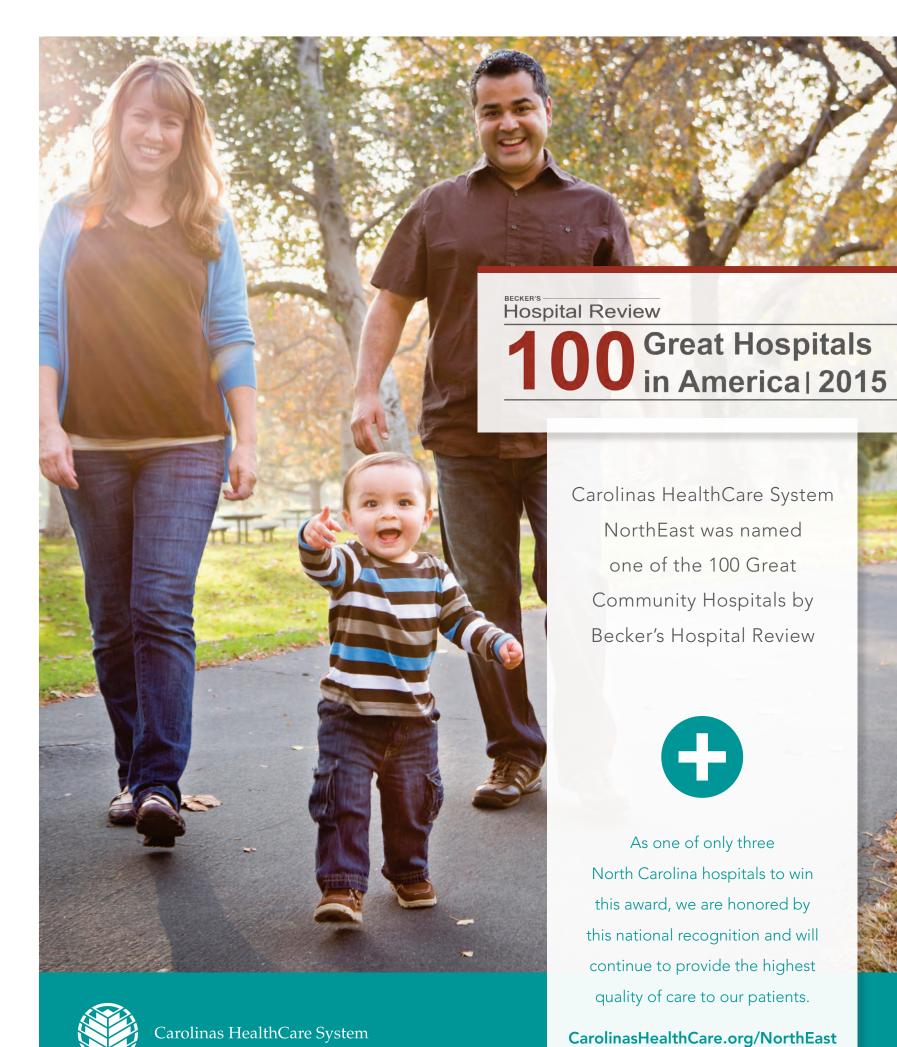
School bus mechanic Brian Moeller performs a check on one of the many buses at the school bus garage on Old Concord Road in Salisbury.







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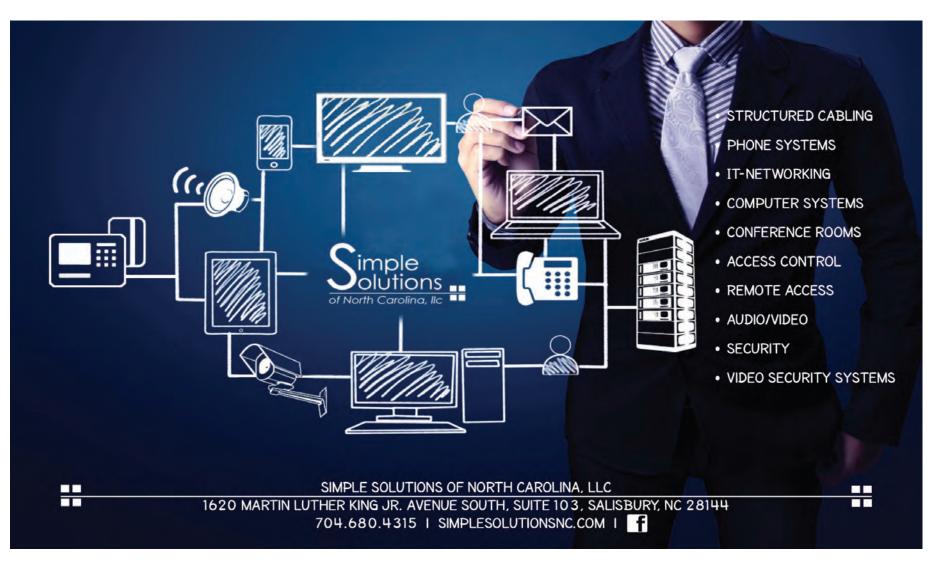
Public schools, the community college, veterans' care, Salisbury and Rowan governments and a state prison employ some 7,600 people. Hundreds more work for the county's nine other municipalities. When you take those jobs out of the equation, the county's top private employers are these:

TOP 10 CORPORATE EMPLOYERS

- 1. Delhaize Food Lion, 3,200
- 2. Daimler Trucks North
 America Freightliner, 1,600
- 3. Novant Health Rowan Medical Center and clinics, 1,449
- 4. Continental Structural Plastics, 544
- 5. Walmart, 428
- 6. Gildan, 385
- 7. DuraFiber Technologies, 316
- 8. Universal Forest Products, 285
- 9 Parkdale Mills, 222
- 10. Ei Pharmaceutical Solutions, 210



Gildan employee Patricia Garcia tends to one of several spinning frames that she is responsible for.



ood Lion's huge workforce is diverse and inclusive, says Tracy Stone, Food Lion's vice president of talent, diversity and organizational development. That's especially important on the retail level.

"We really mirror the communities we operate in," Stone says.



Store positions make up the majority of Food Lion's associates across all states, and part-time work is the norm, according to Stone. That gives

store managers and employees flexibility, she says.

It's a misperception, though, to think only of store jobs when one thinks of Food Lion, Stone says, especially here in Salisbury. Some 1,00 people work in the company's corporate offices off Executive Drive filling a wide variety of positions -- jobs in finance, human resources, construction, real estate and much more. It takes a lot of support staff to keep a chain of 1,100 stores going, she says.

Some 775 people work in the company's distribution center, and then there are the drivers who keep goods moving.

Food Lion is known for career advancement success stories. Antoine Grant, the company's 2013 store manager of the year, started as a 16-year-old bagger. Tom Smith, who became president of the company in 1981, also started as a bagger.

The current president, Meg Ham, started in a Delhaize retail management training program.

And long before Stone became a vice president, she started with the company as a part-time cashier. Now it's her job to make sure that the company attracts and hires the most qualified people and then sets



Food Lion strives to reflect community

By ELIZABETH COOK

them up for success.

All told, the company has about 66,000 employees. The most difficult jobs to fill are deep expertise roles in information technology, Stone says — a challenge across nearly all industries.

Turnover is a fact of life in retail; it's not uncommon to have 30 to 40 percent turnover annually, Stone says. There are always jobs to fill. Entry level positions in the stores do not all require a high-school diploma.

Scott Bauguess checks the product in the coolers in the meat department at the Food Lion store at Westland Shopping Center in Salisbury. Bauguess has been working for Food Lion for 18 years.

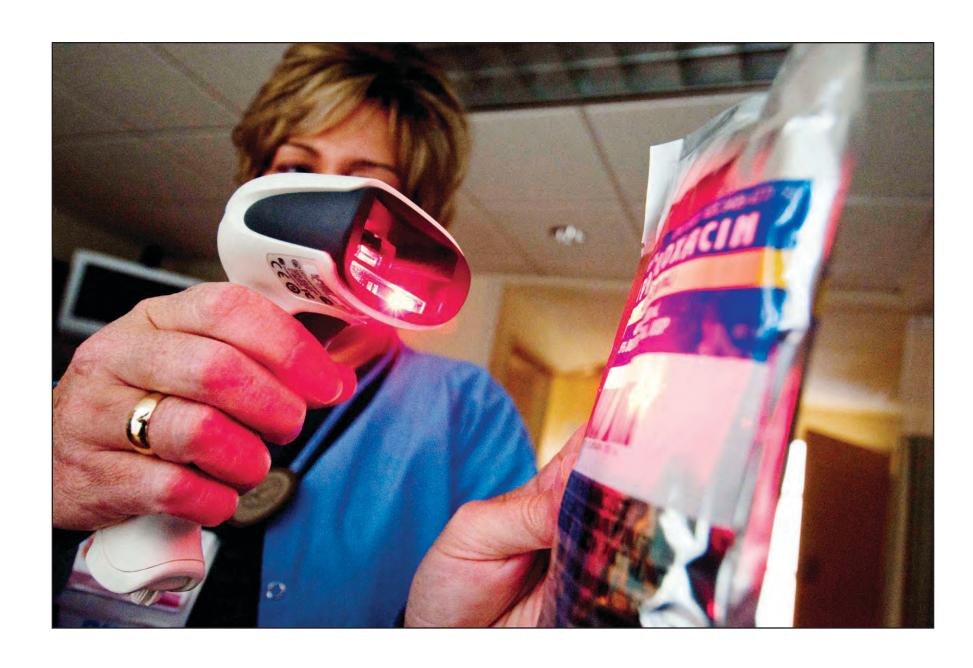
The company encourages education through a tuition reimbursement program for full-time employees, a "highly valued benefit," she

Stone has good things to say about Rowan County workers.

"In our opinion, it's certainly been a workforce that's met our needs," she says. Food Lion has found talented and qualified people here, and only a small percentage of jobs require the company to recruit outside the area.

Food Lion is a good place for the person who wants work part-time or someone that wants to make a lifelong career in the supermarket business, she says.

"We are a great company to work for."



Up to date

Novant Rowan keeps pace with health care changes

Written by REBECCA RIDER | Photography by JON C. LAKEY

ast year was a year of growth and change for Novant Health Rowan Medical Center, President Dari Caldwell says. "We had a busy year," she said during a recent interview.

And perhaps the biggest change the

medical center implemented in 2015 was the launch of Dimensions, an electronic patient record.

"That was a total conversion from paper charts to electronic charts within the medical center," Caldwell said.

Dimensions guarantees a single electronic record for every patient across the system. No more filling out new forms and histories at each doctor's office — it's all

All hospital staff and medical personal

Right: Dari Caldwell, President of Novant Health Rowan Medical Center, talks about the newest upgrades to the hospital over the past year, including adding technology, specialists, equipment and a list of new accreditations. Opposite: Technology upgrades to the Novant Health system include electronic medical records. Nurses use a new bar code scanner to doublecheck the medicines that are prescribed and reduces the risk of human error of incorrect dosage.

underwent training in the new program before its March launch date. Caldwell said the program went live at 4 a.m. one night — she and other administrative staff spent the night at the hospital, making rounds to ensure that everything went smoothly.

"It was just an awesome undertaking," she said.

Throughout 2015, the program had scheduled down times - normally overnight on the weekends, to perform updates and weed out problems. Caldwell also said there was a

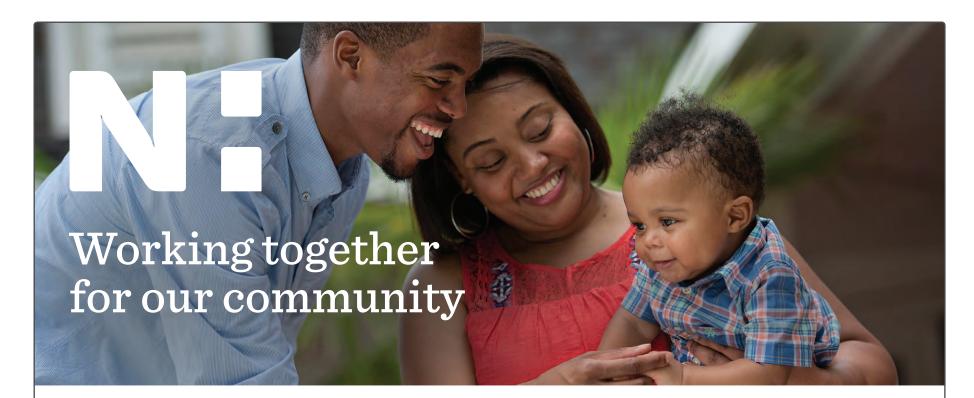


bit of a drag in the Emergency and Surgical departments while medical personal strove to learn a new system while dealing with the same number of patients.

At the same time, nurses in the facility switched to barcoded medications.

"It's the next generation of nursing," Caldwell said.

Patient wristbands and medications are now equipped with a barcode. It's a safety feature, Caldwell explained, to ensure that the right patient gets the right medication at



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the right time. A correct scan will automatically document that the medication was administered.

At the beginning of 2015, the medical center switched out its

Emergency Department physicians and began contracting with a new group, Valley Emergency Physicians.

"Typically you don't have to, you don't want to change physician groups unless you just reach a point where you know you need to do

Amberger, safety director and respiratory therapist, wipes down the surfaces on one of the two hyperbaric oxygen chambers at the Novant Health Wound Center.

Diana

something differently," Caldwell said, "We just couldn't get our outcomes to improve and felt that we had to make a change."

Caldwell says that she valued Valley's approach to patients and patient care, and says that they've help put several strategies in place to ensure that patients are seen in a timely manner.

"We've been delighted," Caldwell said.

Since Valley came on board, Caldwell says that patient approval ratings for emergency services have "skyrocketed." In fact, Novant recently released a report, Caldwell says, that ranks Rowan as No. 1 in the system in terms of emergency department patient satisfaction.

"It's sort of one of those stories going from 'worst to first," she said.

Novant Health Rowan's new Wound Care Center made its debut as an outpatient center on Mocksville Avenue. Wound care used to be located within the hospital, Caldwell says, but patients in need of its services did not need to stay overnight, and many had difficulty walking.

"So many of the patients who came to us for wound care had difficulty navigating or finding their way," Caldwell said.



The new wound care center is located on the ground floor of Novant's new professional services building, and allows patients to drive right up to the door. The center also features two hyperbaric oxygenation chambers to hyperoxygenate the cells to speed wound healing.

"The most prevalent wounds in our community are from diabetes, and wounds to the legs and feet from diabetes — and we want to prevent amputations," Caldwell said, "We want to be able to heal those wounds so that people don't lose their limbs. That was one of the reasons we brought in hyperbaric, was because there's a great success with that."

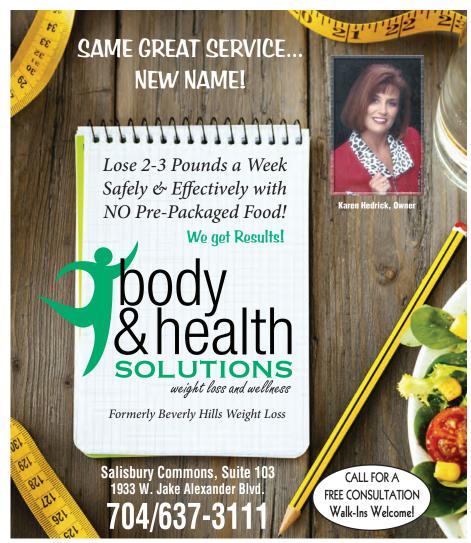
The medical center also purchased a 3D mammography unit, which was unveiled at the end of 2015. Funds for the machine were raised locally through the Cannon Foundation, the Cannon Charitable Trust, the Patron's Ball and the Giving Campaign.

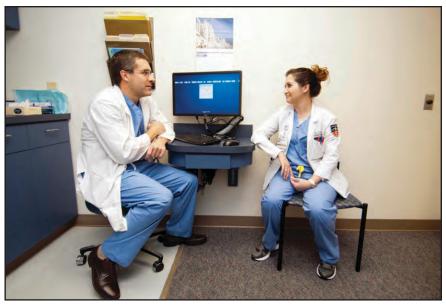
"It belongs to the community," Caldwell said.

The new unit is particularly helpful in detecting the presence of tumors among women who have dense breast tissue, she said. Caldwell hopes that soon all of their mammography units will have 3D capabilities.

July 2015 also saw the first round of medical students from

Campbell University. It's a partnership that's been working very well, Caldwell says. The students are in their third year of medical school and will work with attending physicians at Novant Health





Dr. James Murphy, talks with Campbell College medical student Janet Fontanella between patient visits at Novant Health Carolina Women's Health.

Rowan through their fourth year.

It takes extra work on the part of Novant physicians, and can be draining, Caldwell says, but the physicians have risen to the occa-

"It takes a lot of energy to teach," Caldwell said, "And while the students can help them do his-

tories and physicals and things like that with patients, our doctors are very committed. I mean they're not just babysitting these students, they are very committed to being up to date on what their curriculum is, their reading assignments and making sure the students are getting all the experiences that they



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need — and they take it real personally."

Caldwell says that personal experience is what makes Novant Health Rowan such a desirable location for medical students, getting to work directly with an attending physician rather than a resident. She says she heard from Campbell that Rowan was the number one request from medical students.

"It is going very very well," Caldwell said.

Caldwell hopes that the partnership will turn into a recruitment tool. Novant Health Rowan conducted a manpower study last year indicating that in 2020, the Salisbury-Rowan area will be short 40 primary care physicians.

"That is a real need that we have," Caldwell said.

Within the community, Caldwell says, Novant Health Rowan has been partnering with Livingstone College to start a health and wellness coaching program, funded by a Duke Endowment Grant. It was the brainchild of Dr.

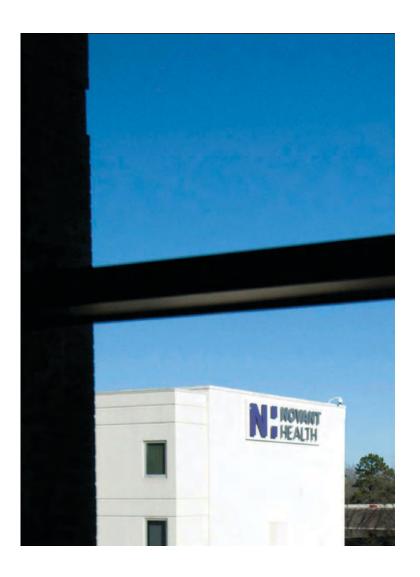
"I think it's phenomenal, it's exciting. I love being able to bring new services to the community — that's what our mission is, to serve the needs of the community."

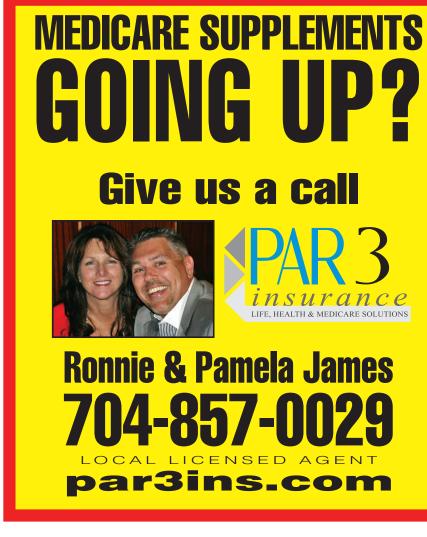
- Dari Caldwell

Jimmy Jenkins.

"The idea being that when they graduate with a four-year degree, their health status is markedly improved from what it might have been when they came in," Caldwell said.

In 2015, Novant Health Rowan also hired a vascular surgeon, Dr. Martin









The new Bariatric Solutions Rowan offers treatment to patients suffering from obesity.

Carignan, and a breast specialist. A new urgent care clinic opened in Manning Park off of Jake Alexander Boulevard. The hospital also received several accreditations including being named a Primary

Stroke Center, being named a Baby Friendly Facility by Baby Friendly USA, and being named a Comprehensive Community Cancer Center and a Center of Excellence for its weight management and bariatric surgery program by the American College of Surgeons.

And 2016 "should be a good year" for the facility as well, Caldwell says. The hospital is looking at new bariatric procedures, expanding medical personal in infectious diseases, OBGYN, vascular surgery and neurology departments. There are also plans to open a rehab clinic in the South Rowan YMCA and a satellite clinic in Albemarle.

"I think it's phenomenal, it's exciting," Caldwell said, "I love being able to bring new services to the community — that's what our mission is, to serve the needs of the community."



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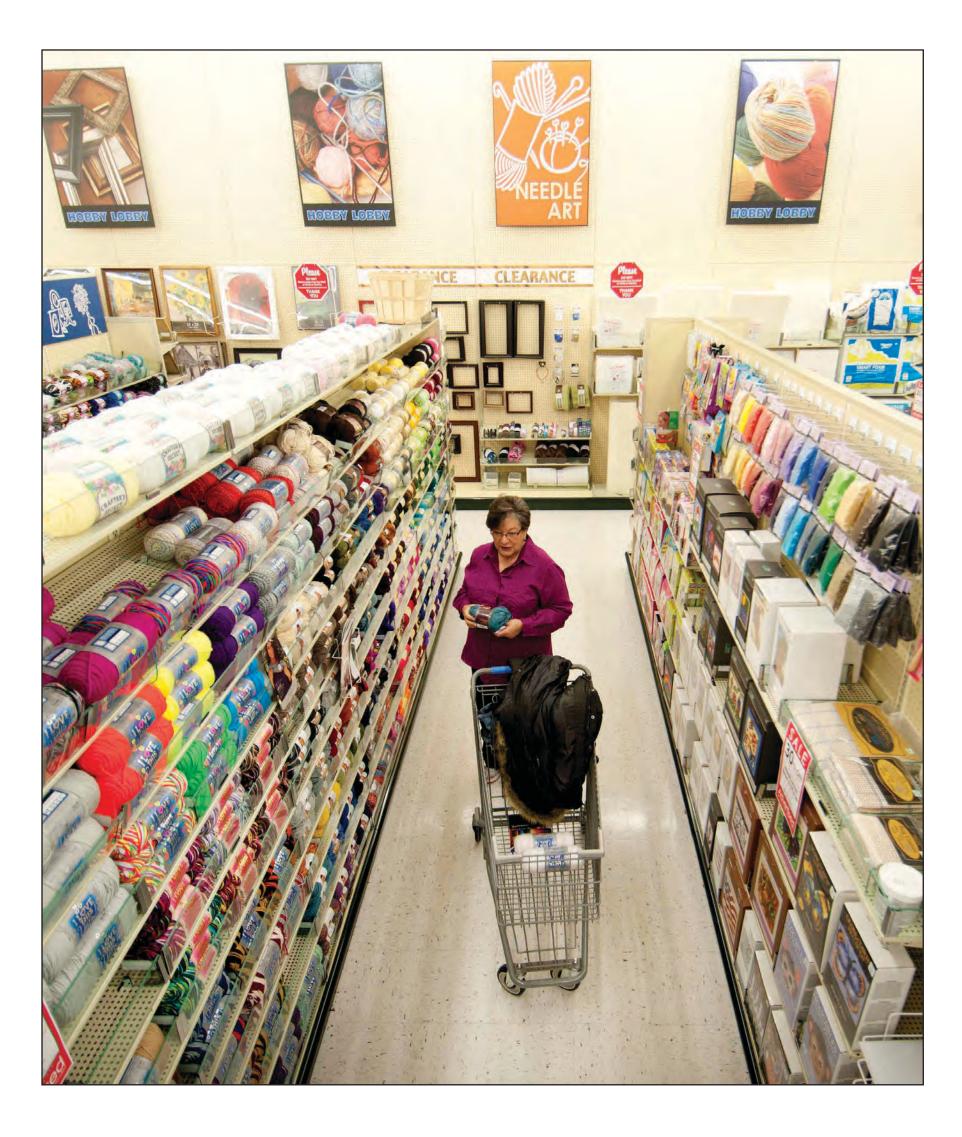


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Retail trends

New businesses set up shop in Rowan

Written by SHAVONNE WALKER | Photography by JON C. LAKEY

oan Jackson, who just moved to Salisbury, slowly perused the aisles of Hobby Lobby, picking through a colorful wall of yarn. The retired grandmother typed the retailer's location into her phone and wound up just five minutes down the road at the craft supply store.

Jackson, a longtime knitter, was able to find the "right" colors to begin her next project.

The craft supply store is just one of over a dozen new businesses that have caught the eye of local consumers.

In September, Hobby Lobby opened its store in the Shop-

pes at Summit Park, making it the first of the retailers in the new shopping center to open.

"We felt that we could bring a very unique shopping experience to the area," said Vince Parker, a spokesman with the Oklahomabased arts and craft chain.

He said the company has enjoyed becoming a part of the Rowan County community.

In addition to Hobby Lobby, the shopping center includes Salsarita, Five Below, Kirklands, and Dick's Sporting Goods.

Mattress Firm moved on its three Salisbury stores into the Shoppes at Summit Park. Just a short drive from downtown Salisbury are two other Mattress Firm locations.

Over the last year, Rowan County, and specifically Salisbury, has seen a growth in retail — from the big-box stores like Hobby Lobby and Harbor Freight to the smaller, locally owned businesses like Your Kitchen Store and More located in downtown Salisbury.

One important factor has been a change in perception about Rowan County, said Robert Van Geons, head of RowanWorks Economic Development.



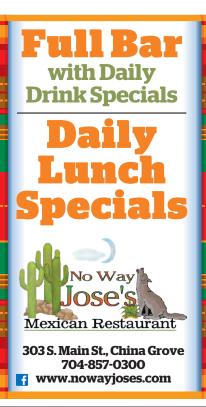
Opposite: Joan Jackson shops for yarn at the new Hobby Lobby to complete a baby blanket she was working on.

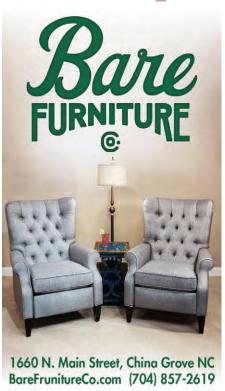




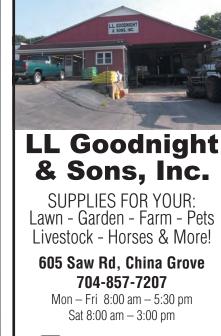






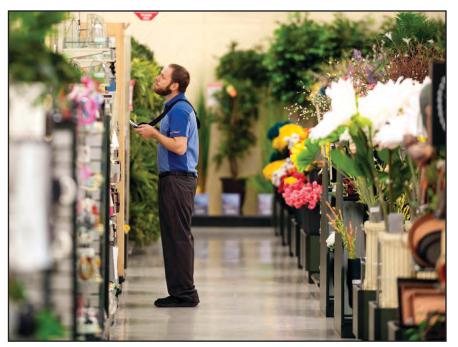






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Employee David Hendry use a tablet device to reorder items for an endcap at the new Hobby Lobby store in the Shoppes at Summit center.

"Thanks to a proactive city and county leadership, the message that our community is 'open for business' is getting the attention of developers, retailers, hotels and restaurants," Van Geons said.

In the last year, Rowan County has added over a dozen new businesses to its roster. Some of the new businesses have filled a niche market, like New Sarum Brewing Co., located downtown. The microbrewery is one of two emerging microbreweries in Rowan County, while Morgan Ridge Vineyard and Brewhouse is the other.

Your Kitchen Store and More is another downtown business that has been able to fill a need in an area devoid of certain specialized goods and services.

"Retailers and developers recognize that Salisbury and Rowan County is an underserved market. Simply put, our citizens have income they are ready to spend, and if retailers want to ensure they capture it, having a location in our community is the best way," Van Geons said.

Dennis Lunsford, owner of Your Kitchen Store and More, said he researched the market before opening the downtown establishment. He spent 18 years as a car salesman but longed to be a business owner. He came to the conclusion a kitchen store "was missing from the retail market."

There were other stores that sold kitchen supplies, but none offered the type of unique pieces and brands he planned to carry, Lunsford said.

"People don't mind spending their money and are not afraid to spend money," Lunsford said about the local retail market.

Two other small business owners who took a leap of faith and launched into unknown waters are Jon Untiedt and his wife, Terrie. The couple, recently married and moved to the area from Raleigh.

Jon had always wanted to own a brew pub, and Terri needed something to do with her time while she wasn't working, so the two opened Brewtique, a coffee shop located in downtown Spencer.

The coffee shop has been open since July and there are plans to add craft beer to its offerings.

The two decided that "it was the right time. It was now," Terrie said.

The Untiedts were specific in their choice of location because of the building's proximity to the N.C. Transportation Museum and the fact that there was no coffee shop in Spencer.

"A couple of years ago, there were a lot of vacancies, but in the last two



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Dennis Lunsford is the owner of Your Kitchen Store and More on West Innes Street.

years it has really picked up," said Paula Bohland, executive director of Downtown Salisbury Inc., the downtown economic development corporation.

She said a trend has been that more business owners are younger, and these young people are coming up with innovative ways to market their businesses. AnnaCraig, a downtown clothing boutique that opened in early 2015, has a mobile store that is literally a boutique on wheels.

Bohland credits the variety of family friendly activities in downtown that continue to draw people to shops and restaurants.

Bohland added those who live in downtown will spend their money in





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the downtown area. "It's a real stabilizer for downtown," she said.

Salisbury City Council recently approved a downtown revitalization incentive grant that would convert the Wallace Dry Goods building, 114-118 E. Fisher St., into luxury apartments upstairs and a restaurant downstairs. The restaurant is projected to create four full-time positions and eight parttime positions.

"While we have seen a number of new retail and restaurants opening, there is still a large amount of retail sales leaving our county," Van Geons said.

County officials have said local residents spend more than \$200 million per year shopping outside of Rowan County. The Shoppes at Summit Park is projected to keep some of that in the county.

Van Geons said he is optimistic that the county will continue to see new restaurants, hotels and retailers opening in the community. A number of restaurants and retailers, he said, have expressed an interest in loca-

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tions along the Interstate 85 corridor, in downtown Salisbury, and across Rowan County.

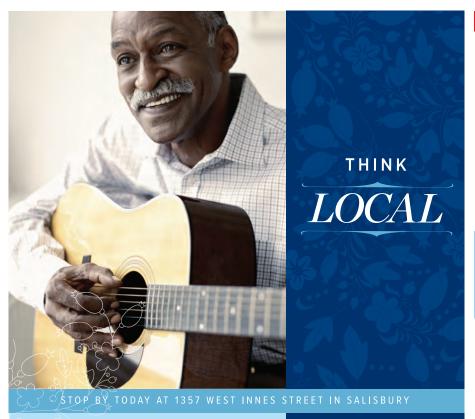
"I think that over the next few years, we will see continued growth of our retail sectors. This will allow our citizens to meet their needs closer to home, while generating new jobs and tax revenue, which will benefit all of us," Van Geons said.

The local market is really recovering from the recession of 2008, said Rowan Chamber of Commerce President Elaine Spalding.

She said people come to Rowan County to shop for everything from cars and other merchandise. She believes — and business owners have told her — consumers travel to Rowan County because of the customer service.

Spalding also said community events, especially those downtown, attract people. She spoke of the recent downtown events like the craft beer festival. There have also been music concerts at the mural, wine tasting crawls, and holiday after 5 events.







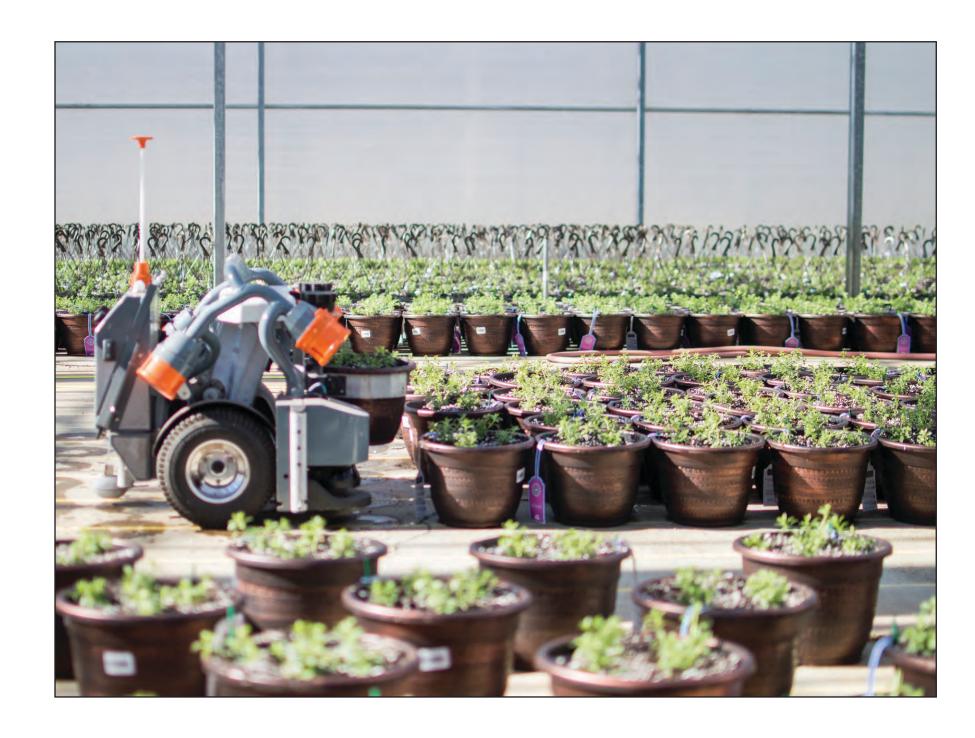
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Technology finds its place in agriculture

Written and photography by JOSH BERGERON

ike clockwork,
they glide across
the concrete floor.
One by one, these
small, wheeled
machines pick up
potted plants and carry them to a
precise spot several hundred feet
away. After the machines conclude
their portion of their work, they
pick back up in another section of
the expansive greenhouse facility.

The machines never tire and pre-

vent employees from doing work that's often tedious and backbreaking, says Bryan Abramowski, who oversees production at Rockwell Farms. In



Abramowski

total, Rockwell Farms has eight of these semi-autonomous machines. Abramowski has given each small machine its own strange name. They don't earn hourly salaries, but are as much a part of Rockwell Farms as the employees and plants who fill the company's greenhouses.

Jason Roseman, who oversees sales at Rockwell Farms, says the robots often attract the most attention from prospective clients. However, the wheeled machines are just one aspect of the several automated processes at Rockwell Farms' greenhouse facility on N.C. Highway 152.

And, for agriculture in the 21st century, it's nearly impossible to compete without some form of technology. From smartphones to automated watering systems, agriculture focused businesses use all sorts of tools to increase yields and productivity.

The robots at Rockwell Farms, for instance, place the plants an equal distance apart, optimizing growth potential, Abramowski said.

Two other pieces of technology that maximize growth potential at Rockwell Farms include an automated watering system and roof panels that control temperature.

With the watering system,

Abramowski said Rockwell Farms can hydrate plants for hours when employees aren't present. A single watering apparatus only spans one row of plants. There's a number of the watering apparatuses across Rockwell Farms greenhouses that can be individually set. When employees leave work for the day, Abramowski can set several water-

ing systems to run at once or one system to run by itself.

Just above the watering system are roof panels that can be individually or automatically adjusted to suit plants. During winter months, it's better to close panels for warmth. In sum-

mer months, natural heat from sunlight is better, Abramowski said.

A massive, indoor greenhouse system might seem like a natural place for technology to take hold. Traditional farming operations have also turned to technological tools. Like most companies, methods of communication with customers have changed for Patterson Farm, said co-owner and Vice President Doug Patterson. How-

ever, Patterson Farm also regularly tracks weather using smartphones, uses computerized irrigation systems and pinpoints locations on the farm that need fertilizer using GPS.

"With technology, one goal is definitely to increase the yields," Patterson said. "It's that way in any business, though. You've got to look at ways to make things quicker,

Above: Rockwell

Farms has an auto-

mated system that controls tempera-

ture in a green-

house. Opposite: A robot moves plants

inside of a green-

house. The robot

is one of eight that precisely spaces

plants.

faster and cheaper because somebody else is already doing it."

He said the price of Patterson Farm's products hasn't increased much in the previous several years. If a piece of technology leads to increased yields, Patterson Farm could, in turn, see

increased profits, Patterson said.

Patterson Farm, based in Rowan County, is one of the largest tomato-producing businesses in North Carolina. Patterson estimated it's probably the largest family owned operation in the state. Patterson, whose primary responsibility is handling sales, shipping and receiving, says his smartphone is, perhaps, most essential.

"It's something you've really

got to have on you all the time," he said. "You've got to be connected. We used to have two-way radios to communicate, and now it's smartphones."

Patterson recalled a time before many of the technological advances, even before two-way radios.

"You used to just have to get in a truck and drive around until you saw the person you were looking for," he said. "Now, I just send a text to the person I need to talk to and hear back instantly. It's definitely a lot better than the old, bag phone."

Despite technological advances, essentials of farming are still critical, he said.

"The most important technology now may be the computer and the smartphone, which is a computer in itself, but you still can't get away from the tractor," he said. "You can't discount that. Even with all the technology we use, you still have to enjoy farming from the beginning."

There's still long hours of hard work, he said. And, if there's ever a power outage, Patterson said, the essential skills ensure crops keep growing as usual.



O2 Energies held a public day on Nov. 21, 2014, at their new Rockwell Solar Farm on Earnhardt Road off N.C. 152. — Jon C. Lakey photo.

Bright future Rowan no exception to state's solar energy boom

Written by JOSH BERGERON

n fields and empty plots of land, they sprout like an invasive species — not native, but thriving in a new environment. These metallic squares only soaked up sun in small numbers previously. Recently, they've begun populating

space at a rapid pace.

In Rowan County, and across North Carolina, solar energy has rocketed in popularity.

Traditionally, solar energy quickly becomes associated with its environmental benefits. In all cases, solar panels increase the amount of green energy on the electric grid. Duke Energy — the state's largest power producer — needs to generate less electricity with each subsequent solar installation. To go with solar energy, the company increasingly relies less on coal to generate electricity.

Financially, the largest solar in-

stallation in Rowan County sits at Catawba College. The college's solar array is the largest of any college in North Carolina. In fact, it's larger than all other North Carolina colleges combined. Catawba's solar panels aren't enough to power the entire campus, but are estimated to



Solar panels on top of the Robertson College-Community Center at Catawba **College.** — Submitted photo.

John Wear, director of Catawba's Center for the Environment. "Historically, colleges and university have been the places where more forward thinking needs to occur and has occurred."

For Catawba, there's two signifi-

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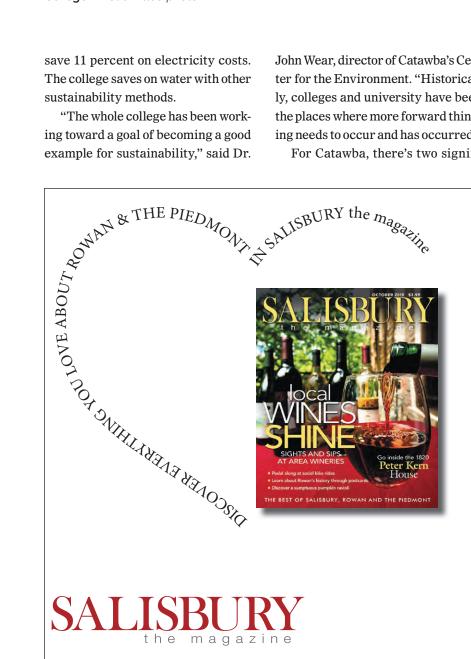








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cant benefits to the massive, multimillion-dollar project — economic sustainability and teaching sustainability to students while also adopting environmentally friendly practices — Wear said.

Solar panels sit on classroom buildings, the Robertson College-Community Center and residence halls. Cars even park under solar panels in Catawba's parking lots.

The college estimates its solar panels will provide \$5 million over the next 20 years and more than \$11 million over the next 30 years.

Energy savings for local businesses is even steeper than Catawba in many cases. Sitting near Interstate 85 in Speedway Business Park, Morse Measurements installed 102 panels — enough to cover 90 percent of electricity costs. Founded in 2003, the company focuses on suspension testing, compliance and consulting. Primarily the company tests race vehicles.

On its website, the company accurately states that its testing is powered by the sun. It further touts the



Solar panels line the roof of Gerry Wood Honda on Jake Alexander Boulevard. Wood installed panels on the roofs of his three car dealerships in 2014. The panels are expected to produce a third of the buildings' energy needs. — David Purtell photo.

solar installation with a live graph on its website compared how much energy is generated with the amount used.

"We felt like it was our responsibility to do something to lessen our impact on the environment," Morse Measurements President Bob Simons said.

Being environmentally responsible represented a portion of Simons' reasoning, but tax credits sweetened









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the idea, according to Simons. With federal and state credits combined, Morse Measurements would receive a 65 percent rebate. Rowan County records show the company paid about \$71,000 for its solar installation, which means it stands to receive up to about \$46,000 in rebates.

The rebates have attracted many to at least consider solar energy, Wear said. Solar panels, once expensive and clunky, are significantly cheaper and easier to install, according to Wear.

"They've gotten cheaper, and the market is much more competitive, he said. "That's definitely one reason. Secondly, with the tax credits in place, I think it's made financial sense for a lot of people who couldn't have done it otherwise."

Regardless of the precise reason, Rowan has issued dozens of solar permits in the previous three years, according to county records. Building Inspections Director Thomas O'Kelley said solar panel building permits have grown significantly in number during the previous couple

years.

Perhaps the most visible solar installations are large arrays on the side of roadways. Often, they're placed in rural areas. Some installations are set up on unused farmland. In other instances, the location is simply an empty field. Regardless, solar industry advocates and property owners say the installations leave the earth unharmed for whatever the next use might be. Three examples of solar farms in Rowan County include one just northeast of Gold Hill, another west of Rockwell on N.C. 152 and a third on Mooresville Road near Salisbury. All three pump large amounts of solar energy onto the grid when the sun is shining. When, it's cloudy the panels still generate electricity, but at a less-thanoptimal rate.

Solar farms pump energy onto the grid. As a result, the owners receive a regular paycheck from the power company — usually Duke Energy. It's only slightly similar to users such as Catawba or Morse Measurements.

Both pump electricity onto the











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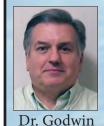
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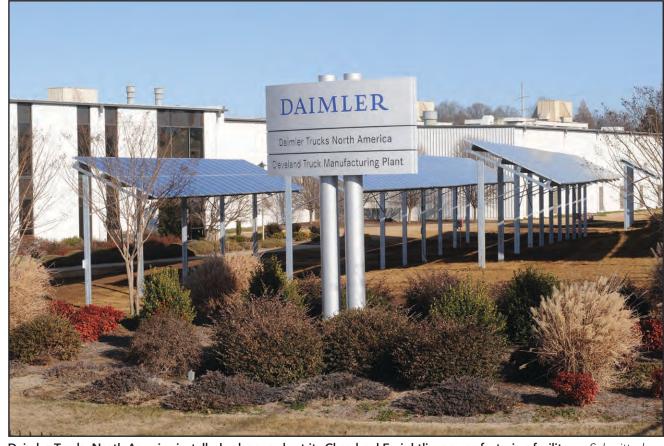
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2907 S. Main Street, Salisbury | www.SalisburyChiropractic.net 30 Years of Experience! **704-633-9335** grid. Morse and Catawba don't directly use energy they generate. They contribute to the overall electrical availability on the grid and receive a check or rebate after generating more electricity than used.

The solar energy boom, however, may be coming to an end.

Rowan's solar farms and various rooftop installations seem commonplace now, but a Duke University study released this year name solar-friendly policies, set to expire at the end of the year, as the chief reason for the boom. North Carolina ranks fourth nationwide for installed solar capacity. The state is also second behind California in large, utility-scale projects. The solar industry represents \$2 billion of direct investment into North Carolina, according to the report.

In the state's budget, lawmakers decided to let the state tax credits expire, and the federal credit will decrease from 30 percent to 10 percent on Dec. 31. Lawmakers say the solar energy has now become inde-



Daimler Trucks North America installed solar panels at its Cleveland Freightliner manufacturing facility. — Submitted photo.

pendent, and can function without the credits.

As long as a solar project starts before the end of 2015, homeowners

and businesses can still take advantage of that 35 percent credit.













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