ITT celebrates opening of $1M natural gas test facility in Oconee

BY CARLOS GALARZA-VEVE
THE JOURNAL

WESTMINSTER — The uture is now at the ITT Corp. plant where some 00 employees stay busy naking critical compo-ents for end uses rang-ng from automation to erospace that will drive ndustry, technology and he economy well into omorrow land.

Company leaders at the ocal plant, located at 105 Commerce Way outside Westminster, put out the welcome mat Thursday as hey offered guests guided tours of its facilities, including its latest addition — a natural gas test facility that ITT invested more than $1 million to build and equip.

Corporate executives flew down to join in a ribbon-cutting ceremony in front of the NG test plant. Oconee County officials participated, including county council chairman Paul Cain, who applauded the company's investment and commitment to the local economy.

"I just want to thank ITT ... and everybody that's invested dollars in Oconee County," Cain said. "It's amazing the technology that's being created here and developed, and the jobs you've all brought here. We're just very thankful and can't thank you enough. We're certainly excited to see the new products to come out of this facility."

ITT officials invited contractor Joel Davis of J Davis Construction to stand with them during the ribbon cutting. Davis said he completed the building that houses the

SEE ITT, PAGE A3



REX BROWN | THE JOURNAL

Oconee County Council chairman Paul Cain and Oconee Economic Alliance executive director Richard Blackwell joined with contractor Joel Davis and ITT officials to cut a ribbon Thursday signaling the opening of the local plant's latest addition — a natural gas test facility.

natural gas plant about two months ago.

Oconee Economic Alliance executive director Richard Blackwell and members of his team, as well as Oconee County administrator Scott Moulder and his staff, joined in the festivities that included a luncheon.

"There's room for this company to grow here," Blackwell told The Journal, pointing at the new natural gas test plant as a catalyst for future growth.

Shannon Winkler, product manager at the Oconee facility, said ITT in Oconee generates about $20 million for the company annually. He's projecting growth of about 20 percent this year.

ITT entered into an inducement agreement with Oconee County last year in which the company promised to invest a minimum of $2.5 million over a five-year period ending Dec. 31, 2019.

ITT morphed from the conglomerate that was International Telephone & Telegraph, which according to ITT's website "had a small beginning as the Puerto Rico Telephone Company" almost 100 years ago.

Rob Hartman, the site leader at the local ITT facility, told guests that the company has come a long way from its humble beginnings in 1920.

"You may not know much about the company," Hartman said. "Today we're an engineering and manufacturing company, and we make critical products for industries where failure of the product is not an option. At this facility, we make the regulators for natural gas vehicles, (and) we make a lot of industrial actuators, which are used on high-end applications where they need to last for many, many years."

Through the years, ITT became a diversified conglomerate that bought and owned many businesses, including a major hotel chain, Hartford Insurance and Avis Rental. However, over the past 20 years, the company's niche has become engineering and manufacturing, according to Hartman.

Globally, the company employs more than 9,000 people, generates sales of almost $3 billion and is publicly traded.

"It's a great company, a great brand and I think we have a bright future ahead," Hartman said.

carlos@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6684
Follow on Twitter @cgvnewsupstate