Workforce development puts Oconee on top

Whenever a community is in a period of growth, there's a lot of talk about the economic support system, infrastructure and sustainability. In reality, none of that is possible without the right people — in this case, a well-prepared, highly engaged workforce. Identifying and developing quality employees are the first steps in any growth process, which is why investing in workforce development is crucial to any growing community.

Lucky for us, Oconee County has a variety of workforce development resources at our fingertips, providing the county yet another critical advantage in attracting new businesses and industries to our area. Through the School District of Oconee County and the Hamilton Career Center, we've already started investing in our workforce early.



OCONEE ON THE MOVE

RICHARD BLACKWELL

At Hamilton Career Center, high school students can take classes in specific technical or trade areas, such as medical technology or welding, and earn college credit for doing so. Programs like this ensure that our workforce is prepared even before they are on the job, and it's these types of programs that we must continue to invest in if companies are going to invest in us.

But workforce development isn't just about starting early. As industry standards continue to change and technology continues to develop, we also need to strengthen the flip side of the coin, which is continuing education.

Again, back to the basic principle of good people as the first step in a prosperous economy, continual economic development simply cannot happen without continual workforce education. Through resources such as the career center, Clemson University's Center for Workforce development, the Anderson-Oconee-Pickens Showcase and Tri-County Technical College, our local industries can ensure that their employees are ahead of critical industry trends that will keep them successful for years to come. But it is only through working with partners like these that we can continue to promote success for all.

Strengthening our workforce is one of the reasons Oconee County has recently applied to become a Certified Work Ready Community. Becoming a CWRC will allow employees within our county to continue developing critical workplace skills through the opportunity to take various skills assessment tests in areas such as applied technology and business writing. Through taking these tests, participants are then certified with a National Career Readiness Certificate, which indicates to potential employers that our workforce possesses high amounts of in-demand skills.

Through efforts such as the CWRC, we demonstrate as a community that we are dedicated to ensuring the most prepared, effective workforce for any industry looking to hire.

It's clear that our location is primed for industry, our resources are ready to support investment, and our community offers an ideal lifestyle for new residents. Let's work together to make sure our people and their development remain our number one asset.

RICHARD K. Blackwell is the executive director of Oconee Economic Alliance, which is dedicated to improving the quality of life for citizens of Oconee County by encouraging a diversified economy that attracts industrial and commercial investment and fosters retention of existing business and industry. To learn more visit www.InvestOconeeSC.com.