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## **Moore Companies Adding New Jobs**

**BY JOHN KRAHNERT III: STAFF WRITER**

Even though rough seas may still be ahead for the economy, Moore County has received some good news from local businesses.

At Moore County Partners in Progress' sixth annual dinner at the Pinehurst Member's Club Wednesday night, Executive Director Ray Ogden said many of the county's niche businesses are doing well and are bringing more jobs to the area. He said that his firm and the entire community need to continue to work hard to keep those jobs here.

"We need to fight for every job we can find and fight to protect every job that we have," he said.

Moore County Partners is an economic development organization that helps recruit businesses and jobs to the area. Ogden has been executive director since 2003.

Ogden offered some positive news for the crowd, which included local business and political leaders. He went through a list of local companies that have held their ground so far during the recession, and some are bringing even more jobs to the area.

Ballistic Recovery Systems Inc., which operates a manufacturing facility in Pinebluff known as BRS Defense, has scored two major military contracts within the span of a month that could bring up to 100 new jobs to the southern end of the county.

One is a \$1.1 million contract to manufacture deceleration parachutes for the Air Force's fleet of Boeing B-52 Stratofortress strategic bombers that was announced last month. On March 12, the company announced that another \$4.1 million contract to provide 1,200 G-12 cargo parachutes to the Army was finalized, which will require another significant number of hirings.

Gullistan Carpets, one the country's largest industrial employers, has announced the consolidation of its Aberdeen plant. Because of the economy, a smaller plant in Lincolnton has been closed, which will bring up to 35 additional jobs to Aberdeen.

Another company with an Aberdeen plant, Kolcraft Enterprises, announced earlier this month that it would be closing its Chicago plant and consolidating operations in Aberdeen, saving 150 jobs here and bringing in an additional 25.

All of this comes at a time when the nation is mired in a deep recession and North Carolina's unemployment rate is the sixth highest in the country.

Charles Frock, CEO of FirstHealth of the Carolinas, delivered the keynote address for the dinner. He spoke about the importance of the role health care plays in the community. He said that good health care is one of the three things that make a community strong and vibrant, along with good education and good government.

"We're proud and pleased to be one of the pillars," he said.

Frock said reforms are needed to control the cost of health care in the United States, which is double the cost anywhere in the rest of the world. He said health care costs make up 16 percent of the U.S. gross-domestic product and about one seventh of the economy.

"We're paying twice as much and getting average results," he said. "Not a record we can really be proud of."

Looking ahead, Ogden said that he would be interested in any company that would be a good fit for the area, one that is clean and offers good jobs. But he said special emphasis would be placed on defense.

"Conflict may move around the world, but it's not going away," he said, adding that Moore County's varied work force and proximity to Fort Bragg make it an attractive location for such companies.

While the economy will continue to be a challenge in the coming months, Ogden still believes Moore County is in pretty good shape.

"The next year will probably be tough, but I think we're well-positioned," he said.

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