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North Carolina's Southeast celebrates another successful year in the region at annual meeting

CLINTON, N.C. – October 9, 2025 – North Carolina's Southeast, comprised of 20 counties in the state, celebrated a year of economic growth within the region at its annual meeting on Thursday night.

"In 2024-25, we continued to build onto a very solid foundation, said **Steve Yost, President of North Carolina's Southeast (NCSE)**. "N.C.'s Southeast opened the books on its first project 31 years ago, and since then we've helped bring **204 companies** to this region, along with nearly **\$4.8 billion** in announced investment and **20,490 new jobs**."

In fiscal year 2024-2025, the Southeast's efforts led to the creation of **1,383 new jobs** and **\$466 million invested** into the region through **11 company locations** across **seven industry sectors**. The Southeast and its partners also helped generate 240 leads, half of which were companies headquartered overseas and looking to establish a presence in the U.S.

"Collaborative Engagement with all the partners represented here tonight is the reason why," said Yost. "That strategic mantra remains at the heart of our vision. The work of our team aligns and syncs with the incredible network of public and private partners at the local, state and national levels. In regional economic development – or anything else for that matter --there's no substitute for strong leadership – and that's what truly sets N.C.'s Southeast apart.

During the event, attendees learned more about the region's success through a variety of presentations, including one from **Will Ruzic, Vice President of Provalus**. Provalus located in the region in 2023 and has experienced tremendous success in revitalizing a building in downtown Whiteville. Ruzic shared the many factors that led to Provalus's decision to establish a location in Columbus County, including the company's deeply held value of investing in rural areas to create sustainable IT careers for community members. Other key factors that drew Provalus to the region was the highly engaged workforce and community leadership engrained in Columbus County.

"There's a reason why we have three centers in North Carolina," said Ruzic. "We thank you for your support because we're not stopping at three."

Attendees, which included local economic developers, private investors, board members and other allies to the organization, also heard from **Newmark's Senior Managing Director of Global Strategy, John Longshore**. Longshore has worked in site selection for over a decade and shared his insight and opinions on what the region can expect to see in economic development in the near future. He says that the

region's connectivity through interstate, rail, and port access is setting the Southeast up for success as the region continues its growth. The organization's ongoing initiatives to continue developing available sites and buildings is further proof of the region's readiness for economic growth.

The meeting featured a surprise presentation of **The Order of the Long Leaf Pine**, one of North Carolina's highest honors, to **Gary Lanier**, who recently retired as the Director of Economic Development for Columbus County. This prestigious recognition celebrates Gary's outstanding service, leadership, and dedication to the people and communities in Columbus County and across southeastern North Carolina and for his recent service as President of the North Carolina Economic Development Association. **North Carolina Department of Commerce Assistant Secretary for Rural Development, Reginald Speight**, presented the award on behalf of **Secretary of Commerce Lee Lilley** and **Governor Josh Stein**.

Some attendees preceded the event by attending a tour of **Star Communications's new headquarters** in Clinton, newly built after its previous building dealt with flooding from hurricanes Matthew and Florence. Star Communications was the presenting sponsor for NCSE's annual meeting. Other event sponsors included Sampson County Economic Development, Sampson-Bladen Oil Company, ECS, Parker Poe, North Carolina Railroad Company, and North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives.

A public-private partnership headquartered in Elizabethtown, N.C., North Carolina's Southeast's mission is to provide strong economic development leadership in southeastern North Carolina through innovative marketing and collaborative regional initiatives that will support the creation of new jobs, generate capital investment and secure new business locations. Member counties include Anson, Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, Craven, Cumberland, Duplin, Hoke, Jones, Lenoir, Montgomery, Moore, New Hanover, Onslow, Pender, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson, Scotland and Wayne. For additional information, visit www.ncse.org