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Dear Friend,

In this newsletter, learn about businesses and organizations in the AdvantageWest region that will become more energy efficient, thanks to winning nearly \$750,000 in funding. Plus: Great training and networking opportunities are coming up, as well as opportunities for entrepreneurs seeking venture capital. Read on!

## Nearly \$740K comes to AdvantageWest region to fund energy efficiency and renewable energy projects

Gov. Bev Perdue recently announced the recipients of federal Recovery Act funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, of which a large portion – \$739,756 – is coming to the AdvantageWest region.

*“Main Street” energy project funding recipients:*

- **Morganton (Burke Co.): \$101,995** for energy efficiency upgrades involving two condo-units and eight businesses belonging to five properties in the Main Street district. Properties are incorporating energy upgrades including insulation, heating and air conditioning units, hot water systems, lighting, appliances, windows, toilets, general weatherization, awnings and roofs.
- **Spruce Pine (Mitchell Co.): \$66,938** for the installation of a solar photovoltaic system to be located on the roof of a vacant service station in downtown Spruce Pine. The solar system will produce a 12.3 percent energy cost reduction in the first year of operation for Craftsmen Inc./The Calafate Group. The energy generated from the solar system will be used to partially offset the costs associated with operating drying kilns which are used in the manufacturing process to dry, sterilize, and convert large sections of tree bark into the company’s “Bark House” brand exterior shingles. Funding will also assist in energy efficiency upgrades of three kilns. In total, the project represents a 52.3 percent reduction in energy use by the manufacturer.
- **Hendersonville (Henderson Co.): \$52,200** for energy efficiency upgrades in three Main Street businesses as well as a street-lighting

retrofit. Upgrades include heating and air conditioning equipment retrofits, insulation, solar hot water installation, lighting retrofits and occupancy sensor controls. The changes will result in an overall 40 percent reduction in electricity use by the business owners. The street lighting retrofit includes the replacement of 32 light fixtures on Main Street with LED light fixtures for a savings to the town of \$11,500 annually.

***Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program recipients:***

- **Valdese (Burke Co.): \$200,000** to replace one pump and one variable frequency drive in Lake Rhodhiss Wastewater Treatment Facility's influent pump station and replace three fixed mechanical aerators with a smaller, more efficient aeration system.
- **Asheville (Buncombe Co.): \$200,000** to Buncombe Co. Schools to continue a lighting retrofit program by replacing 17,720 lighting fixtures with high-efficiency fixtures in 11 school buildings.
- **Morganton (Burke Co.): \$118,622** for five projects: Install updated heating and air conditioning controls in several buildings to provide greater efficiency; upgrade the heating and cooling management system in Morganton's Municipal Auditorium; install occupancy sensors in bathrooms and offices in multiple buildings; retrofit for more efficient lighting in several locations; and insulate Community House.

*Learn more about:*

*The "Main Street" energy projects [here](#).*

*The Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program [here](#).*

***More grant funds come to the region***

In addition to the grant funds described above, there have been more awards recently made in the AdvantageWest region. The Town of Hudson (Caldwell Co.) recently received \$250,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds under the Small Business Entrepreneurial Assistance (SBEA) program from the Division of Community Assistance. The SBEA program is part of an ongoing statewide effort to assist small businesses and encourage place-based economic development. Learn more about the SBEA program via [email](#) from Valerie Moore, the Division of Community Assistant Community Development Financial Consultant, or by calling 919.733.2850.

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## **Learn how farms can increase jobs, tourism and tax revenue**

***Deadline to register for upcoming workshop is Feb. 3***

An upcoming workshop promises to help attendees learn why and how connecting with farms can help bring jobs, tourists, and tax revenue to WNC. Targeting economic development and tourism development authorities, the event will held the 10am to 3pm Feb. 10 at [The Market Place](#) restaurant in downtown Asheville.

The workshop is organized by [Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project](#) (ASAP), a regional leader in the promotion of farms that is striving to work with and support local governments and others interested in the region's development, says Peter Marks of ASAP. "Farms create jobs, increase our communities' tax revenue, attract visitors, and can help keep some of the \$370 billion tourists spend on food and drink in our local economies."

The workshop will discuss:

- Promoting the farm-to-table experience, a leading travel and culinary trend
- Agricultural economic development as a job creation strategy
- Farm-friendly land use planning
- How to apply to ASAP for modest matching funds for a farm promotion or economic development project
- Ideas and successes from around the region

Cost of the workshop is \$25, which includes lunch by The Market Place and paid parking. The event is limited to 50 participants, and registration is due by Feb. 3. To register, call 828.236.1282, [email Marks](#), or learn more [here](#).

### ***More news from ASAP***

ASAP is producing a special High Country edition of the farm-to-business directory, [Mixing Bowl](#). Farmers and food service professionals offering and seeking local, wholesale, farm products are encouraged to register [here](#) (same process as submitting information for ASAP's Local Food Guide). For more information, contact Ashe County-based project coordinator [Hollis Wild](#).

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## **Blue Ridge Community College launches alternative technologies automotive training program**

***Next class starts Feb. 9***

[Blue Ridge Community College](#) in Henderson Co. recently became one of 40 institutions across the US to become a National Training Center member of the National Alternative Fuels Training Consortium, the only nationwide alternative fuel vehicle (AFV) and advanced technology vehicle training organization in the country.

To launch the program, BRCC is offering *Introduction to Alternative Fuel Vehicles*, a short course geared for current automotive technicians who want to expand their skills in alternative fuels. The next class runs Feb. 9-18, from 6 to 9pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, at BRCC's Transylvania Center in Brevard. Topics include the exploration of alternative fuels, including compressed natural gas, propane, ethanol, biodiesel, hydrogen, electric, hybrid and fuel cell technologies.

Registration is \$65. For information about the class and other AFV

training at BRCC, contact Chris English at 828.694.1835 or Matt Rieger at 828.694.1686.

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## Upcoming events cover marketing for farmers and food businesses

*Registration underway for Feb. 27 conference*

Two upcoming opportunities will provide training and networking for farmers and food entrepreneurs who want to grow their business:

- **Marketing Opportunities for Farmers**

*Feb. 27, 8 a.m. – 5:15 p.m.*

*Warren Wilson College – Swannanoa*

*Sponsor: Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)*

*Cost: Before Feb. 1: \$30 per person, or \$45 per two farm partners*

Farmers who get to know the needs of local customers and buyers can thrive, given the right business and marketing skills, which this conference will help provide. Potential buyers of locally grown goods can also attend the lunch, at no charge, for networking only. **Space is limited and early registration is encouraged.** For more information or to register, go [here](#) or call 828.236.1282.

- **Food Marketing in the Real World**

*April 20, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.*

*WNC Agricultural Center– Fletcher*

*Sponsors: NC Dept of Agriculture & Consumer Services and Blue Ridge Food Ventures*

*Cost: \$30, includes lunch, snack and materials*

This training and networking opportunity for food entrepreneurs provides an overview on how to expand a food business and reach new markets. **Space is limited to 40 participants and early registration is encouraged.** More information: [Annette Dunlap](#) or 919.733.7887 ext. 3111.

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## Wind energy association to provide overview of wind industry supply chain

*Register by Feb. 24 for significant savings*

With the growing demand for wind energy in the US, the American Wind Energy Association is bringing its successful supply chain program to North Carolina. This is an opportunity for regional manufacturers interested in wind energy supply chain component markets, as well as economic developers, to discover how increasing domestic manufacturing of wind turbines and their components can grow businesses, staff and profits.

The Wind Power Supply Chain Workshop, held March 17 at The Sheraton Greensboro Hotel at Four Seasons in Greensboro, will provide

attendees with a unique opportunity to interact with representatives from a diverse range of industries and hear firsthand the wind energy industry's needs, challenges, and opportunities for growth. Topics include:

- An overview of the wind industry supply chain
- How to enter the wind industry – tips, tools and resources
- Hear from some of the major wind turbine manufacturers in the world

For those new to the wind industry, a pre-conference seminar on March 16 will provide an opportunity to get up to speed, including; an overview and status of the wind industry, anatomy of a turbine, and how the wind energy industry supply chain works.

*Learn more [here.](#)*

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## **Upcoming funding and networking events for entrepreneurs include Venture Conference and Carolina Connect**

Entrepreneurs and investors, get ready for two excellent opportunities.

CED (formerly the Council for Entrepreneurial Development) is seeking Southeast companies that are creating breakthrough technologies in the information technology, life sciences and clean technology sectors to present at its 27th annual Venture conference on April 20-22 in Pinehurst, NC. **The deadline to apply is Feb. 1. Learn more [here.](#)**

### ***Carolina Connect coming soon***

Closer to home, plans are well underway for the Spring 2010 edition of the **Carolina Connect Conference**, sponsored by BREC (Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council). Entrepreneurs and investors from across the Southeast will have the chance to network with and learn from industry leaders at the event, now in its seventh year.

Previously held in the fall and now tentatively scheduled for April, the daylong conference will feature educational and professional development opportunities as well as access to business experts. Speakers at past Carolina Connect conferences have included such luminaries as Guy Kawasaki, columnist for *Entrepreneur Magazine* and author of nine books including *Reality Check* and *The Art of the Start*; Dan Heath, co-author of the bestseller, *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*; and technology entrepreneur Ryan Allis, founder and CEO of iContact.

Watch for more information, coming soon, or join the Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council [Facebook](#) page for updates.

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## **McDowell County manufacturer recognized**

## for environmental practices

Industrial Timber & Lumber Company, an Ohio-based manufacturer and producer of hardwood lumber with a kiln drying facility in Marion, has won the 2009 Forest Stewardship Award by the National Hardwood Lumber Association. The award is given to NHLA members who exemplify excellence in five areas of forest stewardship: public education, political involvement, promotion to private forestland owners, land management practices and mill/business activities. ITL is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an international nonprofit, multi-stakeholder organization established in 1993 to promote responsible management of the world's forests.

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## Construction continues around AdvantageWest offices

An improvement project by the adjacent Asheville Regional Airport is continuing to impact visitors to the AdvantageWest offices at 134 Wright Brothers Way in Fletcher. The construction involves the realignment and improvement of Wright Brothers Way from our building to Lindbergh Lane, which includes relocated utilities, a center landscaped median, new signage, landscaping, street lighting and pedestrian sidewalks. There will also be some upgrades to our building that include the installation of new carpeting. These improvements are part of a number of construction projects currently underway by the airport.

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## Rockslide update

The NC Department of Transportation reports that crews are now working around the clock to clear the rockslide on I-40 near the Tennessee border. Current estimates indicate the Interstate could be fully reopened sometime in March depending on weather conditions between now and then.

*Learn the latest news on the rockslide [here](#).*

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## Mark your calendar

**Jan 26, 5:30-7:30pm: BREC Forum focusing on 2010 economic outlook.** Entrepreneurs and other business professionals are invited to the next Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council forum, featuring a look at the economic environment in 2010 and ways to capitalize on the opportunities it will bring. *Location: Renaissance Asheville Hotel, 31 Woodfin St., Asheville. [More information and to register.](#)*

**Feb. 2: Conferences focusing on growth and opportunity.** Two free regional conferences, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon, are designed to assist local professionals in the construction/landscape,

design (architect, landscape architects, interior designers, etc.) and real estate industry in positioning their business for growth in 2010. Co-sponsored by AdvantageWest. *Location: Blue Ridge Community College (Blue Ridge Conference Hall), Flat Rock.* [More information.](#)

**Feb. 5: Deadline to register for Pickle School.** This FDA-required course for food manufacturers making an acidified food product will be held Feb. 10-12, offered by NCSU's Dept. of Food, Bioprocessing & Nutrition Sciences in partnership with Blue Ridge Food Ventures. Registration questions: [Lisa Gordon](#) or 919.515.2956. Technical questions: [Fletcher Arritt](#) or 919.513.0176. *Location: A-B Tech Enka Campus (Haynes Bldg.), Asheville.* [More information.](#)

**Feb. 8-9: "Creativity iNC" Emerging Issues Forum.** The 25th annual event organized by the Institute for Emerging Issues will focus on how NC can nurture its creative assets to drive economic growth and social advancements. Speakers include Daniel Pink, a best-selling author and expert on innovation and competition, and Robin Cape, former Asheville City Council member. *Location: Raleigh Convention Center.* [More information.](#)

**Feb. 17: Deadline to register for "Recipe for Success – Price Your Product Right"** food industry seminar, taking place Feb. 24, 6-9pm. *Location: A-B Tech Enka Campus (Small Business Ctr.), Asheville.* [Register for course # SEF-7902-700 here.](#)

**Feb. 18, 2 pm: AdvantageWest Board of Directors meeting.** The 19-member Board of Directors will hold its regular bimonthly meeting on the third Thursday of the month as usual. Meetings are open to the public. *Due to construction around the AdvantageWest offices, the meeting may be relocated.* *Information: 828.687.7234.*

**March 1: Deadline for all NC employers to file NC-3.** This reminder from the NC Dept of Revenue: All employers in NC must file Form NC-3, the annual state withholding reconciliation for 2009 by March 1. Employers with more than 250 employees are required to file their reconciliations on CDs. Smaller employers can save time and trouble by filing their annual withholding reconciliation on CDs as well. [More information.](#)

**March 16: Deadline to register for "Developing a New Food Business" seminar.** Sponsored by NCSU Cooperative Extension and conducted by the Dept. of Agricultural & Resource Economics, intensive workshop takes place 8am-5pm, March 30-31. Cost is \$95; space is limited. To register, make check payable to Blue Ridge Food Ventures and send to: Cathy Hohenstein, NC Cooperative Extension, 94 Coxe Ave. Asheville, NC 28801. *Location: A-B Tech Enka Campus (Haynes Bldg.), Asheville.* *More information: [Cathy Hohenstein](#) or 828.255.5522.*

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## In the news

*Associated Press: North Carolina skiers revel in snow blast.* The

AdvantageWest region got national exposure in this article about winter sports in the WNC mountains, which specifically mentioned destinations in Avery, Watauga, Haywood, Jackson, Madison and Buncombe counties. [Read the story here.](#)

**USA Today: Sugar Mountain named one of the country's "10 great places to cross-country ski or snowshoe for free."** More national exposure of the Avery Co. resort, now celebrating its 40th season. [Read the story here.](#)

**Good Morning America: The holidays and WNC attractions.** Folks around the country got a glimpse at the holiday spirit in the AdvantageWest region at least twice during December. Early in the month, a GMA crew visited Biltmore to admire its holiday decorations. Then, on Christmas Eve, Grove Park Inn Resort & Spa showcased winners of its National Gingerbread House Competition. The grand prize winner was from Cleveland Co., just outside the AdvantageWest region, while the first place youth winner was from Henderson Co. **Watch the videos [here](#) and [here](#).**

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## Quotable

"Thanks so much for your attention, time, enthusiasm, ideas, advice and support...your 'energy' is lasting and much appreciated!"

*– Excerpt from a note written by a Blue Ridge Food Ventures client to Executive Director Mary Lou Surgi*

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## Got news?

We welcome your announcements about economic development activities within the 23-county region of Western North Carolina. Submit news and photos for possible inclusion to AdvantageWest newsletter editor Kathi Petersen at [kpetersen@awnc.org](mailto:kpetersen@awnc.org). AdvantageWest reserves the right to modify submissions to conform to editorial guidelines, space constraints, timeliness and other circumstances.

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**Stay tuned** for more economic development news from AdvantageWest.

[Questions, comments or observations about this newsletter?](#) [Have a regional event or update you'd like us to share?](#)

Visit our websites: [AdvantageWest Economic Development Group](#), [Blue Ridge Entrepreneurial Council](#) (BREC), [MountainSouth USA](#), and our strategic partners the [Blue Ridge National Heritage Area](#), the [Blue Ridge Angel Investors Network](#) and the [NC Department of Commerce](#).

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AdvantageWest Economic Development Group  
134 Wright Brothers Way  
Fletcher, NC 28732  
828.687.7234

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