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**Tom Johnson of Rutherford EDC named NC Economic Developer of the Year at NCEDA Annual Conference.**

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Congratulations to Thomas Johnson, CEcD, HLM, Executive Director of the Rutherford County Economic Development Corporation who has been named Economic Developer of the Year by the NC Economic Developers Association. The honor was announced at the 2011 NCEDA Annual Conference, held June 14-16 at the Grove Park Inn. Described as enthusiastic, motivated, optimistic, visionary, persevering and humble, Tom was cited most often for his work that ultimately resulted in Facebook selecting Forest City for its \$450 million data center, creating some 400 construction jobs and 45 permanent jobs. We join in applauding Tom for this prestigious award and are indeed fortunate to have him as a partner in economic development in the AdvantageWest region. Congratulations Tom!

[Read excerpts from NCEDA members who joined in nominating Tom for this honor HERE.](#)

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## Haywood Co natural products manufacturing company wins \$10,000 in business plan competition.

Haywood County entrepreneur Kara Errickson's big idea has won her big money - \$10,000 to be exact. Of 40 women entrepreneurs who entered AdvantageWest and *VERVE* magazine's *VERVE*-aciously BIG Idea Business Plan Competition, Kara's business that produces all-organic skin salve took the prize. Already efforts are paying off: Skin Food Topical Nourishment, made at the Natural Products Manufacturing Facility at Blue Ridge Food Ventures, will be available in Whole Foods and Earth Fare stores this summer.

"Mossin' Annie" Martin of Transylvania County took 2nd prize with her business, Mountain Moss Enterprises, winning business coaching from Mountain BizWorks. Kara, Annie and other finalists in the competition are featured in the June issue of *VERVE*, a monthly magazine targeting WNC women in the arts, business, fashion and design (Kara Errickson is featured on the cover). [Read the article about the competition HERE](#), including information on the panel of judges who selected this year's winners. Our thanks to *VERVE* and Mountain BizWorks for partnering with AdvantageWest on this effort to support women entrepreneurs across our 23 counties.

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## Important reminder from NC Certified Sites Program: Next submission deadline for 'Intent to Certify' is Aug 3; new criteria in effect Jan 1.

Here's an important reminder from NC Commerce's Certified Sites Program: Your certified sites are valid **ONLY UNTIL DECEMBER 31** unless you have applied for and received certification under the new criteria developed in July 2009. Beginning Jan 1, 2012, the new criteria take effect.

To maintain any site as certified after this calendar year, the site must be reviewed and qualified under the new criteria. To initiate the certification process, the county must submit an "Intent to Certify" and follow steps in the guidelines. The certification process will take a minimum of two months to complete and the next submission deadline is Aug 3. [A copy of the most current guidelines is available HERE.](#) For

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questions regarding site status or the program guidelines, contact [Ellen Tai](#) in the Business and Industry Division at NC Commerce: 919.733.4978.

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## New jobs, expansions and grant money coming to WNC.

A number of job and grant funding announcements have been made recently in the AdvantageWest region.

\* **124 jobs in McDowell County:** RockTenn, a leading integrated manufacturer of corrugated and consumer packaging and recycling solutions, announced its intention to expand in Marion, with 124 new jobs and a total investment of almost \$30 million after five years. [Read the \*McDowell News\* article about the announcement HERE.](#)

\* **36 jobs in Buncombe County:** Advanced Manufacturing Solutions Inc, which specializes in manufacturing quality, precision-machined and fabricated parts, marked the grand opening of its operations in Candler, with an investment of \$1.1 million and the addition of 36 new jobs over the next three years. [Read the \*Asheville Citizen-Times\* article HERE.](#)

\* **12 jobs in Burke County:** Ice River Springs, a water bottling company, will expand its operations with an additional 100,000 square foot warehouse and the hiring of 12 new employees. Ice River Springs, headquartered in Canada, opened their first U.S. facility in Morganton in 2006. [Read the press release HERE.](#)

\* **\$2.4 million in funding from ARC:** Nineteen projects in the 23-county AdvantageWest region and six additional WNC counties have been recommended to receive more than \$2.4 million in funding from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). ARC helps create jobs and economic development opportunities in 29 counties throughout Western North Carolina. [Read the press release and project descriptions HERE.](#)

\* **40 jobs in McDowell County:** Janesville Acoustics, a leading supplier of acoustical and molded fiber products for the automotive industry, will expand their manufacturing facility in Old Fort, with 40 new jobs and a total investment of \$1.5 million during the next three years. [Read the press release HERE.](#)

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## You're Invited: Arboretum kicks off 25th Anniversary on July 1 (enjoy Blue Ridge Food Ventures goodies while you're there).

The North Carolina Arboretum celebrates its 25th Anniversary on July 1, 9am to 9pm, and you're invited to the party. The jam-packed day includes music in the gardens, children's activities, demonstrations, exhibits, a "doggie hike," a 5K time trial, geocaching and much more.

Plus: Here's your chance to sample and purchase artisanal foods produced by specialty food makers at Blue Ridge Food Ventures. Among the businesses present at the Blue Ridge Food Ventures Village Market will be: Beulah's Bavarian Pretzels, Dolci di Maria gluten-free goodies, Imladris Farms jams (pair that with Home Free Bagels), My Whoopie Pies, GalloLea Organics pizza kits, Ulimana raw, organic chocolates, and others. See you

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there!

[See a brochure about the NC Arboretum 25th Anniversary celebration HERE.](#)

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## Top tips for business success and words of wisdom from the trenches: A look back at another successful Carolina Connect.

"Passion is the most important ingredient for building your business." "Know your customers and what they want or you will fail." "Everybody has great ideas. It takes focus and tenacity to execute a market and be successful."

These represent just a sample of the concepts, ideas and tips offered by a stellar lineup of speakers at the recent Carolina Connect conference, Western North Carolina's signature event for connecting entrepreneurs and investors across the region. The eighth annual event, with well over 200 attendees, was produced by AdvantageWest in partnership with Mountain BizWorks. Our thanks to the following sponsors who helped make this year's event a huge success: Renaissance Asheville, The Center for Rapid Product Realization, Our Voice, SBTDC, Allison Development Group, *VERVE* magazine, Printville, MARC, Asheville Event Company, KP Communications, JB Media Group.

**Take a look back at Carolina Connect 2011:**

- [Top ideas and concepts shared by speakers and tweeted by attendees HERE.](#)
- [Asheville Citizen-Times article on advice from keynote speaker Peter Shankman HERE.](#)
- Facebook users: Enjoy a photo gallery on the [AdvantageWest Facebook Group](#) page. Click on "View Photos" to see an album or go [HERE](#).

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## Check out the AdvantageWest website for info on our new VP of Entrepreneurial Development & AdvantageGreen, plus press releases, photo galleries and an *LA Times* review of a new film made in WNC.

\* AdvantageWest's new Vice President of Entrepreneurial Development & AdvantageGreen: Matt Raker has been promoted to an expanded role following the resignation of former Sr VP of Entrepreneurial Development Pam Lewis. [Read more about Matt's background and experience in the press release HERE.](#)

\* AdvantageWest 2010 Annual Report: Learn more about how AdvantageWest made a difference in the 23-county region of Western North Carolina last year. [See our 2010 Annual Report HERE.](#)

\* US Senator Richard Burr tours Blue Ridge Food Ventures: View a photo gallery of a recent visit by Sen. Burr to AdvantageWest's agribusiness incubator located on the Enka campus of AB Tech. [See a photo gallery HERE](#) and an [Asheville Citizen-Times article about the senator's visit HERE.](#)

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\* Blue Ridge Food Ventures client makes *New York Times*: BRFV specialty food maker Bamboo Ladies Bamboo Pickles recently got more national coverage when it was featured in the *New York Times*. The product was also recognized last fall as a recipient of a 2010 *Cooking Light* magazine national taste-test award in the artisanal foods category selected from among hundreds of products. [Read the article HERE](#) as well as other BRFV news.

\* **New Executive Director of the Western Office of NC Biotech Center:** Jonathon Lawrie, Ph.D., assistant professor at the Western Carolina University College of Business's Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, has joined the North Carolina Biotechnology Center as executive director of the Western Office. In his new post, Dr. Lawrie will oversee Biotech Center activities in WNC known not only for its scenic beauty but also for its vast forests and rich diversity of plant species, many with potential commercial value in medicines and nutritional supplements. [Read the press release HERE](#).

\* **State graduation rate climbs above national average:** Good news on the education front in North Carolina. The state's public high schools graduate students at a higher rate than the nation overall and showed the second highest improvement in the graduation rate since 1998 among all states, according to the *2011 Diplomas Count* report. [Read the press release HERE](#).

\* **Film made in WNC reviewed in *LA Times*:** Director Monte Hellman returns to features after a 21-year-absence with "Road to Nowhere," described by *LA Times* as a "stylish, shimmering neo-noir with a multi-layered narrative." [Read the review HERE](#).

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## Mark your calendar for these other upcoming events & opportunities.

\* **June 20:** Deadline for applications, USDA Rural Energy for America grants (up to \$100,000 is available) - Energy audits and renewable energy development assistance will allow agriculture producers and rural small businesses to become more energy efficient and use renewable technologies. Eligible entities include a unit of State, tribal, or local government; institutions of higher education; rural electric cooperatives; or a public power entity. Applications due June 20. [More info HERE](#).

\* **June 23-24, 8am-5pm:** Corporate Social Responsibility Practitioner (CSR) Workshop - *Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute*. CCCTI's Institute for Sustainable Technology offers the opportunity to learn about the global nature of sustainable business practices and especially how to build value into the decision to "go green" to realize a return on sustainability (ROS). Limited scholarships available. [Learn more HERE](#).

\* **June 30, 6-8pm:** Workshop on Organic Certification for Produce and Food Processing, offered by Blue Ridge Food Ventures - *Small Business Center, AB Tech/Enka Campus*. Workshop will take participants, including vegetable growers, egg producers and specialty food-makers, through the requirements of all facets of organic certification. Cost: \$10. Space is limited; [pre-register HERE](#). More info: [Mary Lou Surgi](#) at 828.348-0128.

\* **July 1, 9am-9pm:** 25th Anniversary of The NC Arboretum, featuring the Blue Ridge Food Ventures Village Market (*see article elsewhere in this newsletter*).

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\* July 15-17: 48 Hour Film Project/Asheville - Filmmakers from the greater Asheville area will compete to see who can make the best short film in only 48 hours. The winning short will go up against films from around the world. Screenings of completed projects take place July 19-21. [Registration and details HERE](#).

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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 for consideration to the [newsletter editor](#). AdvantageWest reserves the right to modify submissions to conform to editorial guidelines, space constraints, timeliness and other circumstances.



*AdvantageWest is the regional economic development partnership serving the 23 westernmost counties of North Carolina. Chartered by the state General Assembly in 1994, AdvantageWest is a nonprofit, public-private partnership governed by a 21-member board of directors. Our program of work focuses on advanced manufacturing, entrepreneurial development, agribusiness, and the green economy. AdvantageWest also maintains the WNC Film Commission.*

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