

NORTHEAST ARKANSAS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

2nd Quarter 2023

We appreciate the support we receive from the City of Jonesboro and Craighead County for economic development. A summary of activity for the second quarter is provided below. Our diversified economy continues to flourish and advance. We welcome the new families and talent moving into our community. We're pleased to see our progress in the first half of the year and are excited to continue our momentum in the coming months.

Sincerely,
Al M. Heringer III, Chairman

INFRASTRUCTURE

AIRPORT IMPROVEMENTS

Construction is about to start on improvements at the Jonesboro Municipal Airport. For several years the airport has been working to secure funding for a runway strengthening project, which would allow larger aircraft to land in Jonesboro. More than 45 tons of asphalt will be needed to strengthen the 6,400-foot runway and taxiway. Many thanks go to our federal delegation – Senators John Boozman and Tom Cotton, along with Congressman Rick Crawford, for the important role they played helping secure funding. Additional upcoming projects at the airport include lengthening the runway through a \$5 million grant and rebuilding the terminal building.

NORTHEAST ARKANSAS REGIONAL AIRPORT FEASIBILITY STUDY

Commissioned by the FAA and the Arkansas Aeronautics Commission, Garver Engineering is conducting a study to see whether a new or expanded regional airport should be built somewhere within a 19-county area in Northeast Arkansas. The area under consideration includes the Missouri-Arkansas border to the north, the Mississippi River to the east, Stone County to the west, and St. Francis County to the south. Socioeconomic factors being analyzed include population and income growth. Key industry needs and an analysis of general air service demand and other factors are also being studied. The East Arkansas Planning & Development District (EAPDD) has conducted a survey of residents in the region to gain insight on demand and usage and regional meetings were held. Over 9,000 surveys were received.

HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION UPDATE



The Transportation Committee of the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce hosted a “Transportation Update” meeting in May, with Highway Commissioner Alec Farmer and ARDOT District 10 Engineer Brad Smithee. Over 100 people were present to hear Commissioner Farmer and District Engineer Smithee give an overview of area highway projects. Several projects were mentioned, a few of which included:

The I-555 Reconstruction project, which goes from Highway 49 to Highway 91, is well underway. The \$38.1 million project has an estimated completion date of December 2023.



Construction on the Eastern Bypass has started. The Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive Extension will go from I-555 to Highway 49. The \$61.1 million project has an estimated completion date of May 2026.

Construction of the Airport Road railroad overpass is getting started. This is an \$18.69 million contract with an estimated completion date of December 2023.

Ease of transportation on quality roads is a key factor when companies are looking to locate a business. We appreciate the work Commissioner Farmer and the Highway Department do for our region.

MARKETING & BRANDING

DISTRICT EXPORT COUNCIL MEETING IN JONESBORO

The Arkansas District Export Council recently held their April quarterly meeting in Jonesboro. While in Jonesboro, the board met at the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce and was given a tour of the city by Mark Young, President of the Chamber.



WASHINGTON D.C. FLY-IN

In April, the Jonesboro Regional Chamber of Commerce made their annual trip to Washington D.C. to meet with our Congressional Delegation. Leaders from Jonesboro and Northeast Arkansas made the trip and community conversations were held with Senators Boozman and Cotton and Representative Rick Crawford. Topics of interest that were discussed included airport improvements, the Farm Bill, and highway infrastructure.

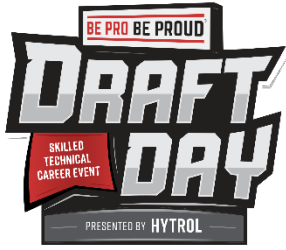


SHOWCASING OUR CITY AND COUNTY

Telling the story of Jonesboro is planned and intentional among our economic development partners. Throughout the second quarter, our partners participated in local, state, national, and global events that provided the opportunity to share information about the great city and county we live in. Our local **Leadership Jonesboro** class had a **class session on Industry** in the second quarter and toured some of our industries to see how they serve the world from Jonesboro. Arkansas State University welcomed **Dr. Calvin White** to Jonesboro as A-State's new **Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost**. Jonesboro Unlimited participated in a **"Meet the Consultants" event**, hosted by the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, in Chicago. Sharing Jonesboro with talented individuals and professionals all over the country promotes our region and stimulates future conversations.



TALENT



Nettleton High School was the location for this year's Be Pro Be Proud Draft Day. Over 100 Jonesboro area high school seniors participated in the event, which was held in April. Draft Day connects students with education and experience in skilled trades with employers looking to

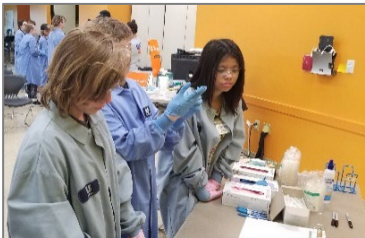
recruit young, talented workers. Participating students were guaranteed three interviews with regional companies. In addition to interviews, regional companies set up booths to visit and talk to students about future career opportunities.



Ashleigh Mann, shown at left, joined the Jonesboro Unlimited team this summer as an Intern. While working with JU, Ashleigh reviewed, strategized, and provided input on recruiting young talent to Jonesboro. Some of her ideas will be carried forward to a new Internship component planned for the My Jonesboro Jobs website.



TekStarz is Jonesboro's manufacturing camp for 7th and 8th graders. Held in June this year, the four-day camp gave 18 students an opportunity to learn about manufacturing and see how Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) connect with manufacturing and provide great career opportunities.



Throughout the week, 18 campers were hosted by ABB, Best Manufacturing, FMH Conveyors, Frito-Lay, Hytrol, Nabholz, Nice-Pak, Ritter Communications, TrinityRail, and Unilever. They also met with Arkansas State University and Arkansas State University-Newport. Each employer gave the students an inside look at the careers available to them and provided hands-on activities to illustrate those opportunities. The Be Pro Be Proud Mobile Workshop topped off the week at the Parents' Night reception, hosted by Hytrol.

LEADERSHIP SKILLS TRAINING FOR BANKERS

The Delta Center for Economic Development, in partnership with Jonesboro Unlimited, has developed a curriculum for leadership skills training for professionals in the financial sector of our economy. The Leadership Sessions will start this fall. Topics include Contemporary Issues in Banking, Management Issues in Banking, Business Communication for Banking, and Sales and Marketing for Banking.

GET TO KNOW JONESBORO.....FOR SUMMER INTERNS

Many of our companies host interns from all over the country during the summer months. As part of Jonesboro Unlimited's Workforce Development strategy, a Get to Know Jonesboro day was planned for summer interns. This gives the interns an opportunity to get to know their peers working with other companies and to learn more about Jonesboro and why they might want to stay or come back to Jonesboro after graduating. Jonesboro Unlimited spent a day with 24 interns this summer, working with FMH Conveyors, Frito-Lay, Hytrol, and Wadell, Cole & Jones. Activities throughout the day included coffee at Shadrachs, Lost Pizza, Crowley's Ridge Nature Center, Craighead Forest Park, Hijinx, and packing meals at the Food Bank. Many times, interns are hired after graduation by the companies they intern for. This program helps them make connections and feel more at home in JONESBORO.



BUSINESS GROWTH & INNOVATION

NORTHEAST ARKANSAS RICE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER

GROUNDBREAKING

We all know that rice production is a vital component of the agricultural economy of our region. The NEA Rice Research and Extension Center, located in Poinsett County, held a groundbreaking for a new facility that will be located on 600 acres, where they have been doing research since 2021. They provide critical research and outreach support for the growers in our region. The new \$18.5 million facility will also feature an educational program that helps grade-school age children learn about rice production and its importance to the region.



There have been over 79,000 page visits on the My Jonesboro Jobs website since the launch of its newly redesigned website last September and there are now 34 companies participating on the site. Plans are being made to add an Internship component to the site to connect companies and student interns. If you are a company looking for employees or interns consider joining My Jonesboro Jobs!

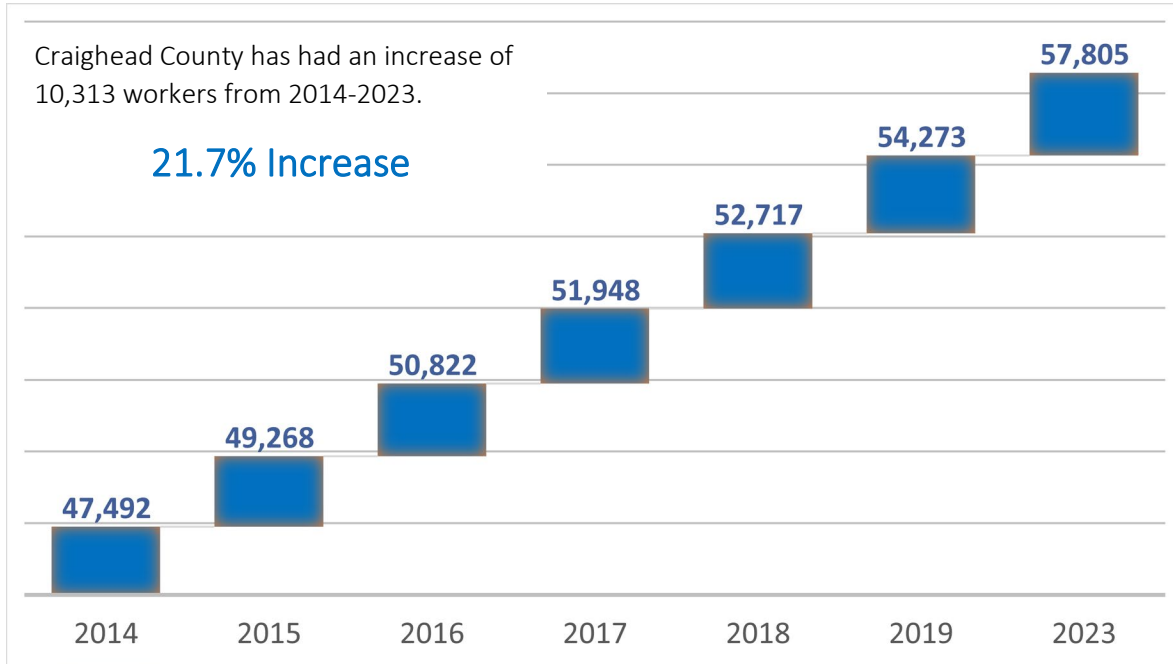
CONNECTING WITH OUR EXISTING INDUSTRIES

In the second quarter group events were hosted by our economic development partners to connect our existing industries and provide opportunities for them to network and share ideas. A HR Roundtable was held with area human resource managers and the Northeast Arkansas Existing Industries Association met for their annual golf outing in May.

BY THE NUMBERS

In the second quarter Jonesboro had seven Inquiries, nine Business Retention and Expansion activities, and five market research requests.

Number of Workers Employed in Craighead County



Source: Arkansas Department of Workforce Services, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, August 7, 2023.

Unemployment in Craighead County



As the number of jobs grow in Craighead County, you'll see that the number of our unemployed has gone down. From an unemployment rate of 5.5% in 2014, the current unemployment rate as of June 2023 was 2.5%