

# Prospects bring signs of hope

## EDC says more than 3,000 jobs heading our way

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### NEWTON

In a time when most people are talking economic doom and gloom, Scott Millar brought some good news to the Catawba County Board of Commissioners.

"2008 was a pretty good year for job announcements," he said during a Monday board of commissioners' meeting.

Millar was referring to the number of announcements of job creations or investments in the county happening this year.

"It's coming at a good time because it's coming at a challenging time for local and national economies," said Millar, the president of the Catawba County Economic and Development Corp.

Millar said jobs coming in through Williams-Sonoma, Convergys, Turbotec Products, Covation LLC, Fiber-Line and FedEx Ground, possibly resulting in more than 1,400 new jobs in the county in 2009 and more than 3,000 by 2012.

On the downside, he said the loss of 1,000 jobs in 2008 and expected in the next five years.

"But I don't think that number quantifies the number of people who will be affected in our region," he said.

He also added a word of warning.

"During times like this, the losses come quickly and the build up occurs over a period of time," he said.

He traced the recent economic retainments to a 2000 workshop with Hickory and Catawba County in which officials decided to begin to look into recruiting nonmanufacturing businesses.

County Commissioner Glenn Barger asked Millar if industry and business representatives mentioned the



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Target will open a distribution center on N.C. 10 in Newton this year. The company expects to employ hundreds at the site.

Higher Education Center of Catawba Valley Community College as incentive to locate to the county.

"Clearly the best investment is in your people programs, namely the Higher Education Center," Millar said. "Most clients see that as another part of your arsenal, seeing what you training capabilities are."

Barger said he had heard of cuts to the budget allotments to the center and thought that move would be a negative for the area and local economy.

"It would be disastrous if we lost that funding and that center," Barger said.

Millar said the new year will bring a new focus on going green or renewable energy. In researching the possibilities, Millar's staff discovered a local leverage point.

Hickory is the home to Diversified Composites, a company that makes windmill blades. Millar said he thinks the company can be used as a selling point for renewable energy projects.

Commission Chairwoman Kitty Barnes said her concern was for the people who will be affected by the predicted 1,700 annual job losses in the Uni-four area in the next 10 years.

"What do you tell that person who loses his job how to get redirected," Barnes said.

### EXPECTED JOBS

- Target Corp. — 450 in 2009, contracted for 580 by 2012
- Williams-Sonoma — 116 in 2008; an additional 147 in 2009; and 207 by 2012
- Convergys — 300 in 2009; and additional 125 by 2012
- Turbotec Products — 16 in 2008; an additional 14 in 2009
- Covation LLC — 544 in 2009; and additional 369 by 2012
- Fiber-Line — 10 in 2009
- FedEx Ground — 60 in 2009

Total — 706 in 2009; 1,406 in 2009; 3,074 by 2012

"It's hard to communicate to the public what are the next steps."

Barger predicted the answer would come in changes to the method of teaching school.

"In my opinion, we'll see a renaissance like happened after the Great Depression and some of those changes will position us to do things in a more efficient manner.

In addition to the announced expected jobs, Millar said he is in the talking stage with two data centers, a manufacturer and one industry expansion.

He said he and his staff are in the analysis stage, deter-

### ANNOUNCED JOB LOSSES

#### 2008

- Delta Apparel — 62 (March)
- Pembroke Chair — 85 (February)
- Bradington-Young — 23 (November)
- Clayton-Marcus — 232 (December)
- Corning Cable System — 300 worldwide

#### 2009

- Getrag — 141
- North Safety Production (Westinghouse) — 66
- Hickory Chair — 100
- Others: Lane, Bassett, Jackson Lea — 121

• Numbers compliments of CCEDC and represent Catawba County only, and taken from Employment Security Commission. Companies are only forced to announce to ESC if laying off more than 45 employees.

mining what can be done to increase successful recruiting.

"We're analyzing what are our sites and how can we compete, what can we offer," he said.