



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Georgetown County saw bright spots in midst of gloomy economy this year

GEORGETOWN COUNTY —The “fiscal cliff” still looms and the economy has a long way to go toward recovery, but there were some significant bright spots for Georgetown County over the last 12 months.

Since December 2011, three companies in the county announced expansions, bringing a total investment of \$29.2 million and the promise of 137 jobs. At least 88 of those jobs have already materialized and the other 49 are on the way in the next few months, thanks to an expansion of Agru America Inc.’s Georgetown County production facility, which was announced earlier this month. The geosynthetics company plans to add 40,000 square feet to the facility, with a 130,000-square-foot asphalt storage yard to accommodate new production equipment. The expansion involves a \$19.2 million investment.

“Considering the dire economic conditions of the nation during the past few years, it is encouraging to see this indication of growth as evidenced by these expansions,” said Wayne Gregory, economic development director for Georgetown County.

The county has the third highest per capita income in the state, following Beaufort and Charleston, according to figures from the S.C. Department of Revenue. The figure for Georgetown County – \$38,403 – is slightly up from years past.

“That’s always a good sign,” Gregory said. “To me it’s indicative of the fact that the jobs we are creating in Georgetown County are good, high-paying jobs and that the quality of life here continues to improve. That being said, do we still have unemployed people? Yes, and one unemployed person is too many, but we’re trying real hard to get to where we need to be: A point where everyone who wants a job has a job, and bright young students who grow up here can find a job in their field without having to leave the county.”

The county’s unemployment rate was 8.1 percent in November, the most recent reporting period.

In addition to Agru America’s expansion, Mercom Corporation and SafeRack LLC also expanded this year. Mercom, a provider of network technology services, announced in August that it would expand its operations in the Pawleys Island area. The expansion included a \$1 million investment and generated 30 new jobs. SafeRack, a maker of loading racks, announced

in December of last year that it would add production capabilities to its plant at the county's industrial park outside Andrews. The move came with an investment of more than \$9 million and created 58 new jobs.

All three companies said their expansions were necessitated by increased demand for what they offer. Each also spoke highly of the atmosphere for businesses in Georgetown County. The county offers an excellent business environment and a strong workforce, said Larry Mercado, Mercom's vice president and chief operating officer. Robert Johnson, president of Agru America, called the county a perfect fit for his business and remarked on the support he has received from state and local businesses.

Georgetown County Economic Development does everything it can to promote the success and growth of existing businesses, as well as encourage new businesses to locate here, Gregory said. That includes advocating for crucial infrastructure improvements, such as dredging of the Georgetown port and widening of Highway 521. The county also continues to market important resources it offers to businesses, including its airport facilities and industrial park.

In its economic development efforts, the county works closely with partners including the state Department of Commerce, the North Eastern Strategic Alliance, Santee Cooper and Santee Electric Cooperative.

Several marketing trips are scheduled for the coming year, and the outlook for 2013 is another a bright one for Georgetown County, according to Gregory.

"We've got several quality projects we're working on and we expect 2013 to be a great year for us," Gregory said.

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