



*"It has been  
most  
gratifying to  
see recently  
trained  
workers  
start a new  
career. . ."*

*Tim Rhodes*

Small companies often require the same level of skilled worker as their bigger cousins and yet many cannot find enough people in the competitive labor market of today. In addition, the cost of educating new or existing employees to a competitive level can be prohibitive. These companies are generators of employment and it's extremely important that they be able to attract and retain quality workers. It must be repeated, competitive companies, no matter where they are located, are the companies that will survive into the next century. Thriving organizations create jobs and therefore economic development.

Rising to the need for educating those workers is the NC Community College System with its mandate to aid economic development in the state. Currently, there is a joint effort between the individual Community colleges in eastern North Carolina and the community college system department of economic development to work in partnership with new and expanding industries in relation to their need to train employees and enhance the skill levels as a result. Representatives from the community colleges and the state office are, by policy, able to work with most manufacturing companies that are adding twelve or more production employees and agree that they are to be placed in full-time positions within the organization. As such, the local business and industry representative from the college will

along with the regional manager of economic development from the community college system. will meet with a prospective company and determine the training needs for the newly hired staff. That training plan will be approved both by the local college and at the state level. At that point, the regional manager will authorize funding for the training from a budget specified for this purpose by the NC General Assembly.

As an example, Gerald Barfield, Director of Business and Industry Services for Lenoir Community College in Kinston, NC recently had the opportunity to aid a new company moving into Lenoir County. This company is a subsidiary of a specialty food processor and had the need to hire workers that possessed technical skills not readily available in the Kinston area. Therefore, Mr. Barfield contacted Tim Rhodes, Regional Manager of Economic Development services and jointly they determined that specific training would be required for new workers. The training needs could not be met exclusively through the community college, therefore, an expert in the field of food preparation was hired to train the staff as an adjunct to the training offered by the college. As a result of the services offered by the community college and the funding made available from the state, this company was able to hire local people and offer them permanent employment in a new industry that might otherwise not have located in the region. This scenario is typical of the types of help that community colleges throughout the eastern part of NC are able to offer companies that are searching for a home. Many of these firms would not consider locating in this part of the state without the incentive of help in training their adult workers.