

Notes from the President

Summer Tour of Georgia Day 3

06/18/2015

Ringgold, Chickamauga, Dalton, Big Canoe

The morning began with breakfast with Georgia State Rep. Bruce Broadrick in Dalton followed by a meeting with the Northwest Georgia Manufacturing Consortium at the Carpet and Rug Institute. Our host was Joe Yarbrough, president of the Carpet and Rug Institute and board chairman of the Technical College System of Georgia. We talked about the Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership (IMCP) project, a new federal initiative that will accelerate the resurgence of manufacturing and help cultivate an environment for businesses to create well-paying manufacturing jobs in regions across the country. The Northwest Georgia IMCP is guided by an Advanced Manufacturing Strategic Plan for Northwest Georgia, targeting the needs of the floorcovering industry.

Earlier this year the Georgia Manufacturing Extension Partnership (GaMEP) at Georgia Tech launched a monthly “Faces of Manufacturing” program to honor hard-working, dedicated people throughout the state who work within or are affected by manufacturing companies. At our meeting at the Carpet and Rug Institute, we formally announced the June Face of Manufacturing, Brian Cooksey of Shaw Industries. Five years ago Brian led an effort that was supported by Shaw, other Dalton manufacturers, and the Greater Dalton Chamber to develop a Design, Engineering, and Manufacturing Camp in Whitfield County. In the story featuring his work, Brian commented, “We are shifting the image that kids have about manufacturing, and in doing so, we will change workforce development for our communities and Georgia.” Later that same afternoon, we were honored to meet with Shaw Industries Group CEO Vance Bell and other company leaders at their corporate office.

We had a southern buffet lunch with our friends Jim Jolly, president emeritus of J&J Industries, and State Sen. Charlie Bethel at The Filling Station in Dalton. Dene Sheheane, our VP for Government and Community Relations, has accompanied me on these state tours over the past six years. I believe he has his GPS set to find every southern cooking restaurant, including all “meat and threes” in the state of Georgia.

Wednesday afternoon we toured Precision Products Inc. (PPI) in Dalton, a modern machine shop that produces a wide range of precision manufacturing parts for the carpet and other industries. The GaMEP works with PPI to help increase top-line growth and reduce bottom-line costs. PPI opened their facility to the community today, offering tours and highlighting features in place as a result of participating in GaMEP.

Our day included a visit with Anne and Wayne Clough in their beautiful home on the water. Wayne is president emeritus of Georgia Tech and former secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. We enjoyed talking about updates to the G. Wayne Clough Georgia Tech Promise program, which helps put a Georgia Tech education within reach of any qualified Georgia resident, regardless of family income.

We ended the day with a reception with alumni, students, and other friends at Big Canoe. Among the special guests joining us were several elected officials and representatives from our congressional offices.

It's always good to be with state leaders, alumni, students, parents, and other friends, and joining them in singing the Ramblin' Wreck while watching the sun set over the lake makes for a special memory.

G. P. "Bud" Peterson
President, Georgia Tech