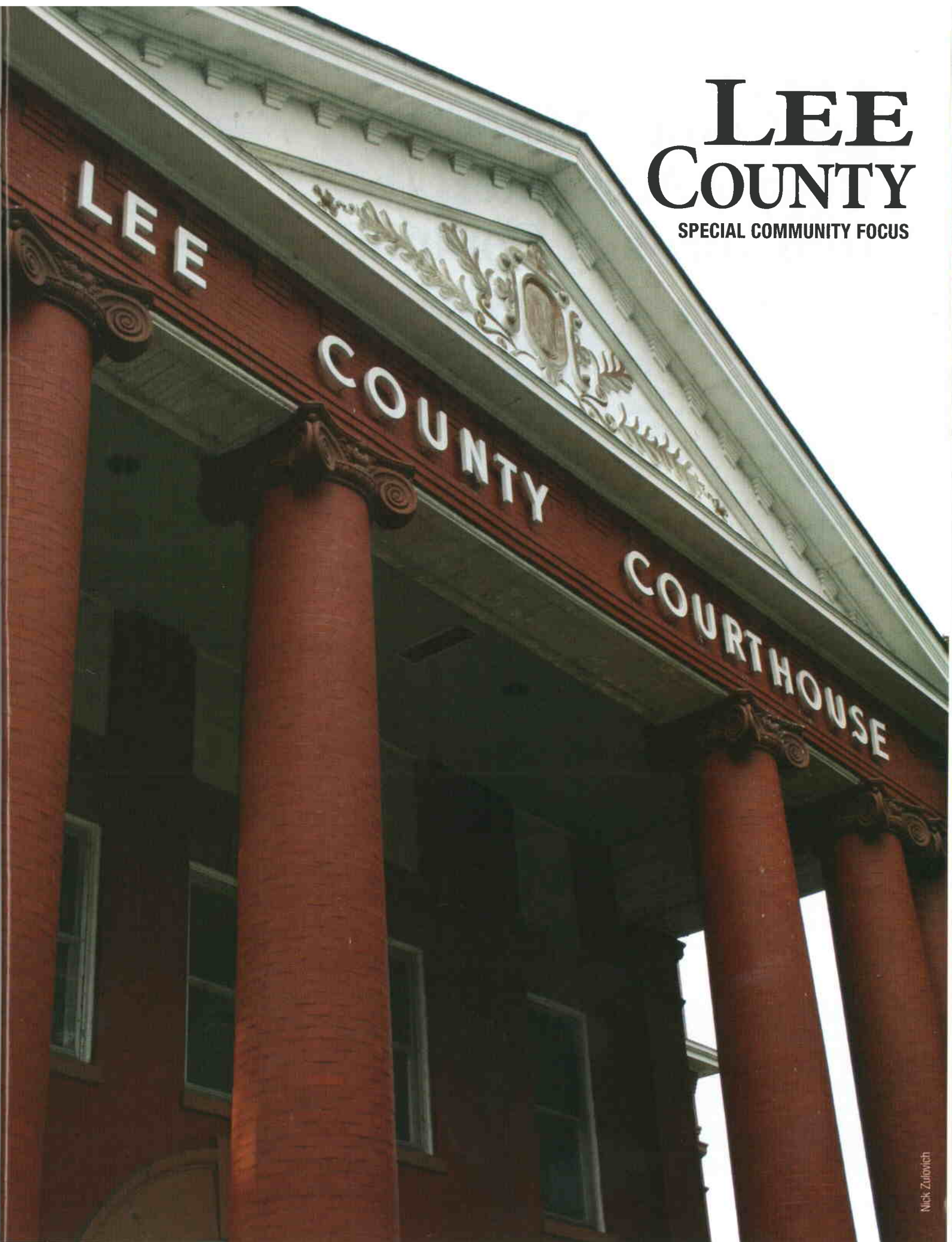


LEE COUNTY

SPECIAL COMMUNITY FOCUS



A Touch of the Triangle

Lee County Melds Unique Attributes Into Thriving Community

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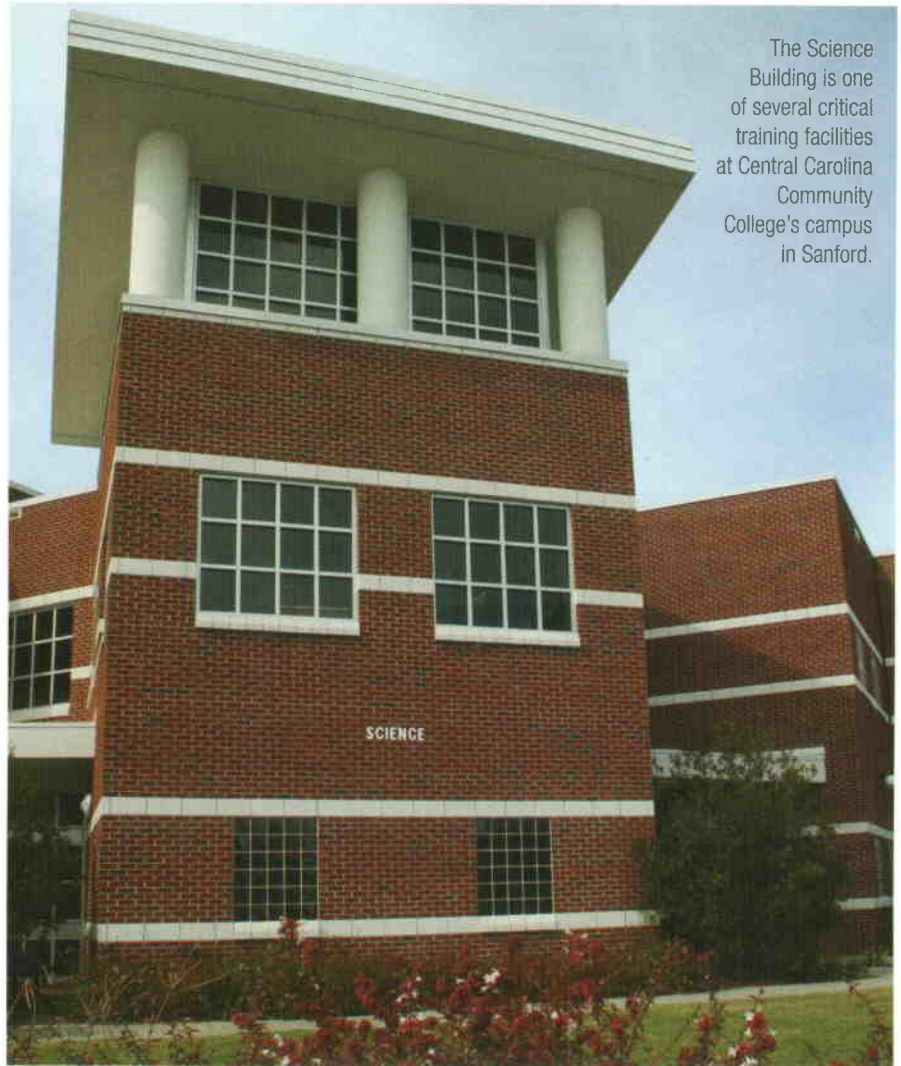
Lee County might just combine all of the greatest economic and lifestyle elements that can be found within the Research Triangle Regional Partnership. The area has a strong manufacturing presence that mixes with a small-town relaxed atmosphere that's already quite prevalent in a county that's nestled within North Carolina's Sandhills.

“With all of that going on, we have managed to attract and keep businesses here that have stayed on the cutting edge.”

– Bob Huets, director of the Lee County Economic Development Corp.

“We compare ourselves to the RTP as a whole, and we think that's a pretty good standard. It's one of the most dynamic regions in the world,” said Bob Huets, director of the Lee County Economic Development Corp. “We develop our own niche because of that higher standard.”

Lee County certainly contributes mightily to the dynamic Research Triangle Region. Currently about 40 percent of the county's workforce is employed in manufacturing, a statistic that Huets said often takes many by surprise. He attributes the county's continued success in manufac-



The Science Building is one of several critical training facilities at Central Carolina Community College's campus in Sanford.

turing to a common thread that weaves through companies such as vaccine maker Wyeth, the county's single largest employer, Frontier Spinning, a company that's still thriving in textiles, and Lee Brick & Tile Co., which continues to have a strong foothold in a signature county product.

“All you have to do is look at the national and state news over the last 20 years, and you'll see we've lost thousands of jobs for two primary reasons: technology which allowed productivity to boom and competition across the ocean,” Huets said.

“With all of that going on, we have managed to attract and keep businesses here that have stayed on the cutting edge,” he continued. “That's the only way they can compete. Every day they look to see what they can do to save money. Now they're all doing lean manufacturing or have some kind of effort to see what it costs to make that product and how they can do it more efficiently today than they did yesterday.”

These companies have been able to thrive in Lee County with the help of the county's support system. For example,

Top Manufacturers

by number of employees

1. Static Control Components 1,400
2. Wyeth 1,300
3. Pilgrim's Pride 1,100
4. Coty Inc 875
5. Caterpillar 700

Central Carolina Community College works closely with the industrial community to create training curriculum vital in maintaining a highly trained workforce.

"The community college, that's the jewel in Lee County's crown," said Bob Stevens, town manager of Broadway, a community located just east of Sanford, the county seat.

Education in Lee County is also going beyond technical tutelage to fulfill immediate business and industry needs.

Lee Early College High School is one of two secondary schools that will be associated with the GRADUATE Program. The acronym stands for Games Requiring Advanced Developmental Understanding and Achievement in Technological Endeavors. It combines the resources of NC State University's College of Education, the Kenan Institute for Engineering, Technology and Science along with gaming company Virtual Heroes.

Fueled by a three-year, \$1.5 million grant from the National Science Foundation, students, high school teachers, college faculty and researchers will collaborate on how video game software can foster science and technology achievement.

"Ideally, our goal is that students will create educational games that appeal to their counterparts so that teachers can then integrate those games into their classrooms," said Dr. Len Annetta, assistant professor of science education at NC State. "The potential of this innovative means of meeting the new graduation project requirement while explicitly engaging students in 21st-century skill-building and (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) career exploration will be communicated to all North Carolina school systems for potential replication."

This project stretches until the participating class graduates in 2011. Huets beams when he discusses this project and how Lee County is a part of it. "That's the kind of opportunity that will have an impact 10 years from now," he said.

Colleges & Universities

Central Carolina Community College is based in Sanford. The college currently enrolls about 4,700 students in its curriculum offerings and 20,000 in various continuing education programs.

Within an hour's drive

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Duke University, North Carolina State University, Campbell University, North Carolina Central University, Fayetteville State University



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— Bob Stevens,
Broadway town manager

Sustaining positive impact during both the present and future, both Stevens and Huets highlighted the sense of cooperation and teamwork within county departments such as planning and utilities that exists in this tight-knit community.

"While it isn't always ice cream and peaches, it's easier to get three entities on the same page and get them to recognize the need for having the right attitude toward growth and business than it would be if we have multiple communities in a large county that has diversity where it's rural on one end and very urban on the other," Huets said.

"If a company comes in here and says, 'We'd like to know about the water situation. We'd like to know about the communities. We'd like to know about the permitting process.' Whatever it is, we can



get the leadership to the table in minutes sometimes if necessary. We're not having to work through many multiple layers of bureaucracy to try to get to the right person in an organization. It's about keeping people informed throughout the year. When we do have an opportunity, we do come together to make things happen and get people the answers they need to make a decision.

"It's a little bit easier as a small community too for us to work together. We have to work together. There's no question about it," he added.

That togetherness is continuing in Lee County through a marketing and