

We aren't in a recession—but it's coming. That's the message economist Brian Beaulieu, Executive Director of the Institute for Trend Research gave at the recent Clermont Chamber of Commerce Breakfast Forum. He told the audience that the current economic slowdown will continue through 2008 and 2009, bottoming out in 2010. His message to the business community and its employees...having strong and marketable skills is especially important now, because finding and keeping jobs will become more difficult in the next several years.

Organizations that prepare youth and adults for careers for our region are particularly important in this economy. That's why the Chamber of Commerce partners with organizations like UC Clermont College, US Grant Career Center, and the Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development.

I had the pleasure to attend the Senior Recognition ceremony for the students of the Live Oaks Career Development Campus, one of four campuses in of Great Oaks, the largest career and technical education district in the United States. Great Oaks has been providing career development, workforce development and economic development services to individuals, business, industry, labor, communities and other organizations in southwest Ohio since 1970.

As the graduation ceremony proceeded and I watched the Live Oaks students receive their career passports, I had confidence that Clermont County was making strides towards developing workers with strong and marketable skills. One-by-one, students studying such careers as business management, computer service, computer assisted drafting, and e-marketing received recognition for their classroom accomplishments. They also were recognized for collectively earning with peers from all of Great Oaks 3,176 academic college credits in English, math, biology and/or sociology (without leaving their campus and at no cost), for received \$1,133,870 in college scholarships, with around half of these students continuing on to college immediately.

Why is this accomplishment important? It's simple, we have both an opportunity and a responsibility to maximize the community benefit resulting economic development, and that includes developing our workforce for job opportunities. For example, consider the announcement that Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) is locating in Clermont County. Expected to create 1,000 skilled professional job opportunities, we have learned that this project will have a significant ripple affect on the region.

The Clermont County Transportation District, the Economic Development Corporation of Clermont County, and the Chamber have been working with the University of Cincinnati to understand the labor force impact of this announcement. Using the REMI Policy Insight tool, it is expected that as many as 5,200 additional jobs will be created due to the TCS project with the majority of these jobs (94%) to be created in Clermont County. Occupations associated with this growth are IT, math, science, engineering, sales, office, and administrative support.

So please join the Chamber and all of the economic development partners mentioned above as we congratulate the class of 2008 and wish them well as we work to make Clermont County a great place to locate, operate, and grow a successful business.