

Halftime Breakfast ... (continued from page 1)

from the state's business and industry leaders; an Intercity Leadership Visit in which several local business, community and government leaders traveled to Columbus, Ga., to learn what has worked and what hasn't, as that community has begun to flourish over the last decade; and several advertisements in Atlanta and statewide publications.

"Your investment in Partners in Prosperity allows this to happen," Raybon said. "If it wasn't for your investment, we would be unable to carry out many of the basic marketing efforts needed in a progressive community such as ours. Your investment opens doors."

Raybon also mentioned several local investments and expansions that have helped energize the local economy since the inception of Partners in Prosperity, specifically thanking *Branson Tractor, F&P Georgia Manufacturing, Profile Extrusion Company, Scott Logistics, Neaton Rome, U.S. Biofuels, Inc., Commercial Fluid Power, and Kellogg Company*. Alone, those companies have combined to invest \$98.6 million and add or retain 878 primary jobs in Rome and Floyd County in just the past 2-1/2 years.

Including those 878 primary jobs, 3,868 total jobs have been added in the community since the beginning of Partners in Prosperity.

Along with an update on past activities, Raybon also shared what Partners in Prosperity will help make happen in the coming months. He said the Chamber will attend three aviation-related trade shows in 2007 in response to that growing industry and its local emergence, thanks to a partnership between *Coosa Valley Technical College* and *Richard B. Russell Regional Airport*.

Raybon also said the Chamber will again host statewide economic developers on a Rome/Floyd County tour and at the Atlanta Steeplechase at Kingston Downs, and will continue to schedule executive briefings in Atlanta. He told the crowd Partners in Prosperity pays for a portion of the Rome-Floyd 20/20 plan that is currently being revisited in order to continue the momentum that the local business community has gained since Rome-Floyd 20/20 was first drawn up in 1997, and since the beginning of Partners in Prosperity 2-1/2 years ago.

"We will not become complacent," Raybon said.

Young Professionals of Rome Chairman Steven McDowell, Old Havana Cigar Company, also addressed the audience about the new YPRome program.

"Over the years, a lot of people have made investments in this community, and it is up to the next generation to carry on what has already been started," McDowell said. "Focusing on professionals in their 20's and 30's, YPRome is aiming to open a dialogue between up-and-coming professionals and current business and community leaders. It will give these young professionals a voice in our community and allow current leaders to understand what makes Rome attractive to these emerging leaders, which we believe will help make us even more competitive in the marketplace for the best and brightest of the next generation."

J. Mac Holladay, *Founder and CEO of Market Street Services*, which worked with the community in the creation of the original Rome-Floyd 20/20 plan in 1997 and the update in 2002, reintroduced his company, which will again facilitate the latest update in 2007. Holladay and *Market Street Services Project Manager Alex Pearlstein* presented current day economic realities, an overview of the

strategy-creation process and an economic and demographic profile.

Among the encouraging signs, Market Street Services' data showed Floyd County's job growth from 2000-2005 far outpaced that of the state and nation, and was a tremendous change from the losses of the late 1990's. The local population growth rate also continues to rise and has nearly reached the national average, which is a great improvement over the lagging growth of the 1980's. Also, Rome and Floyd County's large, growing manufacturing sector is a true accomplishment in the face of significant losses at the state and national levels.

Market Street Services did show some concerns, however, over the declining percentage of Rome and Floyd County residents with Bachelor's degrees, even if there is strong growth in the population with an Associate's degree; and the heavy losses of its population ages 18-24 without much evidence of their return to the community later in life. Holladay said that data suggests the possibility of college-educated "brain drain," but added that the Young Professionals of Rome is a great first step toward addressing that issue.

Holladay finished his presentation with encouragement to local leadership to maintain a commitment to its economic development work.

According to Pearlstein, Market Street Services is currently building a website dedicated to Rome-Floyd 20/20 in which anyone may view pertinent information relating to the project. A survey is available on that site for community members to voice their opinions, as well. A link to that site is available on the Chamber's website, www.romega.com. ■

CHAMBER PLANS TRIP TO WASHINGTON, D.C.

Approximately 20 representatives of the Greater Rome Chamber of Commerce will travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with our elected officials and their professional staff May 1st-3rd.

The Governmental Affairs Committee has determined the issues of interest that affect the quality of life and economic welfare of the Greater Rome community. A lunch will be held with congressional leaders May 2nd and a reception with congressional leaders and their staff will be hosted by *Georgia Power* and *Lamar Advertising* later that night. The legislative agenda, along with fun and fellowship, make this trip a highlight experience.

For information, including cost options, please contact **Sam Freeman (LR, '95)** at 706.291.7663 or sfreeman@romega.com. ■



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