



**Laurinburg/Scotland County Area
Chamber of Commerce**

For Immediate Release

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**Planning Underway for Chamber's Rural Community
Mobilization Project**

A grant from the NC Rural Center for Economic Development is being used to help Scotland County respond to the economic needs and challenges of its unemployed citizens. Brenda Gilbert is serving as the Laurinburg/Scotland County Area Chamber of Commerce workforce development coordinator, and will help implement the various components of the grant. Partnerships are being formed with workforce development organizations, non-profits and other community-based groups in order to maximize the county's resources and streamline the resource delivery process.

A meeting on February 12 brought together over thirty people representing 22 agencies, organizations and businesses that will partner with the Chamber in developing two day-long expos. The Resources Expo will be aimed at guiding unemployed or dislocated workers through the process of re-establishing themselves in the community and returning to the workforce. The Working Links Expo will showcase current and future employment opportunities available in Scotland County.

A Resource Expo Planning Committee began planning the first expo. Thursday and Friday, September 23 and 24, have been selected as expo dates. The committee is already pulling together all the resources available, and designing the expo format, which will include informational booths, seminars and one-on-one counseling sessions.

The committee is also charged with developing a community resources directory, which will be made available in an online open source file format. Local resource providers will be asked to submit information about their programs for inclusion in the directory.

The last component of the grant is to increase the use of the WorkKeys job skill assessment system throughout the Scotland County business community. The WorkKeys system is used by employers nationwide to identify the skills employees and potential

employees require in order to be successful in the workplace. WorkKeys measures real world skills that employers believe are critical to job success.

“These skills are valuable for any occupation, skilled or professional, and at any level of education,” said Gilbert. “I’ve spoken with several human resource managers who use the WorkKeys assessments and have found only positive feedback. This program has been valuable in ensuring that new hires have the necessary skill sets to be successful in their jobs. WorkKeys certification is a trusted credential for those seeking employment.”

For more information about the Resources Expo, Working Links Expo or community resource directory, contact Gilbert at (910) 276-7420.

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