

Business *Link*

Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce

MAGAZINE



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Tourism Impact

King's Hawaiian Bakery in Oakwood

Fall-Winter 2025

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Since 2020, 81 new and expanded businesses have announced more than 4,300 jobs and \$2.0 billion in new capital investment.



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Cover: King's Hawaiian will invest approximately \$54 million in expanding its Oakwood facility, creating more than 135 new jobs.

"For nearly 15 years, King's Hawaiian has proven to be an incredible partner in creating quality jobs in Northeast Georgia, and we look forward to even more years of great success for them in Hall County," said Governor Brian Kemp. "Expansions like these are an important part of our economic development work, helping create further opportunities in growing communities."



8

Lake Lanier Olympic Park

Home of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games, Lake Lanier Olympic Park's Boathouse is the perfect venue for corporate retreats, community events and celebrations.



GREATER HALL
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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BUSINESS LINK MAGAZINE

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Letter to Members



Tim McDonald

Lanier Technical College
Chairman, Greater Hall Chamber

Collaboration, Partnerships & Purposeful Strategies

Collaboration is widely defined as the process of two or more people or organizations working together to complete a task or achieve a goal. In concept, collaboration is a very simple process. However, to be effective on a large scale, collaboration requires purposeful commitment along with trusted, valued partnerships, and a clear understanding of the goal at hand. I can state, without trepidation, collaboration is the core competency of our community.

In this issue of *Business Link*, you will see a vibrant array of community and economic impacts being made through business and industry, tourism, logistics, and retail. As you read the updates, I ask that you note the great diversity in our business and leisure environment. This volume of diversity is the aspiration of communities across our nation, and we have it right here in Gainesville-Hall County. We have it because of purposeful, trusted collaborations between our Chamber, our local governmental agencies, our educational systems and institutes, and our business partners.

This is a thank you to all those purposeful collaborations that have crafted the great community we enjoy every day and a thank you to those business entities who, not only provide great career opportunities, but also gladly weave themselves into the fabric that is the Greater Hall County Community. As you will also read, we are getting national attention for our efforts, so let's remain vigilant in our purposeful collaboration – let's know our purpose and make an impact.



Caldwell Electrical Contractors breaks ground on their 75,000 square foot facility for fabrication, distribution, service and corporate headquarters. (L-R) **Tim Evans**, Greater Hall Chamber; **Sam Couvillon**, Mayor of Gainesville; **Daniel Caldwell**, President & CEO, Caldwell Electrical Contractors; **Brian Daniel**, Carroll Daniel; Chamber Vice Chair Economic Development **William Bagwell**, Homestead Investments. Caldwell is working with a local construction team led by Carroll Daniel, Lawson Air Conditioning & Plumbing, Simpson Trucking & Grading and Rochester DCCM.

Business & Industry

The Gainesville-Hall County Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is among the top 50 fastest growing metros in the United States. Total population is over 220,000 with a day-time population in Gainesville, the county seat, exceeding 150,000 people. We are Northeast Georgia's center for education, banking, retail, recreation, industry, healthcare, redevelopment and the arts. We are the top job producing Metropolitan Area in Georgia. And, Georgia is the top job producing state in the nation. We are a vibrant and growing community with an unparalleled quality of life and a sound economic future for business and industry.

Blue Ridge Connector

Due for completion in 2026, the Georgia Ports Authority's **Blue Ridge Connector** (BRC), Northeast Georgia's inland port, will replace a 300 mile over-the-road haul with a 350 mile rail route. The \$127 million, 104-acre facility on Highway 365 in Hall County will connect Norfolk Southern with rail connection for container service between Hall County and the Port of Savannah each week. gaports.com



The Greater Hall Chamber's **Industry Roundtable** toured the Blue Ridge Connector for an update from Taylor Worley, Assistant Manager of Market Research & Economic Development, **Georgia Ports Authority**. The group is pictured next to new Konecranes, industrial cranes that will support container operations. The Industry Roundtable brings together top manufacturers, distributors, and processors each quarter to network, share insights, and tour regional facilities.

Making an Impact

Currently under construction, the Blue Ridge Connector is a major inland port and economic engine for Northeast Georgia and is expected to generate significant economic growth by attracting new investment, creating jobs, and improving supply chain efficiency. It will directly link the Port of Savannah to the region via daily rail, eliminating the need for long truck drives – leading to lower transportation costs, reduced highway congestion, fewer emissions, and increased economic development for surrounding communities.

With 14 million visitors a year, Lake Lanier is the region's top economic driver assisting local economies through increased spending on hospitality, retail, and other services. Visitors to Lake Lanier spent \$292 million in 2024 at hotels, restaurants, retail shops and marinas, according to the Lake Lanier CVB. Lake Lanier encompasses 39,000 acres with 692 miles of shoreline and provides drinking water for 4 million Georgians. The lake has a \$5 billion annual economic impact to the area, according to the Lake Lanier Association.

Michelin Raceway Road Atlanta, a multi-purpose motor sports facility in Braselton, generates significant economic impact for Hall County, attracting over 600,000 visitors annually. Not only does the track provide 434 jobs and an annual economic impact of \$60 million, the organization supports charities, provides opportunities for corporate sponsorship and media exposure, making it a major asset to the community.

Sports tourism makes a \$52.2 billion economic impact nationally and is the #1 hotel room generator in 63% of U.S. markets. In the City of Gainesville, sports tourism drives 93% of the total tourism dollars, making a \$33.7 million economic impact annually. Some 85% of events are youth or amateur-based with baseball/softball events leading followed by motor racing events.

Business & Industry Announcements

Kubota Opens New \$190 Million Facility in Gainesville

This summer, KMA held a grand opening at its new 700,000 square foot, \$190 million facility and home for manufacturing front-end loaders for ALL Kubota tractors worldwide. The facility, located off Highway 365 in Gainesville, brings 500 jobs and is the company's most advanced – with increased automation for improved safety and quality. The new facility is near the \$90 million research and development facility that began operations in 2022. Kubota maintains a strong base in Gainesville-Hall County, where a large portion of its employees are located across multiple facilities. kubota-kma.com

King's Hawaiian Bakery Expansion to Create 135 New Jobs

Governor Brian Kemp announced in July that family-owned King's Hawaiian is expanding its Oakwood operations and will invest some \$54 million and create 135 new jobs. The expansion will add a new production line for additional flavors of King's Hawaiian Pretzel Bites. This sixth major expansion since 2010 is a testament to the company's deep roots in Hall County. King's Hawaiian has become a cornerstone of our regional economy and a shining example of a company that invests in both business and community. Founded more than 70 years ago in Hilo, Hawaii, the company is dedicated to providing original recipes and Aloha Spirit. kingshawaiian.com

Mimaki USA Opens New Corporate Office

Mimaki USA opened its new corporate office in Flowery Branch this summer. The facility combines an expanded showroom, training and warehouse with administrative spaces. Mimaki brings over two decades of full-color inkjet engineering and manufacturing experience to the 3D world. Their 3D printers offer multiple technologies to provide additive manufacturing solutions for a wide range of needs. mimakiusa.com

Caldwell Electrical Contractors Groundbreaking

Caldwell Electrical Contractors recently broke ground in the Gainesville 85 Business Park on their 75,000 square foot facility for fabrication, distribution, service, and corporate headquarters. With 37 years in the electrical contracting business in Hall County, Caldwell Electrical needed additional space to grow their business and continue to service their commercial and industrial clients. Caldwell Electrical is working with a local construction team led by Carroll Daniel, Lawson Air Conditioning & Plumbing, Simpson Trucking & Grading and Rochester DCCM. caldwellelectrical.com



Kubota's **Ryan Owen**, **Brian Arnold** and **Governor Brian Kemp** at the Grand Opening of KMA's new manufacturing facility in Gainesville.

Koon Chun USA Invests \$70 Million in New Gainesville Facility

Koon Chun (USA), a subsidiary of Koon Chun Sauce Factory, will invest approximately \$70 million in a new food manufacturing facility at the Gainesville Business Park, creating an estimated 50 jobs in Hall County. The sauce manufacturer decided to establish a factory in Georgia to better serve their U.S. customers and enhance production and supply capabilities in the region. Found in 1928 in Hong Kong, Koon Chun Sauce Factory is a family-owned business that has been dedicated to brewing Asian-style soy sauce and condiments with original recipes for four generations. koonchun.com.hk

Bend Bioscience Strategic Expansion in Gainesville

Bend Bioscience, a leading US-based contract development and manufacturing organization, will invest approximately \$20 million in its Gainesville facility. The expansion is in alignment with a projected 10% increase in workforce, deepening the company's commitment to innovation in pharmaceutical manufacturing in the US while investing in the long-term growth of Georgia's life sciences sector. The facility expansion is now underway and includes an additional 12,000 square feet and will bring new high-value job opportunities to Gainesville, supporting the region's continued emergence as a hub for advanced pharmaceutical manufacturing. bendbioscience.com

From the President & CEO



National Accolades Don't Come Easily

Business and industry make long-term investments in Gainesville-Hall County because of our skilled workforce, visionary leadership, beautiful location and quality of life. We are home to more than 330 manufacturing and processing businesses and 60 locations of international companies representing 21 countries. Since 2020, 81 new and expanding firms added 4,370 new jobs and \$2.0 billion in capital investment to Gainesville-Hall County. Since 2015, 186 new and expanding businesses have announced 9,670 jobs and \$3.25 billion in new capital investment

Georgia has earned the #1 ranking for its business environment for an unprecedented eleventh year in a row with Gainesville-Hall County being the top job producing Metropolitan Area in the state. In 2025, *Area Development* and *Site Selection* named Gainesville-Hall County one of the top 5 Small Metros in the nation for job creation and investment. Similarly, *Forbes* has rated Gainesville-Hall County as one of the “Best Small Places for Business & Careers” for the last 10 years. Most recently we were named by *Business Facilities* as the leading Small Metro in the Nation for Best Business Climate.

These accolades and rankings do not come easily. It takes time to build valuable relationships and partnerships. Key factors making our community a place we all want to call home include award-winning education, a thriving healthcare community, workforce development initiatives, Lake Lanier and tourism, parks and recreation, and most importantly, partnerships. Partnerships and teamwork, all working towards a common goal through clear and open communication, mutual trust, and shared goals. The Greater Hall Chamber has built a legacy of collaboration with Hall County, the City of Gainesville, our municipalities and our business community – all working together to make Gainesville-Hall County a great place to work, a great place to be an employer, an employee, a citizen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Evans'.

Tim Evans
President & CEO
Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce

Gainesville-Hall County Metro Named Leading Small Metro for Best Business Climate

Business Facilities magazine's rankings recognize cities and metro areas for *Business Climate, Tech Talent, Corporate HQ, Manufacturing, and more.*

Business Facilities, a leading source of news and insights for site selection decision-makers, revealed the top-ranked cities and metro regions in the publication's 2025 Annual Rankings Report. Focused on 60+ categories relevant to corporate relocation and expansion investment decisions, rankings have served as a valuable resource for site selection teams for more than two decades.

Leading Small Metros for Best Business Climate as Top 5: Gainesville, GA; St. George, UT; Idaho Falls, ID; Bend/Redmond, OR; and Midland, TX.

“Great work on this project and fostering ongoing expansion from existing stakeholders in the Hall County Community. We appreciate all that you do.”

Zachary T. Propes, CPA
County Administrator, Hall County Government

“Continued good news for our community and great publicity for a place we call home. For me and, I know, each of you, it's all about quality. Thanks for what each of you do to attract new and, more importantly, retain quality businesses. It always astounds me what can be accomplished if folks lower their shoulders and push in the same direction; so, in that regard, you are very much appreciated.”

William Bagwell
Homestead Investments

Meet in Gainesville.



55

MILES NORTH OF ATLANTA



1000+

HOTEL ROOMS

100K

SQ. FEET OF
MEETING
SPACE
OPTIONS



216

DAYS OF SUNSHINE



38,000

ACRES OF LAKE LANIER

322

MILES OF TRAILS



21

CITY PARKS

1500 +

HIGH FIVES



We'll handle the details.



*Scan for
information*



The Gainesville Convention and Visitors Bureau can help plan your next meeting, conference, corporate retreat or social gathering. Let us coordinate room blocks, meeting space, catering suggestions and more!

Our team can provide visitor information, create itineraries and arrange team-building activities to make your event a success.

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Member News



Mary R. Hemmer
Northeast Georgia History Center

The **Northeast Georgia History Center** announces **Mary Hemmer** as new executive director. Mary shares in the center's mission to "Preserve and Share" the region's history, drawing inspiration as a member of a family whose presence in Hall County dates back over 200 years. An accomplished author, Mary has written two books and is ordained into the priesthood of the Episcopal Church, currently serving on staff at St. Mary's and St. Martha's of Bethany. She also helps run the family store, **Butch's Market**, named after Minor Garland "Butch" Reynolds, born on her family's White Sulphur Farms in 1899. Butch became a butcher and businessman in Gainesville. Located in East Hall County, the store proudly sells 85% Georgia owned, grown, and produced items, including local meat and dairy products. The building stands as a testament to the hearty history of our area as one of the oldest existing homes in Hall County, built around 1850. Stop in and learn about the history of the house and the farm, and check out fantastic products made right here in Georgia. butchsmarket.com

The Northeast Georgia History Center (NGHC) is dedicated to preserving and sharing our regional history and being our community's pathway to history education. Through educational programs, community events, exhibits, and historic structures, NGHC strives to be a leading resource for promoting a greater understanding of local, state, and national history. negahc.org

They will soar on wings as eagles

Eagle Ranch, a Christ-centered nonprofit located in Chestnut Mountain, takes a whole family approach to restoring and renewing relationships for children and families. Celebrating its **40th Anniversary** this year, the organization's mission is to meet families at their point of need, providing guidance, practical resources and hope for a flourishing future. Since its founding in 1985 by **Eddie Staub**, Eagle Ranch's unwavering commitment to serving children and families has established a legacy in our community and beyond. Over time, the mission has expanded and adapted services while developing new ones to better partner with families on their path to renewal. **John Shackelford** has taken the helm as executive director and is committed to upholding and stewarding the Eagle Ranch legacy while implementing new, progressive initiatives such as expanding the SACS-accredited day school now open to the community. The diversity of support Eagle Ranch provides is reaching a broader audience with The Wings Center and First Step Counseling – a testimony to the growing importance of their work in the community. eagleranch.org



Eagle Ranch's residential program provides children with a structured, therapeutic living environment.



The **Kroger Co.'s Atlanta Division** broke ground in early September on a new **Marketplace in Oakwood** at 4050 Millside Parkway. Expected to open next fall, the store represents a \$49.2 million capital investment and encompassing more than 123,000 square feet.

"This is not just a capital investment, it's a community investment," said Victor Smith, Kroger's Atlanta Division president. "We recognize Kroger's unique role in the communities we serve and are committed to creating positive change and delivering on our purpose to feed the human spirit." thekrogerco.com



Main Street Gainesville was named the **2025 Downtown of the Year** by the Georgia Downtown Association (GDA), and **Doug Ivester** received the **Premier New Development Award** for **Gainesville Renaissance** in Downtown Gainesville. The Downtown of the Year award is the highest recognition given by the GDA, presented to a community that sets a high bar for excellence and serves as an inspiring model for others across Georgia. gainesville.org

Main Street Gainesville is a division of the Gainesville Community & Economic Development Department, in partnership with the Gainesville Convention & Visitors Bureau. The program is sanctioned by Main Street America and Georgia Main Street and is recognized as a Georgia Exceptional Main Street (GEMS) community by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs Office of Downtown Development.

Interactive Neighborhood for Kids or **INK** has opened its new museum in Downtown Oakwood. INK creates a unique environment where children of all ages, abilities and experience can imagine, create and explore beyond their dreams. The museum is geared towards visitors ages 2-12 and is specifically designed to offer unparalleled educational experiences. The hands-on, interactive exhibits are structured in a way that lets each visitor touch and feel the “real world.” inkfun.org



Congratulations to the recent graduates of the **Quality Control Technicians Apprenticeship program at Lanier Technical College**: Josh Newsome, Bitzer US, Laura Araujo Caudillo, Kings Hawaiian, and Rosalba Mejia, IMS Gear. Each apprentice completed 4,000 hours of On-The-Job Training (OJT) with their company mentor, and each received a promotion while in the program. Intensive instruction provided them with a solid foundation of theoretical knowledge, essential for success in the quality technician profession. The Quality Tech Apprenticeship program is a two-year US Department of Labor registered apprenticeship and was created by the Georgia Mountains Works MFG Employer Partnership and Workforce Strategies Group to meet the increasing demand for Quality Control Technicians.



Quality Control Technicians Apprenticeship Graduation at Lanier Technical College (L-R) **Greg Vitek** and **Shelley Logan**, Workforce Strategies Group; **Josh Newsome**, Bitzer US; **Laura Araujo Caudillo**, Kings Hawaiian; **Rosalba Mejia**, IMS Gear; **Cory Addison**, Lanier Technical College.

Photo: Thomas Murphy, Lanier Technical College

Workforce Development

Chamber Job Fairs create opportunities and new careers

When LaNaya Goss attended the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce Spring Job Fair in April 2025, she had no idea it would be a life-changing day. As she browsed the booths, Brenau University's HR Manager of Talent Acquisition, Hannah Ivester, noticed her right away.

"We literally chased LaNaya down," Hannah laughed, "because we knew she was the perfect fit."

Today, LaNaya is thriving as Brenau University's HR Administrative Assistant, a direct result of the connections made at the Chamber's Job Fair. Stories like LaNaya's remind us why these events matter — they create opportunities, launch careers, and build a stronger workforce for Gainesville-Hall County.



Hannah Ivester (left), **Brenau University** HR Manager of Talent Acquisition, and **LaNaya Goss**, HR Administrative Assistant, man the University's booth at the Greater Hall Chamber's Fall Job Fair at the Gainesville Civic Center in September. Some 900 job seekers attended the event with over 50 hiring managers on site.



The Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce's **Annual Eggs & Issues Breakfast** on **Thursday, December 11** (7:30-9:30 am) at Lanier Technical College, Ramsey Conference Center, will feature the nine-member Hall County Legislative Delegation for the Georgia House of Representatives and State Senate. The event assists local businesses and citizens in communicating their issues and concerns. Delegates will be on hand to answer questions about current issues and the upcoming Georgia legislative session. Open to the public. Reservations required. \$40 Chamber Member; \$50 Non-Member or Guest; Reserved Table, \$400 (seats 8). Includes a full buffet breakfast. Reservations: Gerri Collins, 770-532-6206. Email gcollins@ghcc.com.

Small Business

Small Business is Big Business in Gainesville-Hall County and represents the heart of our economy and a dominant source of job creation. 93% of the Greater Hall Chamber's members are small businesses, and of the 5,957 businesses registered in Hall County, some 99% of those are independently owned small businesses that bring character, innovation, and vitality to our economy.

How the Greater Hall Chamber Supports Small Business

The Chamber is proud to champion the small businesses that make our community unique and advocate for policies that promote entrepreneurship. Programs specific to small business include Marketing Workshops, Monthly Small Business Seminars and Small Business of the Month Recognition.

Small businesses are more than just economic contributors – they are community builders, innovators, and local heroes. As we look toward the future, it is essential that we continue to support and celebrate the small businesses that make our community strong. Shop locally, invest locally, and do business together.



Robbie Parks of the UGA Small Business Development Center (SBDC) presented the Small Business Seminar "Digital Marketing: Tools & Tactics That Work." (L-R) Chamber Small Business Council Chair **Steve Naughton**, SCORE; **Kimber Armstrong**, Better Business Bureau; **Robbie Parks**, UGA SBDC; **Margaret Ryder**, Lanier Technical College; **Sam Greene**, OMEGA Technology Group.

The Milken Institute named the Gainesville-Hall County Metro Area as the **2025 Top Small Metro Area in Georgia** and **#1 in the Nation for Best Performing Small Metros**.

Business Facilities ranked the Gainesville-Hall County Metro Area the **#1 Small Metro for Best Business Climate in the Nation** in their 2025 Rankings Report.



Shane Gaddy, managing partner/financial planner with **Strong Gaddy Lee (SGL) Wealth Management**, presented the Small Business Seminar "Shaping the Future of Your Business & Family." (L-R) **Shane Gaddy**, **Jodi Abercrombie** and **Paty Lopez**, SGL; **Tim Evans**, Greater Hall Chamber.



Scott Glover, farmer and owner of **Mountain Fresh Creamery** in Clermont, received the Small Business of the Month Award presented by Chamber Chairman **Tim McDonald**, Lanier Technical College.



Simon and Kristi Janman, owners of **Nothing Bundt Cakes**, received Small Business of the Month, an award given to businesses monthly with recognition at the Chamber's Board of Directors meeting.

Education & Leadership



The **2026 Class of Leadership Hall County** kicked off their series of year-long programs this summer with an introductory program at Riverside Preparatory Academy. Since its inception in 1982, 1,124 have graduated from Leadership Hall County and taken their place as leaders in our community. *Front Row, L-R:* Christina Page, Chris Sanchez, Leah Stewart, Sandra Imperial, Beth Garmon, Kat Yee, Morgan George, Madilyn Puckett, Alejandra Carrillo, Rebecca Thurman, Sidney Cochran. *Middle, L-R:* Kiley Sargent, Trevor Bishop, Matt Phillips, Rex Hall, Jessica Van, Lina Cook, Parhis Howard, Abby Loggins, Heidi Pritchett, Tracy Moore, Kami Kovach, Emma Courtney, CJ Harman. *Back, L-R:* Drew Stewart, William Bagwell, Zach Green, Donna Allen, Amy Marsh, Luke Lovell, Marissa Maynor, Ross Stevens, Lizzie Kelly, Clayton Cowart, Isaac Teasley, Matt Keadle.



Over 400 adults received degrees from Lanier Technical College

Lanier Technical College's Adult Education program is the leading provider of literacy education, high school equivalency courses, English language acquisition/citizenship preparation, and tutoring services in the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) and recently named its 2026 Exceptional Adult Georgian in Literacy Education (EAGLE) Student of the Year. (L-R) **Tim McDonald**, *President, Lanier Technical College*; **Dr. Cayanna Good**, *Assistant Commissioner, TCS Office of Adult Education*; **Daren Wayne**, *Board Member, TCSG*; **Josh Bennett**, *EAGLE Student of the Year*. Over 400 adults received degrees from Lanier Tech's Adult Education program this year. laniertech.edu



Powering Industry and Friday Night Lights

▲ Jackson EMC's Business Development Team:
Kevin Dodson, Cameron Barnhill, Tate O'Rourke,
Brandon Ashley, Tino Johnson, John Skinner
and Wade Johnson



You have the vision, ingenuity and product to change the business landscape. Our team has the expertise and knowledge to help you every step of the way. Jackson EMC's Business Development Team is your resource to keep energy reliable and affordable now and in the future.

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MORE THAN A REAL ESTATE AGENCY

We know the ropes.
We know the place.
And we value people.



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