



# ***THE GROWING EDGE***

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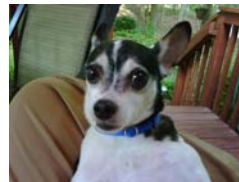
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**Dear John,**

I had set up the meeting with a local business owner to discuss some new state programs and how I thought they might benefit his landscape-fabric distribution business. Arriving at his office in Bucks Industrial Park, I rang the bell in the small lobby area and was greeted enthusiastically by Frankie, a feisty wire-haired dachshund. "He's my daughter's, really," Randy DeMao of Vantage Partners, LLC said as he gently petted the 20 pound dog that sat calmly in his lap as we talked.



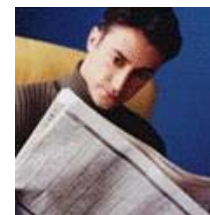
You might think an office an unusual place for a dog, but the fact is a surprising number of Greater Statesville businesses count four-legged "assistants" as part of the office staff, including Slane Glass, Donwalt, McCombs Steel and Ash-Kourt Industries.

Workplace experts suggest there are many advantages to creating a dog-friendly workplace. Obviously, dog-friendly offices are good for dogs, but more importantly, they're good for business. Studies show that having a dog or other pet in the workplace reduces stress and tension among workers, and helps attract and retain great employees. In a recent article in *Outside* magazine, more than half of the companies employees ranked as "best places to work," have dog-friendly policies.

Some companies go as far as to indicate a "dog-friendly workplace" in their help-wanted ads, and suggest that's increased both the number and quality of applicants. And once someone gets used to bringing their dog to work, they're less likely to leave for a more restrictive environment.

Similarly, employees are more likely to work late, finishing a project when they don't have to run home to walk the dog. Most non-dog-owner employees also enjoy the friendlier, warmer atmosphere it creates when dogs are around.

And contrary to what cartoons and comedy sketches would have you believe, even the delivery folks love the dogs. According to one local dog-friendly downtown business person, the UPS man gives her dog a biscuit every day, so her dog knows exactly what brown can do for him.



## **In The News**

The Statesville Record & Landmark recently ran this [article](#) on ThorLo's new "foot care"

The key to a dog-friendly workplace is developing a reasonable approach that reduces friction and problems. The first rule is that dogs have to be well behaved and housebroken. At most of the businesses I visit, the office dogs sit under the desk, quietly sleeping through my entire presentation.

identity.



What about people who are allergic? Interestingly, the businesses I have talked to indicate this has not been a problem. Dog owners usually ask visitors if they'd be more comfortable with the dog in another room.

What can you do to make your business a dog-friendly workplace?

- Negotiate a dog-friendly lease. Give the landlord "references" on your dogs (a letter from a previous landlord), and if the dogs cause disturbances to other tenants, they have to go.
- Conduct pet "interviews." Before you allow a dog to come to the office regularly, meet the dog and have them come for a few days or a week on a probationary period. Get proof of vaccination.
- Enforce the no fleas rule! Dogs must be clean and flea-free at all times. Keep cloth towels handy to wipe feet during the rainy season.
- Adopt a "three strikes, you're out" rule. A big company that allowed dogs had a rule that after the third "accident," a dog was banned. Dog owners must be responsible and take dogs out for short walks.
- Keep dog beds and water bowls handy. Create comfortable areas (usually under/near their owners' desks) for the dogs to sleep, helping them stay quiet. Make sure they have enough water.
- Don't play favorites. If you have more than one dog in the office, make sure they all get attention, treats, walks on a fairly even basis. Be careful about toys and food. Before you introduce those into common areas, make sure the dogs are used to sharing.
- Make sure dogs aren't left unattended. Unless you know a dog is quiet and well behaved when alone, the dog's owner must find a way to keep the dog watched when its owner leaves the office or his or her area.
- Understand the dog is your job, not your assistant's. Unless you make it clear in a job description when hiring, taking care of the dog is solely the responsibility of the dog's owner.

Do you have an office dog? Cat? Bird? Email me a picture, along with the pet's name and the name of your business, and we will publish it in a future edition of *The Growing Edge*.

John

As always, feel free to email me with news about your company's events, awards, new products, honors, etc. and I will include them in an upcoming issue of *The Growing Edge*.

[jmarek@greaterstatesville.org](mailto:jmarek@greaterstatesville.org)

**Iredell County Unemployment Dips in August**  
**Half percent decline drops key rate to lowest point in seven months**

The unemployment rate in Iredell County fell to 12.4 percent in August from 12.9 percent in July. The county continues to have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the region. Unemployment in the Charlotte/Gastonia/Concord area dipped to 11.8 percent from 12.4 percent in July. In the Hickory/Lenoir/Morganton region, unemployment decreased to 14.6 percent from 15 percent.



Here are county unemployment rates in August compared with July:

- Anson: 15.1 percent, up from 14.9 percent.
- Cabarrus: 11.4 percent, down from 11.6 percent.
- Catawba: 14.4 percent, down from 14.9 percent.
- Cleveland: 14.8 percent, down from 15.3 percent.
- Gaston: 14 percent, down from 14.4 percent.
- Iredell: 12.4 percent, down from 12.9 percent.
- Lincoln: 13.7 percent, down from 14.4 percent.
- Mecklenburg: 11.3 percent, down from 11.7 percent.
- Rowan: 13.2 percent, down from 13.7 percent.
- Stanly: 12.2 percent, down from 12.6 percent.
- Union: 10.3 percent, down from 10.8 percent.

Currituck County had the lowest unemployment rate in North Carolina in August at 5.1 percent. Scotland County had the highest at 16.5 percent.

## H1N1 Swine Flu Business Planning Seminar Scheduled for October 12th

**Local government, civic and business organizations work together to answer questions about workplace preparedness**

What would you do if a third of your workforce called in sick for a week or more? That is the question facing the business community in the wake of the H1N1 swine flu pandemic. Some health officials believe that 40% of the US population will contract the H1N1 virus this flu season, and while this particular strain of influenza appears to be far less virulent than originally feared, it is still a nasty bug which requires several days of bed rest, and may hinder employee productivity for many days beyond that due to general weakness and fatigue.



On October 12th, the Greater Statesville Chamber of Commerce, Greater Statesville Development Corporation, Mooresville-South Iredell Chamber of Commerce, Mooresville-South Iredell Economic Development Corporation, Iredell County Emergency Management, Iredell County Health Department and Engineered Sintered Components Company will sponsor a special information session on dealing with the H1N1 virus in the workplace. The focus of this meeting will be prevention and mitigation, with the following topics addressed:

- What is the current flu update?
- How do I prevent spreading the flu?
- How do I prepare my business?
- How do I get updates about the flu?

The meeting will be held from Noon to 1:30 PM at Barium Springs' Little Joe Chapel. This is a free event and lunch will be provided. Seating is limited. For more information or to register, contact the Greater Statesville Chamber of Commerce at 704-873-2892 or register online at [www.statesvillechamber.org](http://www.statesvillechamber.org) before October 9th.

## Statesville-Based TharpeRobbins Works with Indiana Company on Incentive Programs for Younger Workers

**Centennial Communications devises ways to give its "Millennials" something to strive for**

It is now conventional wisdom that members of the youngest generation in the workforce -- the Millennials, or Generation Y -- are not motivated by the same things as older employees. Fiftysomethings in upper management are more likely to enjoy a day of golf, while Millennials probably would take no interest whatsoever. So what makes these youngsters tick?



Centennial Communications, a wireless telecom service provider based in Fort Wayne, Indiana has that figured out. The average age of the company's employees is in the mid-twenties, so when members of Centennial's President's Club -- the top 10 percent of the company's employees across all of its departments -- are rewarded with three-day incentive trips each year, the Millennials expect something a little different. For starters, younger award recipients aren't looking for strict itineraries, and "night life" is more important than group excursions.

Not only does Centennial cater to their younger employees in its incentive travel programs, it targets its merchandise awards to them as well. Working with Statesville, NC-based incentive house TharpeRobbins last year, the company developed a line of jewelry for its length-of-service program that is specifically geared toward the younger crowd.

Previously, Centennial had a program where, for every five years of service, an employee receives a letter, a certificate, and a catalog of gifts that included jewelry. But the jewelry awards left something to be desired. "I was looking for a way to improve the program I was running," says Kenny of Centennial. "I was looking at the jewelry, and a lot of it would not have appealed to our younger Caribbean group." So Centennial turned to TharpeRobbins. The timing couldn't have been better, as TharpeRobbins was in the process of coming up with its own designs for new, hip jewelry for incentive programs. "The urban jewelry collection are all designs that we created and put together," says Anthony Luciano, TharpeRobbins' senior vice president of sales and marketing. "We had an exciting catalog, but we were in the process of looking at ways to incent the younger generation."

"If there's a youngster interested in a big hammered ring, or one of the thick silver chains, or big multi-loop earrings, [we make that] accessible to everyone in the company that gets an award," says Kenny. "The idea is you want to offer merchandise that is going to appeal to your audience."

Another challenge that companies with many young employees face is keeping them motivated until they earn their first rewards, which often

occurs at the five-year service mark, as with Centennial.

"What we're trying to do with our customers is something for the in-between years," says TharpeRobbins' Luciano.

"We call them accolades. It's so that you don't have to wait five years to recognize someone, even if it's just an ecard."

Younger workers are also more apt to change jobs, so it's harder for them to see the incentive to stay with the same company for five years, especially if they're not getting frequent feedback. Luciano says the first couple of years with a company are the most crucial in encouraging a long career with that same employer.

"The first year or two is very important because that's when you're going to get them [to stay]," says Luciano. "If you've got someone for five or 10 years, odds are you're going to have them for 20. But in order to get them to that mark, you've got to incent them a lot in those early years. They want constant and fast feedback, they love electronics, they love things that fit their peer set. Traditional items may not excite them at all."

TharpeRobbins is starting to make its lower-level programs, such as five-year-recognition awards, more geared toward younger recipients and their less-traditional tastes. "Even at our absolute lowest budget level, we put in a 1-gigabyte MP3 player," says Luciano. "We're putting in hotter products, the more exciting types of things in electronics." Luciano says that for the higher award levels, TharpeRobbins is sticking to more traditional items, such as grandfather clocks. "I can't see a 22-year-old person choosing a grandfather clock," he says.

TharpeRobbins stays on top of the latest trends in many ways in its attempt to keep itself modern and to motivate employees of all ages. "We read all the articles, we look at all the trends, we see what's going on with the generation now, and we get feedback from our customers on a constant basis," says Luciano.

When Centennial thought of the idea to create a more trendy jewelry line and tapped TharpeRobbins for help, the merchandise supplier was excited, says Luciano, since it had already begun producing similar products. "When Centennial came up with that," Luciano says, "it really reinforced our hard work."

## Ernie Pearson to Speak at Committee of 100 Luncheon at Statesville Business Park Shell Building

### Former North Carolina Assistant Secretary of Commerce will address economic development questions

The next Greater Statesville Committee of 100 Luncheon will be held Wednesday, October 21st at the Shell Building at Statesville Business Park. The event will be sponsored by The Keith Corporation who developed the property in partnership with the Greater Statesville Development Corporation and the City of Statesville. The guest speaker will be Ernie Pearson of Nexsen Pruet.



Ernie Pearson has an extensive background in economic development. As Assistant Secretary of Commerce for North Carolina, he managed programs dealing with business and industry recruitment, international trade development, incentives, travel and tourism promotion, and small business development.

In each of his four years with the Department, the agency was recognized as the top state recruitment program in the country. During that period, North Carolina led the nation in recruiting large industries three times and twice led in recruiting international companies and R&D facilities.

After leaving government, Pearson joined Sanford Holshouser L.L.P., concentrating his practice in the areas of corporate law, international law, public finance, commercial real estate development, corporate relocation, and corporate growth and financing. He joined Nexsen Pruet's Raleigh office in January.

The luncheon will begin at noon, with Mr. Pearson beginning his remarks at approximately 12:20 P.M. and concluding at approximately 1:00 P.M. For those interested, a guided tour of the Shell Building will be conducted by GSDC Executive Director Michael Smith immediately after the luncheon.

The event is free for Committee of 100 members and \$15 for the general public. Registration in advance is appreciated.

To register or for more information call Lisa Taylor at 704-871-0062

## 40th Anniversary of "First Flight" Celebrated

### Re-enactment to be held on October 4th

The community is invited to come watch the 40th anniversary hot air balloon flight commemorating the very first flight in Iredell County!

The photo to the right is of Pilot Bill Meadows and balloon designer Tracy Barnes as they prepared to launch from the parking lot at Village Inn Pizza (beside JRs).



Date: Sunday, October 4th, 2009

Location: Signal Hill Mall (lower mall next to I-77)  
Statesville, NC.

Time: Fly at 5:00 pm or as soon as wind and weather will allow.

Bring your kids and friends and enjoy a little bit of history and an exciting mini-rally with our special guests!

Following is Bill Meadow's history of the flight:

"On October 4, 1969 Tracy Barnes and I made this historic flight from the Signal Hill Mall at 5:00 pm. Tracy and I had met in Charlotte a month or so before and this date was picked because Tracy would be in route to deliver the 'Land of Oz' balloon he had just completed to Beach Mountain, North Carolina. This would be the first flight for both of us in his newly designed triangle basket which became the trade mark of the balloons he started manufacturing 5 years later at Rhyne Aerodrome near Love Valley. This flight was my first balloon training flight.

We flew west over downtown Statesville and landed just short of the Statesville Airport 1 hour and 15 minutes later. In December 1969 I became the first pilot in the southeast to be awarded the FAA's new Hot-Air-Balloon License."

## Just for Fun

**Unlike the Statesville Haunted Prison, our ghosts are REAL.**

If you've ever done a web search on "Statesville," you've probably stumbled across the Statesville Haunted Prison. This is a haunted house-type attraction in Illinois. Fortunately, we don't have to go half way across the country for Haunted Statesville, a walking tour of famous -- and infamous -- haunted sites right here in downtown. Sponsored by the DSDC and the City of Statesville, the Haunted Statesville tours last a little over an hour and cover all of the ghost lore and legend of the area. I did this last year and highly recommend it as fun for the whole family... don't worry, it's strictly PG and any little ghosts over the age of 7 or 8 should be fine.



Step beyond the beauty of Statesville's historic downtown and discover its true haunted history - where tales of spirits, scary creatures, mysterious deaths and creepy alleys become real.

Tours run Oct. 24-25 and Oct. 31-Nov. 1.

Tickets \$8 each or 4 for \$30. Tours departing every half hour.

Advance tickets/reservations required; space is limited. Call 704-878-3480 for information on where to purchase tickets.



The Greater Statesville Development Corporation (GSDC) is a public-private partnership of local governments and business leaders. Our purpose is to promote the industrial and commercial development of the City of Statesville, the Town of Troutman and the surrounding area of upper Iredell County, North Carolina. We provide a variety of services and assistance to help locate, maintain and expand new and existing businesses and industries in our area.

View available [sites and buildings](#).

View [resources](#) for existing industry.

Learn more about the [Committee of 100](#).

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