

Business Pulse

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In another blast from the past, Delores was known for her kindness in extending credit and allowing families to pay her at the end of each month. She'd let kids pick up a cold drink, then get the money from their parents when they stopped by the store a few days later.

Those are things that just don't happen anymore, mainly because the store owner would rarely collect the money these days, an unfortunate commentary on our society.

One thing I can say about owning a country store is it's a constant commitment. Delores' Market was open seven days a week and I'd often see Delores in there working on Sundays when I would stop in to get gas for my lawnmower.

I remember talking to Delores when she sold the market in January 2006. It's hard to believe that was more than 12 years ago.

"I'm ready for a break," Delores told me for a story published in the paper. "I've enjoyed it, but I don't know where the time went. This store is so much work, you can't do much else."

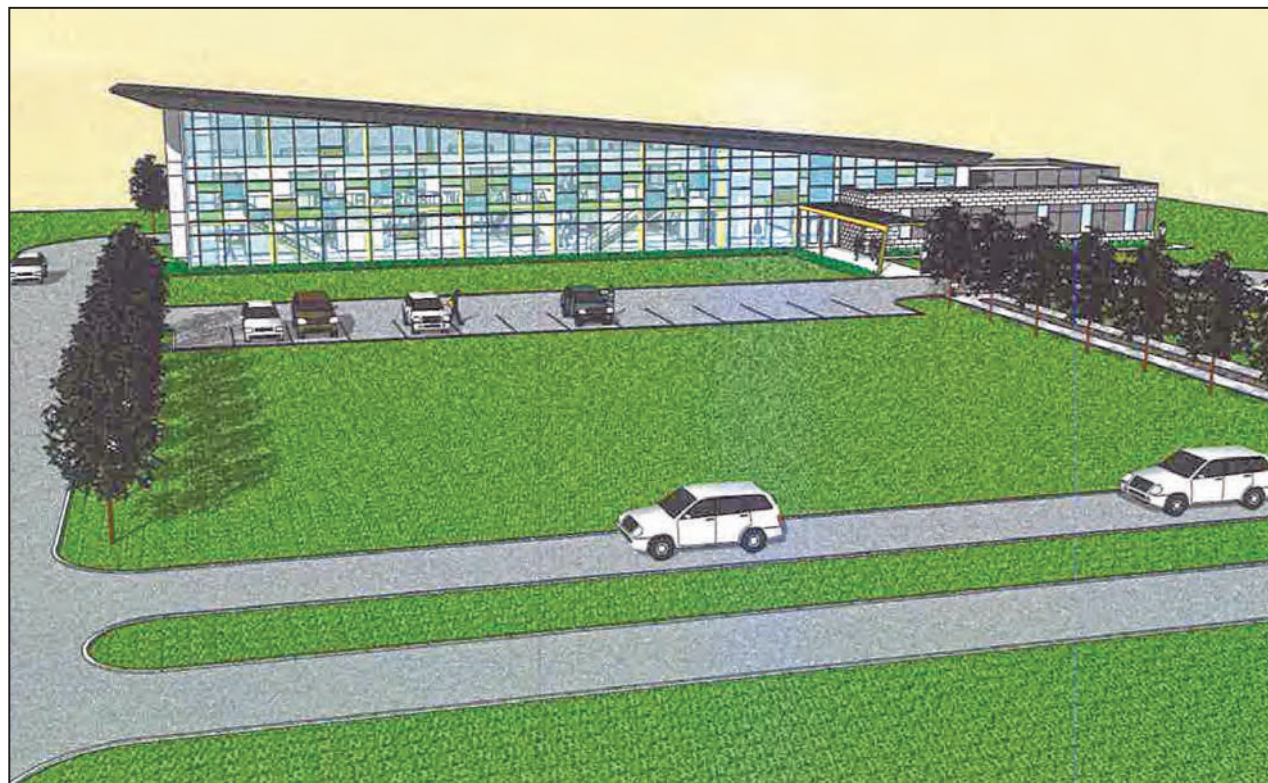
Where does the time go? That's a question we all can ask. I'm honored to have gotten the chance to know Delores Glenn and I am thankful for her wonderful store and its place in Warren County history.

MORE AUTO JOBS COMING?

It was a lively meeting of the Industrial Development Board on Thursday as director Don Alexander says things look promising for the two sites available at Mt. View Industrial Park.

Don says he's been receiving interest in the sites, but he's especially encouraged by the January announcement that Toyota and Mazda will be opening a \$1.6 billion joint automotive plant in Huntsville, Ala. The plant is projected to create 4,000 jobs.

"They've indicated they want to look outside their



Bids for the proposed Advanced Robotics Center in McMinnville were opened Wednesday and there was sticker shock. The lowest bid came in higher than the construction budget, leaving officials to ponder their next step. Pictured is a proposed design for the \$5.5 million facility.

direct hire area for their suppliers," said Don. "In being about two hours from the plant, we are right in their area. We know TVA was very active in their site selection of Huntsville and they are going to need a lot of supplier operations to support it. We have the only two sites that are Tennessee certified in the Upper Cumberland area and our sites are being listed by TVA. They wanted a complete inventory of sites that are shovel ready."

If the Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga is any indication, automotive plants produce a tremendous amount of spin-off jobs. In a 2015 University of Tennessee study, the Volkswagen plant created 2,000 direct jobs along with another 9,800 support jobs in the region.

Automotive plants have a significant impact on the regional economy. They stimulate home construction and lead to new restaurants. Just look what the Nissan

plant has done to Rutherford County. So perhaps we can reap some of the benefits of this new Toyota and Mazda plant that's some 95 miles away in Huntsville.



ALEXANDER

Warren County needs to continue to attract manufacturing companies. Even with our unemployment rate at a low 4.1 percent in January, there's going to be a time when that rate begins to climb and jobs are harder to find.

Don and our Industrial Development Board certainly understand this and that's why they continue to work toward recruiting new industry.

ROBOTICS BIDS TOO HIGH

It was a grand day in November of 2016 when Gov. Bill Haslam announced a \$5.5 million grant had been awarded to Motlow College to build a sparkling Advanced Robotics Center

right here in McMinnville. The facility was projected to open in the spring of 2018, which, for those with an eye on the calendar, is right now.

Since that festive announcement, there has been nothing but speed bumps along the way. Not only is our robotics facility not open, but construction hasn't even begun. The project has not proceeded according to plan.

This is not to suggest a tone of negativity on my part. It's just a recap, a summary, a 20-second review of what's happened.

It appeared action was finally in store for our Advanced Robotics Center on Wednesday when project bids were unsealed. But instead of full steam ahead, the bids have led to more regrouping as the lowest bid came in higher than the amount budgeted for construction.

"This doesn't lessen our commitment. It heightens our challenge," Motlow vice president Terri Bryson told me Friday. "We view this facility as a prize for the

McMinnville community and we will rise to the occasion and develop a plan to solve this problem. This project is a mission and we're fully committed to it."

Terri said the bids were just opened Wednesday so college officials haven't had time to fully evaluate their options.

She said the construction bids will be analyzed in the coming days to determine if removing add-ons will be enough to reduce the cost or if other measures will need to be taken.

IDB director Don Alexander mentioned the high bids Thursday during the board's monthly meeting. He told me Friday the higher than expected bids are the result of a booming construction industry.

"They say a rising tide raises all ships and that's the case with construction right now," said Don. "Nobody is hurting for work so nobody is going to submit a really low bid so they can get the job. Everybody has plenty to do."

Officials seem to still be

radiating with optimism the project will be done so I'm going to echo their confidence and predict our Advanced Robotics Center will be a thing of beauty and it will be a reality. It might not be as fast as we'd like, but it will happen.

MOTLOW TO HOLD CAREER FAIR

Speaking of Motlow, the community college has seen its enrollment explode in recent years due to free tuition offered through the state. As a result, there's a need for more faculty members to teach all those new students.

If you're interested in teaching, there will be a hiring fair at the McMinnville campus for adjunct faculty members this Tuesday, March 20, from 5 to 7 p.m. It will take place in the front lobby and Kathy Reynolds is the contact.

Adjunct faculty can teach a maximum of 12 hours in the fall and spring semesters for a total of 24 hours per academic year. Positions available include teaching day, evening, weekend and online classes at all four Motlow campuses.

Course subjects include: accounting, anthropology, art, biology, business, chemistry, clinical nursing (BSN accepted, MSN preferred), computer science, criminal justice, early childhood education, economics, education, engineering, English, geography, geology, health/physical education, history, information systems, mass communications, mathematics, mechatronics, music, physical science, physics, political science, psychology, reading, sociology, Spanish, speech and theatre.

A master's degree in any of the aforementioned areas of study, or a master's degree in any area with 18 graduate semester hours in one of the areas, is required to apply.

THAT'S ALL FOLKS

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