

WBD LEGACY INVESTORS



BURGAW MANUFACTURER GUNS FOR GLOBAL MARKET LEADERSHIP

Privately-held businesses are the lifeblood of the U.S. economy. In Greater Wilmington, entrepreneurial companies fuel much of the region's job and investment growth. For the past year, Edge-Works Manufacturing Company has been quietly growing its presence in Burgaw, drawing talent from across the region as it builds market share through business partnerships and e-commerce operations. The 13-year-old firm is a leading maker of firearm holsters and related accessories under the G-Code Tactical brand.

"We moved from Jacksonville about a year ago," says Jesse Lockhart, senior vice president at the company. Founder Scott Evans started Edge-Works in the spare bedroom of his house in Jacksonville. "Growing pains" led the company to a 60,000-sq.-ft. building in Burgaw in 2018, up from the 12,000 square feet it previously occupied. A convenient location off I-40 plus an attractive price-tag sharpened Pender County's appeal. "The price per square foot really made a difference," Lockhart says.



Wilmington Business Development worked directly with Edge-Works management throughout their relocation/expansion process. From ally meetings to building search, WBD's efforts were imperative to this win for Pender County.

Edge-Works makes all manner of holsters for law enforcement professionals, private security firms and military organizations. "Our customer base can be pretty much anybody who carries a gun for a job," Lockhart says. The company also sells to consumer hobbyists. "That's a huge part of our sales." Common to every sale is a G-Code product sourced completely from domestic materials. "One thing that sets us apart is that we're 100% American made," he says.

Since joining the company 13 years ago, Lockhart has watched Edge-Works grow from a five-person shop to a workforce that now ranges from 60 to 70. "We're actively hiring at the moment," says Lockhart. The company's current growth trajectory has its workforce ultimately growing to 120. Hurricane Florence delayed those plans last year. "We had to hit the re-set button on everything."

Edge-Works is global in scope. "Our customers can be anywhere," Lockhart says. "Whether you're a Navy Seal jumping out of a chopper or a dad teaching your child how to shoot, we've got something for you." Also setting the company apart is the lifetime guarantee it makes on every product. The promise grew from a contract Edge-Works won with the U.S. Army. "The Army required a two-and-a-half-year testing process they ran our products through." The quality assurance efforts were rigorous but had big rewards, Lockhart says. "That contract really put us on the map."

STEM TEACHER OF THE YEAR FOCUSES ON 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

In her role as an educator, Amy Engle, the 2018 recipient of the Corning/WBD Award for STEM Teaching Excellence, doesn't settle for the usual science, technology, engineering and math content. Her approach also incorporates art into STEM learning models. She calls it "STEAM" education.

One learning activity, for example, starts with students drawing the human digestive system and then coding the "voice" of a human body. It is an interactive approach for teaching biology, math, art and technology. Including a drawing exercise "gives students that piece of artistic creativity that is part of the 21st century skills-set," Engle says. "Along with teamwork and collaboration, creativity is something they'll need to



thrive in today's work environment."

Engle is a media specialist at Topsail Middle School. The award, presented in December by Corning and WBD, is in recognition for

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CEO NOTES/OPINION SUPPORT FOR EXISTING INDUSTRY REMAINS KEY

WBD's visionary founders got a lot right when they sought to create an economic development model capable of delivering persistent, real-time results. Making WBD a membership-driven organization was a smart move both strategically and tactically. The structure creates cohesion among our partners, allies

and stakeholders across local government, the educational sector and our business community. WBD embodies a shared mutual interest in a dynamic, growing and diversified regional economy, as well as the widespread rewards that come with it.

The advantages of being member-focused also are evident at the day-to-day level. The most obvious example of this is our existing-industry support services. The International Economic Development Council (IEDC) routinely cites a statistic that highlights the importance of ongoing, systematic business retention and expansion efforts: companies already having a presence in a community generate up to 80% of net new jobs. The figure does not include recruitment leads local businesses help us uncover through referrals.

WBD's dialogue with Greater Wilmington's existing employers is woven into our daily work. Like most aspects of economic development, it is best done by a team. That starts with our staff, all of whom interface on some level with representatives of our business community. In recent weeks, Cliff Pyron has joined forces with Billy King to be the

"point of the spear" in our existing industry program. Our board also is part of that team. The team extends to our workforce and educational partners, technical allies and government stakeholders. Ultimately the greatest resource available to our businesses is each other, and WBD has a proven track record as a venue where those relationships are planted and nurtured.

And the value-chain runs in both directions: conversations with existing industry leaders keep us in close touch with emerging trends in our regional economy well before government data or academic research uncovers them. As economic development professionals, WBD's staff relies on the feedback of HR directors, plant managers, c-suite executives and business owners for a complete, up-to-date understanding of the forces affecting our economy and the industries comprising it. That intelligence informs WBD's planning and strategic leadership.

Our status as a membership-led entity enables all this – and more. In the end, WBD's work strengthens the connections between companies and the community, yielding fertile soils for employers to grow and flourish here.

Sincerely,

R. Scott Satterfield
CEO

MEET WBD'S NEWEST EMPLOYEE: CLIFF PYRON

WBD's seasoned staff of economic development professionals has recently grown. As of January 15, Cliff Pyron is serving in the role of Senior Manager, Business Development.

A Wilmington resident, Pyron spent more than four years at the NC State Ports Authority, working most recently there as account manager. His responsibilities put him in close touch with local, regional and statewide economic developers and allies. He joined the Ports Authority in September 2014 as communications manager after working as a broadcast journalist. Pyron is a 2009 graduate of UNC Wilmington, where he majored in communications. He also served on the board of directors at North Carolina's Southeast, the Elizabethtown-based economic development marketing partnership covering 18 counties.

"Cliff has hit the ground running, as we knew he would," said Scott Satterfield, CEO of the organization. In his early weeks on the job, Pyron has worked closely with Billy King, WBD's Director of Business Development. "Our team dynamic has a whole new dimension – with Cliff's energy and new ideas combining with Billy's seasoned and technical expertise," Satterfield said.

Pyron's collaboration with WBD while working at the Ports enabled him to start his new position without too steep of a learning curve. "After years of working together as partners, I'm honored to join the WBD team and help build on its admirable legacy of results," he said. Going to college, beginning his career and starting a family in Wilmington sparked Pyron's visible commitment to the region and its economic future. "I have a great passion not only for creating jobs and bringing new investment here but supporting existing industry across our region," he says.

Pyron's new role spans responsibilities in business recruitment and support for existing companies in WBD's service area.



STEM TEACHER OF THE YEAR FOCUSES ON 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

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innovations she pioneered during her prior tenure at South Topsail Elementary School. "I incorporate a lot of technology into this," she says. The PTO supported her efforts by raising \$20,000 for the purchase of new iPads so that Sphero robots could be integrated into the learning environment. Other modules blend history and civics with Sphero to weave technology into humanities and liberal arts.

Engle received her undergraduate education at UNCW and holds a Masters in Library Science from NC Central University. She was nominated for the annual award by Jennifer Angel, her principal at South Topsail Elementary, and the instructional team at Pender County Schools.

"One of the first things we look for is an educator that excites student interest in STEM," says Corning's Bob Trapp, who chairs the selection committee for the award. Letters of support received by the committee from both parents and students offered compelling testimonials to the effectiveness of Engle's teaching model. Students were "talking non-stop about coding," one parent reported. "We knew we were recognizing a deserving educator," Trapp said.

THOMAS & HUTTON PROJECTS MOVE ONTO NATIONALS AFTER TAKING TOP HONORS AT SOUTH CAROLINA'S AMERICAN COUNCIL OF ENGINEERING COMPANIES' EXCELLENCE

On January 5, 2019 two of Thomas & Hutton's projects were named in the Top 6 Engineering Excellence projects in South Carolina, "South Carolina's Framework for Freight" Camp Hall Rail and "Horry County Schools Think Energy Positive". The "Horry County Schools Think Energy Positive" project was awarded South Carolina's

highest honor – the Palmetto Award. Both projects now move into the national competition at the American Council of Engineering Companies' (ACEC) annual Engineering Excellence Awards (EEA) competition in May 2019.

WEBSITE UPGRADES PROVIDE CLEARER PICTURE OF WBD, GREATER WILMINGTON

Given their global footprints and 24/7 timeframes, site selection professionals increasingly rely on economic development websites for their initial market research. Internet-based promotion by communities and regions is thus rapidly growing and rapidly changing. Ease of use is a top consideration: the digital research firm Hosting Facts found, for example, that a page-load delayed by as little as one second could turn away 7% of users.

These and other trends drove recent upgrades and improvements to WBD's web presence. The revamped site was demonstrated to the organization's board of directors on March 21 and unveiled to the general public later that day.

"One of our main goals was to make navigation easier," explains Brett Neville of Cape Fear Design, which worked with WBD to build the new site (<https://wilmingtonbusinessdevelopment.com>). Gone is the crowded list of drop-down menus, replaced with a simple series of "parent pages" along the top of the view. "End users can find what they're looking for without having to dig too much," Neville says.

Another immediately noticeable improvement are the site's compelling images. The upgrades replaced much of the "stock photography" previously used with more spontaneous pictures provided by WBD members and allies. "That made it more of a community effort," Neville says. Engaging images enabled the design team to rely less on verbal narratives. "There's less text, and the text that we do have is more to the point." The upgraded site includes software that makes it easier for the WBD staff to keep its digital inventory of available properties and buildings consistent and up-to-date. "The overall objective for me as a developer is to make it possible for clients to edit their sites in a way that is user-friendly," adds Neville.



HELP ESTABLISH NEW HANOVER AND PENDER COUNTIES AS A WORK READY COMMUNITY

Being designated an NCWorks Certified Work Ready Community reflects the Cape Fear Region's efforts to improve economic growth by giving students and others the foundational & technical skills needed to thrive in the workplace. One requirement is that businesses recognize the value of the Career Readiness Certification (CRC). The CRC is a credential that measures and articulates that a person has "real world" cognitive job skills that are useful for any occupation—skilled or professional, regardless of education level. The CRC reflects the skill level and trainability of the individual. It is a recognizable level of certification, which can be a valuable hiring tool for business, making us more competitive for economic development prospects. Complete the short form at www.workreadycommunities.org/business/ form to show your support for New Hanover and Pender Counties becoming a Work Ready Community.

To learn more about this program contact:

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AHEAD FOR MAY: WBD'S 2019 GOLF TOURNEY

The stage is set for the region's preeminent yearly corporate golf event. The 17th Annual WBD Membership Invitational will take place May 8 at River Landing. A full slate of 46 teams are set to compete. This year's tournament has a new corporate sponsor: First National Bank.

"WBD's golf tournament has grown from little more than an idea in 2002 into one of the go-to business events on the region's calendar," said WBD Chairman Bill Cherry. "There aren't many better opportunities to show support for economic development in Greater Wilmington while building fellowship among the region's business leaders."

In addition to First National Bank, sponsors of this year's tournament include Wilmington International Airport (ILM) as Breakfast Sponsor, McKinley Building as Lunch Sponsor, PNC Bank as 19th Hole Sponsor and Coastal Beverage as Beverage Sponsor. "We appreciate the generosity of all our sponsors for this unique gathering of WBD's members, investors, leaders and partners," Cherry said.

Proceeds from the event support the organization's global marketing initiatives.



First National Bank



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