

Broadwater speaks at Talbot business awards breakfast

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EASTON — More than 200 representatives of local businesses, state officials and guests attended the sixth annual Talbot County Business Appreciation Awards Breakfast on Thursday, April 24, at The Milestone.

Hosted by the Talbot County Economic Development Commission and the Talbot County Office of Economic Development, it featured Jason Broadwater, founder and CEO of Revenflo in Rock Hill, S.C., and author of “Old Town New World: Main Street and More in the New Economy,” as the keynote speaker. It also presented three Talbot County awards and four town awards (Easton, Oxford, St. Michaels and Trappe) to businesses that contributed and completed a major project phase during the 2013 calendar year.

The event began with Ted Bautz, chairman of the Talbot County Economic Development Commission, introducing the officials who were present: Chief of Staff Kevin Reigrut and Denise Lovelady of U.S. Rep. Andy Harris’s office; Sen. Richard Colburn, R-37-Mid-Shore; Del. Jeannie Haddaway, R-37B-Talbot; Del. Addie Eckardt, R-37B-Dorchester; and Robert L. Walker, deputy secretary of the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development. Also present were Easton Mayor Robert Willey, members of the Talbot County Council, and officials from Easton, Oxford, Trappe and St. Michaels.

Bautz said the Economic Development Commission is there to “help create a better and safe environment for Talbot County economically.”

Corey Pack, president of the Talbot County Council and liaison to the Economic Development Commission said, “For the first time in several years, I can report to you that the state of your county, Talbot County, is good.”

“The Talbot County Council continues to manage the county’s goal of achieving good, fiscal discipline for its citizens. This is a tradition that we’ve inherited and one that we will continue to be mindful of as we deliberate future budgets and employ sound, fiscal thinking,” Pack said.

He talked about how this year’s budget has shown a slight increase than ones in the past, due to a “slightly improving” economy; future projects the council has set its sights on, such as expanding an existing 911 center on Port Street and how the council wants to expand upon its relationship with Talbot County businesses and ensure they flourish.

“We are eager to attract the best and the brightest here in Talbot County, because we believe in the law

of attraction,” Pack said.

Paige R. Bethke, director of the Talbot County Office of Economic Development, recognized the sponsors of the breakfast: CBIZ, Chesapeake Utilities, Easton Airport, The Henker Group, M&T Bank, PNC Bank, Sperry Van Ness and Wells Fargo.

“In this community, we’re not on our own, because we have a tremendous outpouring of business support that we should all be very proud of,” Bethke said.

Chairman Ted Bautz and Vice Chairman Geoff Oxnam of the Talbot County Economic Development Commission presented the awards. The businesses honored made great strides in 2013 in one of three areas: innovation, investment and expansion.

The Talbot County award recipients were the Rotary Career Path Initiative of Easton for innovation, Achievement Park of Easton and Best Western Plus Easton Inn & Suites for investment and Trident Aircraft at Easton Airport for expansion.

For the town awards, the investment recipients for Easton were David Valliant for purchasing and renovating the Daylight Building and Bruce Marvel of Marvel Construction; the investment recipient for St. Michaels was Diana Quatman Mautz, owner of the Carpenter Street Saloon; the innovation recipient for Oxford was Ian Fleming, partner and Mark Salter, chef and partner, of the Robert Morris Inn; and the expansion recipients for Trappe were President C.O. Johnson, owner Richard Marks of Paris Foods Corporation and Bob Breeding General Contractors.

Mike Henry, Easton Airport manager and Talbot County Economic Development Commission member, introduced Broadwater by touching upon his concept of “a connected village.” Henry also mentioned Broadwater’s book, “Old Town New World: Main Street and More in the New Economy,” saying, “In it, he describes a new era in our economy and culture, and lays out a strategy that communities and businesses alike can use to be successful in this new world.”

Broadwater, a firm believer of businesses using the Internet in diverse ways, opened his segment by talking about how crucial connectivity is to businesses, saying, “I talk about the concept of a ‘connected village.’ To me, that’s what success looks like in the new economy.”

“You know, the world’s changing, that’s one thing it always does ... If you look at what holds an economy together, it’s always about connectivity,” he said.

But what exactly does the idea of a “connected village” mean?

According to Broadwater, it’s an intermeshing of local businesses and the community (village) they’re in, forming relationships on many levels and using the Internet to promote the growth of both. If a community is stable, has a thriving population, “authentic culture” and “robust Internet access,” then the businesses will expand, thus continuing this beneficial symbiotic circle, he said.

For this to happen, Broadwater said, businesses should ensure they help in revitalizing the community and “invest back into the community to bring more business.”

“Why make a million widgets in one town? To ship them all over the world and bring the money back home,” Broadwater said.

He talked about the importance of talent to “the connected village,” saying, “Talent drives this whole thing, talent chooses to be a village of their choice. It’s about lifestyle. Businesses are chasing talent, but the funny thing is, talent just wants to be in a community.”

Mentioning how students can go on to become “talent,” he advised those attending to go to colleges and high schools, promoting what they do so that fresh eyes may join their staff.

Though the Internet has added the option to be able to work anywhere, Broadwater said, most people choose not to do that, opting instead to work among their peers and forming small communities, which further helps a business grow. For that to happen, a business needs to be versed in social media, to employ the “millennial generation” and have strong ties to the outlying community.

Wrapping up his speech, Broadwater said, “Our economies are all about connectivity. Embrace the authenticity of your village, don’t tear it all down, don’t sprawl it out. Focus on the village, make it compelling and a place we all want to be, and provide robust connectivity, both Internet and physically. That way, the talent doesn’t need to go to Baltimore or D.C., but rather would choose to stay here.”

“You all have a great and beautiful thing here. Don’t lose sight of it,” he said.

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