

Thursday, March 24, 2005

Butler Co. area's top job magnet

By Janice Morse
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Butler County led Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky in keeping old jobs and attracting new ones last year, officials say, partly because the county is "geographically blessed" and has development-friendly policies.

"The fact that Cincinnati and Dayton are growing together and we're in the middle of it is probably our chief asset," Brian Coughlin, county economic development director, said Wednesday, a day after the Cincinnati USA Partnership released the jobs data in its regional growth report. "The confluence of quality-of-life and a good business climate make it an attractive place to live and work."

Butler County's growth in 2004 outpaced its combined 2002-03 growth in jobs created and jobs retained, said Joe Kramer, president of the Butler County Alliance, a public/private economic development partnership.

The 45 new construction and expansion projects in Butler County created 3,115 new jobs in 2004 versus a combined 2,108 new jobs in 2002 and 2003.

The county also retained a total of 6,123 existing jobs in 2004 compared to 369 jobs retained in 2002-03.

"While many parts of the country are struggling to recover from the recent recession and the loss of manufacturing jobs it caused, over 700 new manufacturing jobs were created in Butler County in 2004," said Chuck Furmon, commission president.

Even during the 2002-03 recession, half of Butler's new jobs were in manufacturing, officials said.

Hospitals were another source of growth for the county.

JOBS IN OUR REGION				
Employment and earnings by county, 2004				
County	New jobs	Retained jobs	Total jobs	Total earnings
Boone	1,308	3,054	4,362	\$182.4M
Brown	3	N/A	3	\$72,679
Butler	3,115	6,123	9,238	\$389M
Campbell	N/A	163	163	\$6.8M
Clermont	208	309	517	\$18.7M
Gallatin	10	N/A	10	\$650,296
Hamilton	2,984	3,097	6,081	\$251.1M
Kenton	276	238	514	\$17.1M
Warren	1,282	1,013	2,295	\$96.6M
Total	9,186	13,997	23,183	\$962.5M

Source: 2004 Cincinnati USA Partnership Regional Growth Report

Fort Hamilton Hospital in Hamilton is completing an \$18-million, 43,000-square-foot expansion that will add 185 jobs.

Fairfield's Mercy Hospital added a 100,000-square-foot bio-medical expansion costing \$4.5 million and creating 100 jobs.

Butler's convenient location, interstate highway access and governmental leaders taking steps to encourage business are key factors, Coughlin said, and county, municipal and township officials have made economic development a top priority.

It's difficult to predict whether the county's growth this year can beat last year's, Coughlin said.

But, he said, "We're starting out strong again."

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