

MB Chamber of Commerce President addresses group
Industries contribute to Marion County's bright future

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By Jennifer Bartell
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“Today we show our appreciation to the industries in Marion County,” Larry Atkinson, chairman of Marion County Economic Development Commission said on Wednesday. The commission, along with the Marion Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Mullins Chamber of Commerce, sponsored the annual industry appreciation luncheon. In his invocation, the Rev. A.C. Robinson gave thanks for the industries that exist in Marion County and for other industries that are on the way.

“For years we’ve known that Marion County is in a good location, and we’re going to see that in the next five years,” Atkinson said. Economic contributions Marion County industries made in 2006 include over \$2 million in taxes paid to Marion County, an annual payroll of nearly \$59 million and an economic impact of nearly \$150 million, a brief report said. More than 30 Marion County industries were listed in the event’s program.

“We know that a lot of great things are going on in Horry County, especially, Myrtle Beach,” Atkinson said, adding that it would be informative to know what’s going on in Horry County and how it affects Marion County.

“I believe the future of Marion County is bright,” Myrtle Beach Chamber of Commerce President Brad Dean said, making his remarks to the 80 or so people gathered. “I know other people will tell you otherwise ... they’ll tell you the problem is simply in the schools or the community and we’ve got some challenges in South Carolina schools.” He said Marion County has some unique potential.

After warning any environmentalists present, Dean said Interstate 73 is one of the most important infrastructure projects for the entire region. He also emphasized the impact retirees will have on Marion County and the region in coming years. Growth is coming, whether we want it or not, Dean said. Also, As baby boomers continue retiring, up to 10,000 of them a day will retire. Thousands of people will move to the Southeast, Dean said. Marion and Horry counties and the region are connected, he said. An interstate highway, a regional airport, an inland distribution center and thousands of people moving to this area can create an “economic explosion,” Dean said.

Atkinson reported that Gov. Mark Sanford recently presented Wayne Burdick, president of Beneteau, the Economic Development Ambassador award. After the luncheon, Burdick said Beneteau has 340 plus employees. “We only had 174 employees when I started a decade ago,” Burdick said.