

'Roots' program sought

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College graduates, return to your roots.

The Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce wants area students to know there are job opportunities locally for them after they graduate.

“Return to Roots,” a Southwestern Virginia program that helps young adults from the region find jobs near home, is being considered for expansion into Southside. The program is funded by the Virginia Tobacco Commission.

The chamber and its counterparts in Danville-Pittsylvania County and Halifax County are preparing a Young Professionals Recruitment Strategy that will be incorporated into Return for Roots if the program expands into Southside.

“We want to host events to showcase businesses in the community that are interested in hiring young people,” Martinsville-Henry County Chamber President Amanda Witt told the chamber’s board Thursday.

Chamber officials have met with local business leaders and West Piedmont Workforce Investment Board officials to discuss ideas. They include a job fair, an internship program and listing job opportunities targeted to young adults on chamber Web sites, according to Witt.

No definite plans to implement those ideas are in place, Witt said, noting that the chambers are waiting to hear whether the tobacco commission gives its approval.

She is optimistic, she said, because the program has been successful in the southwest part of the state.

Also Thursday, the chamber board approved eight new members and dropped 14 members.

New members are Badcock Home Furnishings, Broad Street Christian Church, H & K Meat Market, Martinsville Report, Pandora’s Lunch Box, Skyline Tree Service, West End Beauty and Barber Center and Hopkins Delivery Service.

Dropped were Belk, Darnell H. Cockram, Commonwealth Microtechnologies, Enterprise Consulting, GCS Electronics, J.C. Penney, J.R. Joyce, Management Recruiters, MARC Workshop, Quality Motors, Sasser Signs, Specialty Gifts, Thompson Arthur Division and VF Imagewear.

Many of the drops were for economic reasons, said Sharon Shepherd, the chamber's deputy director.

The board also learned that:

- The chamber — with the board's approval — is in the process of reducing the board from 24 to 18 members.

Chamber officials feel it will be easier for business to be conducted with fewer board members, according to Witt.

As board members' terms end, they will not be replaced until the number of seats is down to 18, she said.

- The National I-73/74 Corridor Association will meet May 23 in Greensboro, N.C. Witt said she plans to attend that meeting, but the focus will be on the planned Interstate 73's route through North Carolina and South Carolina.

Plans call for I-73 to run through Henry County east of Martinsville.

Witt said that only positive comments about I-73 were heard during a public hearing on the Virginia Department of Transportation's Six-Year Improvement Plan held recently in Lynchburg.

- The annual Business Appreciation Luncheon will be at noon Wednesday at Bassett Country Club. Jeffrey Anderson, executive director of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, will be the guest speaker.

Various awards will be presented to local businesses.

- The chamber's Annual Meeting and Leadership Recognition Dinner will be at 6 p.m. May 21 at Chatmoss Country Club. Former governor Mark Warner will be the guest speaker.

Chamber officials on Thursday also welcomed Autumn Clark, an intern at the organization this summer. Clark, a student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is in the New College Institute's summer internship program.