



# BEDFORD BUSINESS FIRST

News from Bedford County Office of Economic Development

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## Sam Moore makes adjustments to work environment and improves retention rates



In March we held a Business Retention and Expansion visit with Sam Moore in the Town of Bedford.

They have 237 employees and 10 new employees joining their team over the next two weeks. For the first time in many years, they are fully staffed.

Over the past several years, and then highlighted by the pandemic, the company faced a devastating shortage of employees. Determined to retain its workforce, they made adjustments to improve the working conditions and benefits for their employees. A new A/C unit has been installed in the upholstery area, they improved their compensation and classification to be more competitive, and added paid time off for sick days and holidays.

Since childcare is the number one issue for their staff, as is for many other Bedford area businesses, the company now offers some flexibility in hours since most daycares don't open until 6 a.m. which is the start time at Sam Moore. The company allows employees to come in 7 a.m., if needed, so they can get their children off to daycare. They offer in-house training for sewing and upholstery, and other skills.

One of the most interesting facts about the visit is that 20 - 30% of their employees are Spanish speaking. They work with a local English as a Second Language (ESL) group and are finding great candidates through that program.



## Georgia-Pacific going strong since 1891

On Thursday, staff, along with representatives from the Lynchburg Regional Business Alliance and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership met with plant management at Georgia-Pacific in Big Island. They opened in 1891 and have nearly 300 employees at its plant that operates 24/7/365, making them the oldest and the largest employer in Bedford County. One family has had 5 generations work there! The company also has a personal trainer on site to help prevent workplace injuries.

Additionally, they have made significant investments in advanced technology for control systems over the past several years and recycles 1,000 tons of paper every year.

Check out their video showcasing their environmental stewardship - [Faces of the Forest: Meet the Big](#)



## New Retreat and Adventure Center opens in Thaxton

The Peaks Retreat and Adventure Center held a ribbon cutting ceremony on Monday, April 4. The center offers conferences, professional retreats, weddings and much more. It boasts more than 8,000 sf. ft. of event space, lodging for up to 80 guests, 5+ acres of camping spaces, outdoor amphitheater, zip climbing, low ropes course, swimming pool, trails, canoeing, basketball, and disc golf and more! Find them at [ThePeaksCenter.org](https://ThePeaksCenter.org)

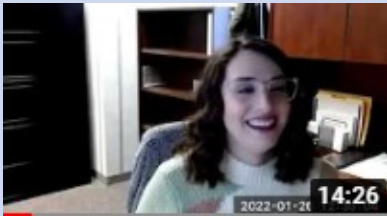


## Bedford County Administration hires Shelley Basinger as its new Public Information Officer

County Administrator, Robert Hiss, announced in February that he has hired Shelley Basinger as Bedford County's new Public Information Officer (PIO). This is a newly created position within the organization.

Ms. Basinger has been the managing editor with VistaGraphics since 2016. In this role, she oversaw the development of three regional magazines: Lynchburg Living, Lynchburg Business, and Central VA Bridal Guide. Prior to that, she held roles in marketing at Liberty University and as an anchor/reporter/producer at WSET-TV. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Journalism from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Read the full release [here](#).

[Follow the County Administration's Facebook page here.](#)



## Bedford ONE Career Conversations continue to explore local pathways to success

Our monthly career conversations this spring have included Mackenzie Caun with Sentry Equipment, Tyler Paitzel with Bedford Regional Water Authority (BRWA), and Randy Dunton with Legacy Education Center.

**Mackenzie Caun** is a recent graduate of Liberty University and started her career with Sentry Equipment in Forest following her internship with the company. She is a HR Generalist and loves working with people. [Listen to her talk](#) about what she likes the most about her job.

**Tyler Paitzel** is a graduate of Liberty High School and is now a Maintenance Tech II with BRWA. [Watch this video](#) to learn about his responsibilities and the equipment he maintains.

**Randy Dunton** is the founder of Legacy Education Center (LEC) and he shared information with the students about the opportunities at LEC post-high school. Hear what Randy has to say [here](#).

Check out all of our Career Conversations on our [YouTube channel](#). Want to join in the conversation? Contact [Holley](#) Scheffel if you would like to be featured on an upcoming segment.

## Summer Farmers Markets opening dates announced!

The Forest Farmers Market summer season begins on Saturday, April 30 behind the Forest Library.

Both markets are open from 8 a.m. - Noon

Come out and support these local businesses!



The Bedford Farmers Market is moving to Saturdays for the upcoming Summer market season.

Opening day is May 7. They will have one more off-season market on Saturday, April 16. The Bedford Farmers Market is located at the Centertown Pavilion.



## Next Generation: Youth Farmers Market is Back!

Did you see them at the market last year or just wonder how to get involved?

Next Generation is a collaborative effort between the Bedford Farmers Market and the Bedford Cooperative Extension to offer a youth-led makers and growers market for young entrepreneurs ages 8 - 15. The goal is to encourage youth to create and showcase their business talents and trades through entrepreneurial education and hands-on experiences. The program begins in April. Apply today!

Contact [MariBeth Martin](#) for registration details.



## EMPLOYERS INTERESTED IN RECRUITING REGIONAL TALENT:



# SAVE THE DATE!

# JOB FAIR

## THURSDAY, JUNE 23 10AM-2PM

### FOREST PUBLIC LIBRARY

MEET POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES, PROVIDE JOB INFORMATION,  
FILL NEEDED INTERNSHIPS & POSITIONS AT YOUR BUSINESS!

RESERVE YOUR SPACE AT [BEDFORDAREACHAMBER.COM](http://BEDFORDAREACHAMBER.COM)





The New London Tech Disc Golf Course made its worldwide debut at number 29 on the 2022 World's Best Disc Golf Courses. Not the state, not the nation, but in the WORLD! There are 13,000 disc golf courses across 80 countries and our course is right up there with the best of the best. [See the full list here.](#)



# DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Current through Q3 2021



**38,373**  
Labor Force



**59.3%**  
Participation  
Rate



**79,811**  
Population



**\$39,502**  
Average Annual  
Wage



**3.2%**  
Unemployment



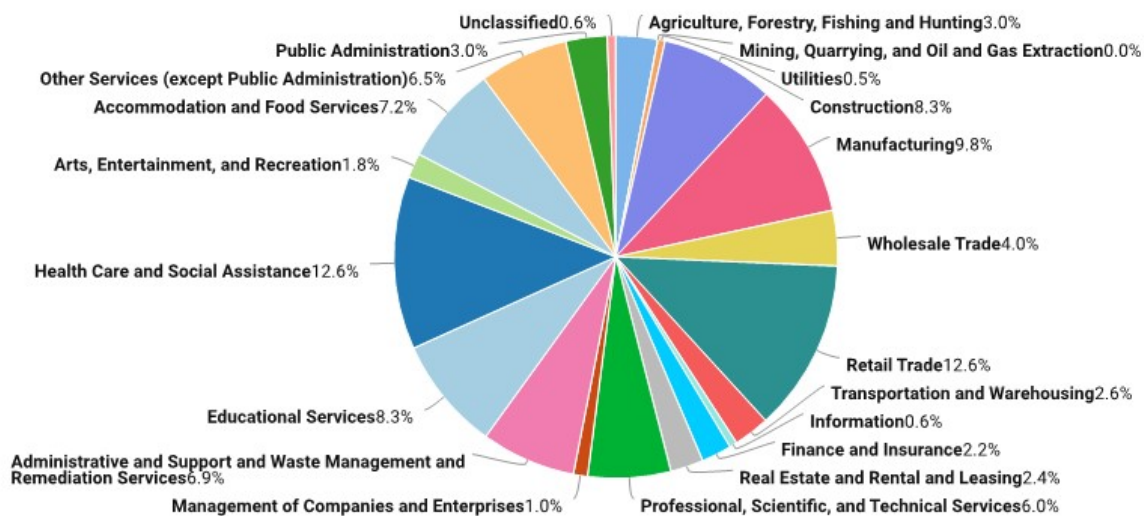
**579**  
Advertised Job  
Openings\*

\*listed on Indeed.com March 2022

The unemployment rate for Bedford County, Virginia was 3.2% as of January 2022. The regional unemployment rate was lower than the national rate of 4.4%. One year earlier, in January 2021, the unemployment rate in Bedford County, Virginia was 5.1%.

The average worker in Bedford County, Virginia earned annual wages of \$39,502 as of 2021Q3. Average annual wages per worker increased 3.5% in the region over the preceding four quarters. For comparison purposes, annual average wages were \$64,555 in the nation as of 2021Q3. The cost of living is 9.4% lower in Bedford County, Virginia than the U.S. average.

Total Workers for Bedford County, Virginia by Industry



The largest sector in Bedford County, Virginia is Health Care and Social Assistance, employing 2,655 workers. The next-largest sectors in the region are Retail Trade and Manufacturing. The sectors with the largest Location Quotients in the region are Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, Other Services (except Public Administration), and Construction.

Sectors in Bedford County, Virginia with the highest average wages per worker are Finance and Insurance (\$80,138), Wholesale Trade (\$65,990), and Management of Companies and Enterprises (\$63,380). Regional sectors with the best job growth (or most moderate job losses) over the last 5 years are Management of Companies and Enterprises (+144 jobs), Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (+141), and Retail Trade (+130).

Over the next 1 year, employment in Bedford County, Virginia is projected to expand by 57 jobs. The fastest growing sector in the region is expected to be Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation with a +2.4% year-over-year rate of growth. The strongest forecast by number of jobs over this period is expected for

## Expanding? We have Business Ready Sites for you.



Our premier **New London Business and Technology Center** park in Forest features pad-ready and cleared lots for sale ranging from 7.5 to 48+ acres for whatever size facility suits your needs. Prices are negotiable based on jobs and investment. [Download the flier here.](#)

The **Bedford Center for Business** has land ready for development including a graded lot, and it lies within the Town's Enterprise Zone and Virginia's Opportunity Zone. [Download the flier here.](#)



In **Montvale Center for Commerce**, two lots are available with nearly 20 combined acres ready for grading. Conveniently located on 460W and close to I-81. [Download the flier here.](#)

Call the Office of Economic Development to learn how we can help your business grow in Bedford County. **540-587-5670** [BedfordEconomicDevelopment.com](http://BedfordEconomicDevelopment.com)

**Did you know we have other commercial listings available on our website?**  
[Check them out here.](#)

### Like what you see?

We post regularly to keep you up to date on projects taking place in the community, continuing education opportunities, and more!



Bedford County Office of Economic Development  
540-587-5670