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# DOC staffers look over Forsyth

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**FORSYTH**—Touring what could be their new hometown was exciting and comforting, several Georgia Department of Corrections headquarters employees said Friday.

Forsyth and Monroe County officials showed a group of 106 DOC employees, about a fourth of the headquarters staff, around the community Friday in the first of several planned tours to educate department personnel about the community.

Gov. Sonny Perdue announced earlier this year that he plans to relocate DOC's headquarters, now divided among five locations in the Atlanta area, to the old Tift College campus in Forsyth. He has allocated \$7.5 million in his 2007 budget, which still must be approved by the Legislature, to

## FORSYTH

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begin renovations. The actual move will begin in 2008 and be completed in 2009.

"I'm sure there's been some anxiety for some of our people since the announcement (about the move)," said Brian Owens, DOC assistant commissioner. "But I think this tour relieves some of that. Not everyone will choose to move, but those who are considering it are a bit more excited after coming down here today."

Owens said he definitely plans to move to Monroe County.

"My wife and I have already been down a few times on our own just to look around. She would like to move right away," he said. "But we'll probably wait



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until we're closer to actually moving the offices. We live in Newnan now, so that would be quite a commute."

Tawanda Anderson, who has worked for DOC for 12 years, said seeing where she will be working in the future was comforting, but she's not sure she'll move to Forsyth.

"I think it will be a good place to work, and after today's tour, it makes me think I could be happy moving here," she said. "But I live in Riverdale, so I could commute from there. It's about a 45-minute drive from there, and I already have that long, or even a little longer due to traffic, to my office in Atlanta."

Not all of the employees plan to remain with the DOC when it moves its headquarters. Some will seek new jobs, others might take early retirement.

"I've enjoyed the tour, but I don't want to move," said one man who asked not to be identified.

me in transferring to another state department in Atlanta."

DOC Commissioner James E. Donald said that the norm in such relocations is that about half the work force will move.

"We have 400 people now, so we expect 200 will come with us and 200 will not. But that's OK. There are plenty of people in this area we can recruit to replace the ones we lose," Donald said.

Owens said many of the losses can come through natural attrition as people retire and leave for other jobs until time for the relocation.

"We're already starting to hold some positions open until we move," he said. "And anyone we hire now will know we're moving, so they'll be prepared

for the change."

Forsyth Mayor Jimmy Pace and Monroe County Commission Chairman Harold Carlisle led a group of local government, school and business leaders who welcomed the DOC employees to Forsyth. In a short program before the tour began, they touted the community's growth, schools, hospital, lower taxes, affordable homes and friendly, small-town atmosphere.

"We're the best kept secret in the state," Monroe County schools Superintendent Scott Cowart told the visitors. "We're close enough, but we're also far enough away. We're a great place to live and raise children."

Then the community leaders led three busloads of DOC

employees on a driving tour of the area, visiting the schools, hospital, golf course, the Georgia Public Safety Training Center, the Tift campus, several subdivisions and downtown. The tour ended with the visitors being treated to lunch downtown.

"We wanted to show them more subdivisions and the new recreation center, but we ran out of time," said City Council member Rosemary Walker. "But this gave them a taste so they'll come back to see more on their own."

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