



the Monroe County

# Reporter

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**WELCOME 'HOME':** State Department of Corrections (DOC) employees visit the Monroe County Reporter during their walking tour of Forsyth last Wednesday. Most DOC employees said it was their first trip to Forsyth and they said they enjoyed the charm and small-town feel of Forsyth. Above, editor Will Davis shows the employees the headline, "Here it comes," about the DOC getting final funds for the move to Tift. Davis gave each DOC members a free Reporter and many of them signed up for a trial subscription. (Gina Herring)

# 'Warm and Welcoming'

*Corrections employees say they like what they see during walking tour of Forsyth*

Dozens of Department of Corrections employees who trekked from Atlanta to Forsyth last Wednesday to tour their future workplace and its community said they liked what they saw.

"The business owners that we met as we walked around the square were so refreshing and had such a warm and welcome feeling," said Brad Patterson, a program manager in human resources. "You can't get that kind of attention in a large city."

Added Mike Long, the deputy director of human resources:

"The...genuineness/ authenticity of the people that we met ...really stood out. These were real folks with genuine pride in their hometown. Everyone was very nice."

The DOC organized the trip to help its employees get acquainted with Forsyth. The department is now just about 18 months away from its scheduled move to the Tift College campus in October 2009.

Some 70 employees toured Tift before getting lunch at the Royal Palm Cafe and taking a walking tour of downtown Forsyth. The tour was

open to all DOC employees but only included room for the first 70 to sign up. Several of the employees said they were trying to decide whether they'll continue working with corrections when it moves to Forsyth. They listed hometowns from all over the metro area, from Powder Springs to Austell to Decatur. Some even hailed from as far away as Fitzgerald.

Better Hometown director Laurie Pippin helped set up the tour, in which local volunteers led groups of about 10 around downtown where business owners met them, giving away goodies in front of their shops.



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Mayor Tye Howard and Monroe County commission chairman James Vaughn also greeted the DOC staffers.

Pippin said DOC employees appreciated the hospitality and the opportunity to see what the town had to offer. She said they were especially impressed by the number of art opportunities in Forsyth, including the Rose Theater, the Arts Alliance and the art glass gallery at Studio 51.

The DOC's Patterson said the Tift tour was very interesting, seeing all the progress being made. He said their van was full of excitement coming down and, more

importantly, going back after seeing the city.

"I think it really presented a side that many in central office had not seen or were not willing to see," said Patterson.

Long agreed.

He said GDC employees were appreciative of the meal and the tours. But he said the character of the town and its people really stood out.

"Not only was the character of the town revealed as we strolled through the square,' said Long, "but one got a sense of the character of the individual business owners. You immediately got the sense that these were good folks. In many ways the tour of the town and meeting the residents out-shined the tour of the facility itself."

DOC director of public affairs Joan Heath said she was extremely proud that her coworkers saw what a wonderful community they are joining.

"The hospitality shown by the City, County, Better Hometown,

Chamber of Commerce and local businesses," said Heath, "was just a small example of what happens here on a daily basis!"

Also on Wednesday, the DOC hosted a job fair at Alderman Hall at the Welcome Center. About 50 local residents submitted resumes hoping to join the DOC.