

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**JUNE 21, 2011**

**TWO INDIVIDUALS HONORED  
DURING RECENT NCEDA CONFERENCE**

*Tom Johnson and Mark Pope receive 2011 Economic Developer of the Year Awards*

RALEIGH, NC – Overwhelming efforts by two of North Carolina’s economic development leaders made it too difficult to select just one honoree for this year’s North Carolina Economic Developers Association’s (NCEDA) Economic Developer of the Year Award.

As a result, two winners were selected – Thomas Johnson, executive director of the Rutherford County Economic Development Corporation, and D. Mark Pope, executive director of the Lenoir County Economic Development Department – in recognition of their outstanding achievements in economic development over the past year.

“Tom Johnson and Mark Pope have worked tirelessly to expand economic development and create jobs in their counties and throughout North Carolina,” said Jimmy Smith, NCEDA president. “This award is a small recognition compared to the impact they have made in their communities and our state.”

**Tom Johnson’s** determination for business recruitment led to successful work with large data center projects looking in Rutherford County. Most impressively, Johnson’s leadership led to the announcement that Facebook will be building their second data center in Rutherford County, investing at least \$450 million and creating over 300 jobs (including immediate construction jobs). Johnson was also integral in establishing CMI Industries in Rutherford County with a new manufacturing facility. These projects will have immense impact on a community that has been hard hit by the exodus of the textile manufacturing sector, as Rutherford County had an unemployment rate of 19.1 percent in January 2010.

**Mark Pope** was critical in bringing new projects to Lenoir County in 2010, gathering the right people and resources to provide assistance. These projects include expansion of DuPont and MasterBrand businesses, along with the establishment of Precision Shavings, Inc., Woodmen of the World Community Center, Spirit Aerosystems and Sanderson Famers’ Processing Plant-Hatchery-Feed Mill. These projects bring a combined 2,974 jobs and \$817.8 million in new investment to Lenoir County. Throughout the year, Pope overcame obstacles, offered continuous guidance and maintained critical relationships to guarantee each project’s success.

**PHOTO OPPORTUNITY:** Photos of award recipients are available upon request.

**ABOUT NCEDA:**

The North Carolina Economic Developers Association is the leading statewide association of professional economic developers and their allies in North Carolina. The nearly 600 members promote the state and its communities as places for new economic activity. They are on the front line of economic development in North Carolina. Based in Raleigh, NCEDA provides professional development, advocacy and information services for its members. For more information, visit NCEDA’s website, [www.nceda.org](http://www.nceda.org).