

Quest

Newsletter of Industrial Opportunities, Inc.

Gibson Retires after 47 Years of Service

The Town of Andrews and Industrial Opportunities, Inc. (IOI) proclaimed July 24, 2025 “Joe Gibson Day”. We were honored to recognize the dedication and achievements of Joe Gibson during his 47 years of service at The Lee Jeans Plant and at IOI. Joe led the development and creation of over 1,000 jobs in Andrews and surrounding communities.



Joe’s legacy in Andrews is unmatched and is to be celebrated for a career of ensuring jobs for the people of the area and ensuring service choices for people with disabilities. He serves well to improve the lives of others.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) offered by IOI is dedicated to empowering students with disabilities, aged 14 to 21, in Cherokee, Clay, and Graham counties, giving them a vital head start on their journey to college or a career. We’ve seen a tremendous positive impact and are proud to continue expanding our reach within the community.

Our approach is comprehensive, focusing on five key areas to ensure our students are well-prepared for the future. We offer career counsel-

ing, hands-on work experience through paid internships with local business partners, guidance on post-secondary education, and training in essential workplace and self-advocacy skills. It’s incredibly rewarding to see our students gain the confidence and experience they need to pursue their goals, and we are excited to see the program continue to grow and support even more students in the years to come. Scan the QR code for more information.



TCCC and IOI celebrate adult learners’ success in program

Cherokee Scout – Tri-County Community College, in partnership with Industrial Opportunities Inc., honored the accomplishments of 50 adult learners in the College & Career Readiness Program hosted at IOI.

This initiative supports adults with disabilities as they work to build foundational skills in reading, writing, mathematics and technology while also preparing for success in structured workplace settings. Through this collaboration, students gain essential tools for both personal development and professional advancement.

Of the 50 students recognized by TCCC, 43 earned an IET – Integrated Education

and Training – Certificate in Manufacturing Safety, awarded by IOI. This industry-focused Credential for the Manufacturing Career Pathway demonstrates their readiness for entry level



work in manufacturing environments, with training that emphasizes safety and emergency procedures, production fundamentals, and real-world job skills.

“This partnership is a powerful example of what can be achieved when education and community organizations come together with a shared goal,” said Dr. Donna Tipton-Rogers, Tri-County Community College President. “We’re incredibly proud of our students’ hard work and

determination.” IOI, a nonprofit organization based in Andrews, has long supported individuals with disabilities by providing employment and training opportunities.

Its collaboration with TCCC’s College & Career Readiness Program ensures that participants not only gain confidence in academic areas, but also have a clear path toward meaningful employment. For many students, receiving their certificate is more than just an academic milestone – it’s a step toward greater independence and participation in the local workforce. “These students have

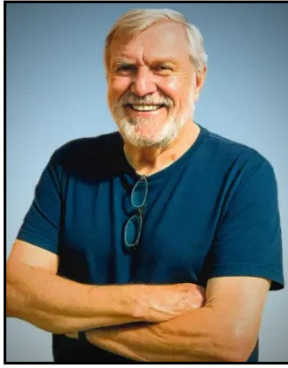


shown extraordinary perseverance,” said Polly Kilpatrick, Adult Basic Education lead instructor. “Their success is a testament to their commitment and the value of tailored, supportive education programs.” As TCCC and IOI continue their partnership, plans are underway to expand opportunities and offer additional training aligned with the needs of local employers.



Dwight Alan Dickinson ~ Supporter & Friend

Dwight Alan Dickinson age 81, of Murphy passed away peacefully Thursday, June 26, 2025 at his home. A native of Grandville, Massachusetts Dwight earned his Bachelors



son. He was also preceded in death by a sister, Jerri who passed away in 2023. Surviving are his wife of 40 years Linda; son Sean Dickinson and wife, Hillary of West

Degree in computer science from Miami Dade Community College. Upon graduating he went on to start his business TecDad where he worked for the next fifty years. Dwight moved to Murphy in August of 1990 where he taught at Tri County Community College and IOI. He was an avid hiker and runner who ran in many marathons across the country with his loving wife Linda by his side. Dwight loved the outdoors and would walk five miles every day enjoying nature with his grandson Caden. He was a devoted husband, father and grandfather who loved to give back to people in the community often doing so anonymously. He was the son of the late Donald and Marie Dickin-

Virginia, Mark Gacchina and wife, Tiffany of Petersburg, Alaska; a daughter, Christine Gibby of Murphy, North Carolina and Shirley Dickinson of Miami, Florida; one brother, Donald Dickinson and wife, Peggy of Kentucky; and seven grandchildren, Caden, Kenyon, Isabella, Sean, Riley, Lyra, and Everly.

A memorial service will be planned at a later date. In lieu of flowers the family requests memorials be made in memory of Dwight Alan Dickinson to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Place, Memphis, Tennessee 38105, or The American Cancer Society, P.O. Box 42040, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73123-3000.

Supporters

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- Terry & Melinda Swaim
- Town of Murphy Power Board
- BRMEMC
- Phil & Virginia Mattox
- Mountain Credit Union
- United Community Bank
- Rashid & Sabiha Khan
- First Citizens Bank

Quest Fellowship

- In honor of Doug Earley by Nan Earley
- In memory of Jack & Maxine Earley by Nan Earley
- In memory of Fred A. Moss by Fredericka Moss Flynt
- In memory of Dwight Hollowell by Delmer & Deborah Chilton
- In memory of Lee Ferguson by Matt Rogers
- In memory of Dan O'Brien & Ken Isidor by Jim & Ellen O'Brien
- In honor of the legendary leadership of Tom O'Brien by Lynne Manning
- In memory of Chris & Susan O'Brien by David & Susan Winterle
- In honor of Tom O'Brien by John Strawn
- In memory of Randal & Peggy Bailey by Jimmy & Tammy Bailey
- In memory of Chris O'Brien & Cherry Jarrett by Beth Walton
- In honor of Morgan Gooch by Betty Kilpatrick
- In honor of Tom O'Brien by Catherine Riordan
- In memory of Chris O'Brien by Joe Gibson
- In memory of William, Shirley & Dan O'Brien by Tom O'Brien
- In memory of Kathy Pruzinsky, Judy Sheridan & Kenny Isidor by Tom O'Brien
- In memory of Chris & Susan O'Brien by Tom O'Brien

Find us on Facebook!



From IOI's Mail Bag



We received your gift of \$2,200 to Eblen Charities on 12/26/2024, and we are grateful to you for your generosity! In this time of repair and recovery, we are putting your kindness right to work, providing rent and utilities assistance, warm clothing, and gasoline vouchers for those affected by hurricane Helene.

Thankfully,
Brian Hall
Executive Director

Thank you for the wonderful retirement party. I was so touched by the luncheon, the speeches, the kind words, gifts, employees and client programs, and memories everyone shared with me. I had a fantastic time and really appreciate all the hard work and effort that went into it. I am truly grateful for the support and friendship I've received from all of you throughout my years at Industrial Opportunities, Inc. Thank you for being such an amazing group and showing me such love and support. I'm going to try to embrace retirement but I will certainly miss working alongside such a wonderful group of people. I sincerely Thank you!

JoJo
(Joe Gibson)

Mission Statement

We believe that individuals have a right to economic opportunity and personal development. The Board of Directors and staff Actively incorporate the concept that through meaningful, satisfying work, people are able to live more independently, successfully, and productively. We believe that every individual has the right to respect, equal opportunity and gainful employment.

IOI Thankful for Supporters

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of Industrial Opportunities, Inc (IOI) supporters that aided the IOI Board of Directors purchase of the V.F. Jeanswear –LEE Facility on Sept.23, 2002 and those who continue to support IOI’s mission.

IOI moved from Marble, N.C. into the former LEE Facility in Andrews, on 2/28/2003 with the following goals:

- Increasing IOI’s Floor Space
Then 32,500 square feet
Now 108,344 Sq. ft.
- Increase Sales & Service Revenue
Then \$ 3,396,411
Now \$ 5,923,550
- Increase the number of employees
Then 50
Now 91
- Increase # of Individuals served
Then 80, with commercial revenues to support our mission of providing vocational training and employ-

ment to adults with disabilities.
Now 169 adults with disabilities, 59 working in the facility and 110 individuals receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services at the Cherokee, Clay & Graham County Schools.

339 individuals with a disability have been successfully placed on a job in our community or at IOI, earning wages, paying taxes, and contributing to our community’s economy, since 2001. To date, IOI has completed \$4,351,516 in new construction and renovations,

bought \$2,244,256 in equipment, invested \$1,746,077 in vocational training wages, working capital & loan income, for total investment of **\$9,475,839**. I am proud to report that **\$139,320,028** in wages and benefits have been added to our local community since 2/28/2003. The current IOI workforce of

151 appreciates all the support IOI has received over the past 23 years here in Andrews and the past 51 years serving Cherokee, Clay & Graham Counties.

Tom O’Brien
IOI President/CEO



All Gifts are Tax Deductible - Industrial Opportunities, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

I make this gift:

- In memory or honor of _____.
- To benefit the client activity fund / IOI Endowment fund.

Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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