

## **NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership Listed Among Expansion Solutions Top 5 for Aerospace Sector**

BLOUNTVILLE, TN – NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership, the economic development organization serving Bluff City, Bristol, Kingsport, and Sullivan County as well as marketing and recruiting for Phipps Bend Industrial Park in Hawkins County, Tennessee, has been recognized as one of the most desirable destinations for aerospace and aviation companies to consider when looking for a new location by a national site selection magazine.

Expansion Solutions magazine, based in Hoover, Alabama, announced its 10<sup>th</sup> annual “Top Five” Awards of Excellence earlier this month. These awards recognize economic development organizations which have shown exceptional progress and potential in the area of development across seven specific categories: Advanced Manufacturing, Aviation/Aerospace, Food Production & Processing, Inland Ports, Logistics, Ports, and Warehouse/Distribution.

“This type of third-party validation can be a significant boost to our marketing and recruitment efforts, because it offers an independent opinion in support of what we are out there telling consultants and companies,” said Clay Walker, NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership CEO. “Aerospace is one of our top targets and is a very hot, growing sector. It is also a highly desirable and competitive sector, so anything like this that can give you exposure and credibility is a welcome arrow in our quiver.”

The Top Five Awards of Excellence recognize economic development organizations that have shown exceptional progress in development, according to a press release from the magazine. The locations were chosen because of the support system offered to businesses, as well as recent activity and potential growth that can be created in each area. Strategic locations, pro-business climates, investments made in improving infrastructure and the availability of buildings and sites were among the top deciding factors in choosing these locations.

“It’s kind of an obvious thing that Aerospace Park at Tri-Cities Airport is our crown jewel differentiating advantage that we use in marketing to aerospace companies,” Walker said. “But our business case for this sector goes well beyond just an incredible site. The aviation program at Northeast State Community College, the recent growth at companies such as Bell Helicopter, Wysong Helicopters, DEC Technologies, and Aviation Accessories, plus Eastman’s aviation division, all help to generate interest from similar companies.”

Aerospace Park is a 166-acre park, with a 21-acre tract that is a Select Tennessee certified site, that has several points of access to Tri-Cities Airport’s 8,000-foot runway. Walker touted the airport’s executive director, Patrick Wilson, and director of trade and business development, Mark Canty, as well as the involvement of Richard Blevins, who heads Northeast State’s aviation program, as integral players in the region’s future in growing this sector.

NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership joins these partners as attendees and exhibitors at various trade shows. It also markets to site selection consultants who are known to work aerospace and aviation projects and seeks editorial content and advertises in aviation magazines and site selection magazines’ aerospace/aviation-focused issues.

“We have some great partners and a tremendous product,” Walker said. “Now it’s just a matter to continuing to work this sector and tell our story to the right people. We’re making progress and I am optimistic we are going to see this sector enjoy a great deal of growth in the upcoming years.”

Patrick Wilson, Executive Director of Tri-Cities Airport, was pleased to hear of the recognition and praised the

partnership between Bell Helicopter and Northeast State Community College, as it benefits the aerospace industry cluster for the entire region.

"The Tri-Cities Region has long been home to a vibrant and successful aerospace industry cluster, said Wilson. "The flagship of that cluster, Bell Helicopter, employs over 500 maintenance technicians at their Piney Flats location in Sullivan County. In an effort to maintain a continuous supply of skilled employees, Bell has recently assumed an advisory role in Northeast State Community College's new Aviation Maintenance Technology program"

Mark Canty, who markets Aerospace Park and works closely with NETWORKS, stated that having runway access on a property, like Aerospace Park does, is a unique and desirable quality.

"Aerospace Park is the premier destination in the southeastern United States for aircraft maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO), passenger to freighter (PTF) conversions, manufacturing, completions, or any other activity requiring direct airfield access at a world-class commercial service airport," said Canty.

To learn more about NETWORKS Sullivan Partnership, go to [networkstn.com](http://networkstn.com).

To learn more about Aerospace Park, go to [triaerospacepark.com](http://triaerospacepark.com).

To learn more about Northeast State Community College, go to [northeaststate.edu](http://northeaststate.edu).

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