

Meeting in regular session Thursday, October 2 at the Nestle Waters Ozarka bottling plant between Hawkins and Holly Lake, the board members of the Wood County Industrial Commission (WCIC) heard a report on the status of one of Wood County's largest employers. The Ozarka plant's management headed by Scott Bradford, Plant Manager, hosted a tour and luncheon meeting for the Wood County Industrial Commission.

WICI board members heard that the Wood County plant represents an economic impact of \$29-million per year. Ozarka employs 245 employees in a 24-hour, seven-day spring water bottling operation. The 500,000 square foot Wood County plant has seven high-speed, high-tech bottling production lines

Since opening in 2002, Ozarka's impact includes more than one-half-million dollars in charitable contributions, \$225,000 of which have been in a scholarship program called "Every Drop Counts" directed to those pursuing higher education in environmental and earth sciences.

"Winning the Ozarka scholarship to me wasn't just about getting money, it was about helping me to achieve my goals and encouraging me even more to take the next step in life," said Jessica Thompson, the 2010 Hawkins High School \$2,500 scholarship winner. "Thank You for giving me the opportunity to pursue my dream of getting my Bachelor of Science degree." This past year Ozarka awarded two \$10,000 scholarships and three \$2,500 scholarships to Texas students.

"Ozarka is committed to environmental leadership and innovation and we believe that environmental education is critically important for the future.' said David Feckley, Ozarka Natural Resource Manager and hydro geologist. Feckley was the Ozarka official who first identified and qualified the potential of the site of abundant spring water in the southeastern corner of Wood County.

Feckley said, "The interests and pursuits of these scholarship winners matches many of our own employees, whose daily jobs are to manage and maintain the health and integrity of our water resources and the surrounding lands that support our springs."

As a natural resource company providing a healthy bottled beverage, Ozarka and its parent company, Nestle Waters North America, are dedicated to producing high quality bottled water in a sustainable way. This includes reducing the amount of plastics in its bottles and packaging, investing in hybrid transportation technology, increasing internal recycling, regionalizing bottling facilities, constructing LEED certified buildings and sponsoring recycling initiatives nationally. Nation wide the company manages over 50 spring sites across the U.S. and protects ore than 15,000 acres of land and natural habitats.

Ozarka Spring Water founded in 1905, has led bottled water sales in Texas for more than two decades. Based in Dallas, TX, Ozarka has been a division of Nestle Waters North America Inc. since 1987. Ozarka has earned and outstanding reputation for its expertise in spring source protection, environmentally responsible operations and industry-leading quality controls.

McKinley advised the board that three projects/promotions which earned grants from WCIC have yet to submit invoices for their events, including Holly Lake Chamber advertising promotion, Lake Country Playhouse advertising and the Winnsboro Chamber of Commerce Gun Show. The expenses are due prior to the end of September.

The November meeting of the Wood County Industrial Commission will be held on Thursday, October 28 at 7 p.m. The meeting will feature the annual "Lake Fork Update"