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Gov. Scott brings jobs message in visit to Flagler County

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Despite overcast skies, Gov. Rick Scott brought a message of sunshine to the area Tuesday at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for Coastal Cloud LLC, a high-tech company that plans on creating 100 jobs over three years and building a 30,000-square-foot headquarters in Flagler County.

As he opened his remarks at the company's temporary headquarters in The Hammock, Scott remarked about the number of business owners who showed up for the open house.



News-Journal / Steven Notaras

Gov. Rick Scott, left, talks to the family of Tim and Sara Hale at the Discovery Center in The Hammock on Tuesday during a visit to Flagler County.

"This shows the commitment of this community to building jobs," he said.

Scott emphasized his campaign pledge to create jobs and said getting people back to work was one of three fundamental issues that come up all over the state, along with strengthening the education system and keeping the cost of living low.

Coastal Cloud is a cloud-based technology company founded by Tim and Sara Hale that provides consulting, user-training and ongoing administration to its clients. The company received incentives from the state and county that are performance-based and tied directly to job creation.

The county incentive will pay the company \$50,000 over seven years if the anticipated 100 jobs are created. The state incentive for new or expanding businesses in targeted industries is worth \$548,800.

Scott hailed the decision by the Hales to locate the company's headquarters in Flagler County and said it is another sign that the economy is improving in the Sunshine State.

"As we know, our state is heading in the right direction," he said. "People are moving here, they're picking Florida because we're doing the right things."

Scott said he is determined to put Florida at the top of the list of best places to do business and recalled a conversation he had with Texas Gov. Rick Perry.

"We're about to beat Texas as the best place to do business," Scott said, recounting an invitation he extended for Perry to participate in a fishing tournament in Destin "so he gets used to being No. 2."

Scott presented the Hales with the Governor's Business Investor Medal in appreciation for bringing their company to Florida.

"We're proud that you picked us," he said. "What you're doing to help people get jobs, we just want to thank you."

Several members of the local business community were on hand for the ribbon-cutting, including Scott Sowers, chairman of the Flagler County Chamber of Commerce & Affiliates.

"It's a very big deal," Sowers said. "It puts us on the map and shows our county is going in the right direction."

Flagler could use the boost. In December the county's jobless rate of 11.2 percent was the state's highest. It was in double digits throughout 2012.

Bruce Page, president and CEO at Palm Coast-based Intracoastal Bank, said having the governor in town for the ribbon-cutting "is a huge accomplishment for the Hales, the Flagler County community and our region."

Page said the fact that Coastal Cloud is a high-tech firm makes the news even more significant.

"We want everyone to know that Flagler County and Northeast Florida is the place for technology businesses going forward," he said. "When you have that catalyst, it will gain momentum."

Palm Coast Mayor Jon Netts said Scott's visit and the Coastal Cloud opening were good for the entire county.

"This is going to strengthen our county," he said. "This is going to bring attention to our county. This is very important to all of us."

Tim Hale said while his family has lived in the area "for a while," it was only recently that they "got serious about it as a business opportunity."

He had praise for the partnership with the state as well as the work of Flagler County's Department of Economic Opportunity and Executive Director Helga van Eckert, saying "we would not be here today" without the efforts of van Eckert and county staff.

Hale said the buzz about Coastal Cloud has taken off so much that even before the company began advertising for employees, more than 60 resumes were submitted to the company website.

"We have 15 people already enrolled in online training," he said. "We are moving and moving quickly."

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