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Wednesday, Oct 15, 2008

Posted on Sun, Oct. 12, 2008

**Taking a long, deep breath when thinking about the economy**

You might have read the story last week about the importance of reassuring our children, during a time of economic hardship, that the sky isn't falling. With somber-voiced newscasters and dark headlines proclaiming -- accurately, for the most part -- hard times, we need to guard against the possibility of our kids freaking out over something even their parents probably don't quite understand.

Maybe the children aren't the only ones who could use some reassurance. Maybe the rest of us could, too, even if we have to look for it ourselves. If there's not enough silver lining to cover all the clouds, there's silver up there nonetheless -- more of it over local skies, perhaps, than elsewhere.

Just last week, an Associated Press report reminded us that West Georgia now stands as a rare bright spot on a dark economic landscape, as the Kia plant in West Point, growth in the Columbus area and the coming expansion of Fort Benning are bringing money and jobs at a time when too many other communities are losing them. Some of that growth, inevitably, will spread across the Chattahoochee into east Alabama as well.

There are lots of people to credit for our relatively good situation, but one outfit that perhaps hasn't gotten the kudos it's earned is the Valley Partnership, a player in the Kia deal and a group of area folks who have been preaching, and practicing, the gospel of regional economic development since back when few if any were listening.

Thanks to their efforts and the work of man others, some of us can actually count our blessings while our neighbors are counting only job losses and market plunges. Kia's \$1.2 billion investment should bring about 2,500 jobs by the time it is in production a little more than a year from now; its suppliers and other satellite industries are expected to bring another 3,500-plus jobs in Georgia and more than 1,500 in Alabama. The move of the Armor School from Fort Knox to Fort Benning means another \$2.9 billion in area capital investment and another 11,000 jobs.

None of those signs of hope and progress changes the hard realities. The economy remains in turmoil, and consumer/investor confidence is shaken, to put it mildly. Local job losses at Synovus and CapitalOne, and the collapse of the Bill Heard empire, mean economic good news can't come too soon for the folks affected. The prospect of better times to come is hard to cling to for somebody struggling just to put food on the table right now.

But for those of us fortunate enough to be getting by, and especially for those among us who are doing better than just getting by, maybe this day of rest is a good time to take a deep breath and put some things in perspective.

-- Dusty Nix, for the editorial board

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