



Ohio city that became recession focus rebounds

Ohio city that became a recession focus rebounding slowly; Wilmington keeps public jobs tally

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Wilmington Mayor Randy Riley points to placards showing the number of new jobs in the city as he poses outside city hall...

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WLMINGTON, Ohio (AP) -- A southwest Ohio community that became a national focal point for demonstrating the pain of recession job loss is making a slow comeback.

In the front windows of Wilmington's city hall, placards keep a running tally of new jobs in the community. So far this year, the number is 139. Mayor Randy Riley tells the Dayton Daily News it's a small way to focus on good news.

When DHL decided to move its package delivery operations out of the Wilmington Air Park amid the recession, the resulting loss of some 8,000 jobs in a county of 42,000 residents sent the unemployment rate soaring past 16 percent. National news media reported from Wilmington, and celebrities such as "Tonight Show" host Jay Leno and TV cooking star Rachael Ray came to the community for benefit efforts as food pantries struggled to keep up with increased demand.

Riley said that while Wilmington was the "tip of the spear" of the recession in the 2008-09 years, it now can be an example of fighting back to recovery.

"I want to be the phoenix rising from the ashes," Riley said of the community.

A variety of employers added jobs, and Clinton County unemployment is dropping, down to 10.9 in the latest state figures. And since December, the community has tallied 378 pledges of new jobs — the City Hall count includes only jobs that are already filled. And Airborne Maintenance and Engineering Services expects to hire more than 250 workers and is building a \$15 million repair hangar at the air park.

The state of Ohio has helped with tax incentives for job-creating businesses and is trying to encourage businesses to use the air park.

"We have a great facility down there, and we scout around all the time," Gov. John Kasich said.

Wilmington and Clinton County have plenty of skilled people ready to fill jobs, and the community just off Interstate 71 is convenient to Cincinnati, Dayton, Columbus and those cities' airports.

Brady Templeton, president of the Airborne Maintenance company that is adding jobs, said it has already about doubled employment since 2009 to more than 600 workers as operations bounce back. He said the DHL loss "distracted" residents.

"But you get through it," Templeton said. "You persevere."