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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Important Employment news to be revealed at this year's State of the Region and E2 Summit**

On Thursday, April 4th, business, community, government, and education leaders will come together in Greenville for the 12th annual State of the Region and 5th E2 Summit. The event will take place at the Greenville Convention Center (303 Greenville Blvd SW, Greenville, NC 27834). Registration will begin at 8:30am with a light breakfast. This year's theme is: 'Growing Regional GDP Through Innovation in Education' which reflects the relationship between economic development and education. There is a charge for general attendees (\$25 which includes breakfast and lunch) and everyone should register at (<https://www.nceast.org/press/events/details/?id=412>).

"The 'youth boom' economy is coming: as Millennials and Gen Z combine in the workforce, these two outsized generations could deliver a sizable jolt, powering higher consumption, wages and housing demand, all pillars of GDP growth." Simultaneously, 'boomers' are retiring at an accelerating pace while automation is redefining current job requirements. It is imperative that we work to harness the potential of our future generations.

Kicking the event off, Mr. Ted Abernathy, Managing Partner, Economic Leadership, LLC will present, "Workforce: Throttle on Economic Growth." Ted has 35 years of experience in directing economic and workforce development programs. Mr. Abernathy received his bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; his Master's from Johns Hopkins University, is a graduate of the Economic Development Institute and is an Eisenhower Fellow for global economics. He was the Executive Director of the Southern Growth Policies Board and served as Executive Vice President and COO for the Research Triangle Regional Partnership, where he helped generate 65,000 new jobs and almost \$10 billion in investment. Ted's current projects include developing economic and workforce strategies in more than a dozen states and regions across the country as well as designing economic development and innovation ecosystems. Mr. Abernathy will set the stage for the Summit with a presentation on the economy and the effect of worker shortages on economic growth.

This year's lunch Keynote Speaker will be Stephan Turnipseed, Executive Vice President of Pitsco Education. He will address the combined audience about "Workforce 2030: Building the Talent Pipeline." Mr. Turnipseed earned his degree in Electrical Engineering from Auburn University. He is the former President of LEGO Education North America and chaired the Partnership for 21st Century Learning; a network that assists in implementing 21st century learning to make sure children today are prepared to enter the workforce in the future. In his current role at Pitsco Education, he focuses on innovation, STEM ecosystems, and international partnerships. For over 46 years, Pitsco Education has served rural schools and students, providing resources to practice project-based learning and future-ready skills. They offer programs for Kindergarten through 9th grade (K-9) ranging from academic, STEM, and career-based solutions.

The annual Educators and Employers (E2) Summit will be in joint session at the Greenville Convention Center where students from regional public school districts will display projects demonstrating how they are developing workforce skills across all grade levels. At the 2018 E2 Summit, students were on hand to share STEM related programs from agriculture and aquaculture, to coding and mechatronics. Attendees will have time to talk with students, teachers and regional STEM organizations about projects and programs that are focused on workforce preparation.

“We have had some excellent conferences in the past,” stated John D. Chaffee, president and CEO of the NCEast Alliance, the meeting host, “but I am really excited about this year’s event, our speakers and the level of sponsorships that exceeded expectations. Both Mr. Abernathy and Mr. Turnipseed are world leaders in economic and educational innovation. Mr. Turnipseed is one of the thought leaders fostering how STEM networks need to operate to have collective impact.” Chaffee also alluded there will be some news about employment opportunities and growth in eastern North Carolina during his State of the Region remarks as well as emphasizing regional education innovation taking place.

Bruce Middleton, Executive Director of STEM East, said “This is a wonderful opportunity for our school districts and other members of the STEM Ecosystem to demonstrate how they are preparing students and supporting STEM employers with their focused educational efforts.”

Local leaders will weigh in on building the workforce through STEM Education and how to prepare the future workforce to serve area employers. A panel, moderated by Middleton will include Mark Meno, (Engineering Head at FRC East), Wayne Washington (Human Resources Manager for Design Engineering at Hyster Yale Group) and Patrick C. Miller (Greene County Schools Superintendent).

Other speakers will include: Mark Hamblin (NCEast Alliance Board Chair), John D. Chaffee, President/CEO of NCEast Alliance relating regional development activities and issues and John Marques, Chief Human Resource Officer of Vidant Health will speak on building the healthcare workforce pipeline. The event will begin at 9:00 am and run until 1:00 pm. The adjoining hall where students will display STEM-based projects will continue to remain open until 3:00 pm. Attendees can come for the whole day, just for one portion of the event, or simply for lunch to hear Mr. Turnipseed and speak with students afterwards about their projects.

NCEast Alliance is a regional economic development agency that serves 28 counties in eastern North Carolina. The organization, and its many partners, is involved in marketing and advocacy and supports company recruitment/retention, entrepreneurship, workforce development, and STEM education through STEM East, and a recently organized STEM Northeast. ([www.nceast.org](http://www.nceast.org)).

STEM East is a 12-county consortium of public schools, businesses, STEM organizations, out-of-school organizations, science centers, and other educational institutions focused on improving student-learning pathways leading to employment. Through this collaborative effort, STEM East students will engage in real-world learning that directly aligns with career opportunities in eastern North Carolina. STEM East is focused on K-16 opportunities for all students to become more aware of and better prepared for future employment. For more information visit [www.stemeast.org](http://www.stemeast.org).