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## **‘Aloha spirit’ meets Southern hospitality** King’s Hawaiian expansion on track for early 2015 completion

When deciding where to build an expansion of the King’s Hawaiian facilities, the initial thought was to place the second building outside of Georgia.

“It would actually be a little cheaper for us to be in another state,” said John Linehan, executive vice president of strategy and business development with the bread-baking business. “But we were so happy with being in Hall County and just so convinced of the value that it offers in terms of being a great place to work, that we decided to ... open up a second plant there.”

The company first opened the Oakwood plant in 2011, making the initial building big enough for two lines according to Linehan. At that time, only one line was built.

But the past couple of years have seen an explosion of growth for the company. By April, it completed the second line, and earlier this year construction began on an adjacent building with the capacity for two additional lines.

Company leaders expect the addition with one of those lines up and ready to be operational by January.

According to Linehan, more than 300 people work at the Oakwood plant. He expects to have around 600 employees in that location in just a couple of years.

“The business is growing very fast,” he said.

Linehan credits key members of the Hall community, like businessman Philip Wilheit of Wilheit Packaging, Tim Evans with the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce and Hall County Schools Superintendent Will Schofield, for helping attract larger businesses to Hall County.

“(Schofield’s) doing a knockout job,” Linehan said. “I don’t think people realize how important ... a really good strong school system is, because it produces great, educated kids. It produces great workers. When we came here, we took a hard look at the Hall County school system and were really impressed.”

On top of the company’s leadership impressions of the Hall community, the state’s general Southern hospitality meshes well with the company’s “aloha spirit,” Linehan said — with

“aloha” being both the Hawaiian greeting and an adjective to describe something friendly, hospitable and welcoming.

“(Gov.) Nathan Deal has been to the plant three times,” Linehan said. “He’ll address several people who work there on a first-name basis. What other state does that happen? I’ve gotten two handwritten notes from the governor this year thanking us for the community things we did. Where else does that happen?”