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By Mary Carr Mayle

mary.mayle@savannahnow.com

SEDA celebrates another successful year with Top 10 achievements



Greg Bell speaks at the SEDA 2017 Annual Meeting breakfast held at the Trade Center.
(Steve Bisson/Savannah Morning News)

When a farmer plants a particular type of bamboo seed, it has to be watered every day for more than four years before anything even emerges from the ground.

“But somewhere around the fifth year, giant timber bamboo will shoot out of the ground, growing more than 90 feet in 60 days — basically a foot and a half a day,” Greg Bell told the 500-plus business leaders gathered Thursday morning at the Savannah International Trade & Convention Center for the Savannah Economic Development Authority’s annual breakfast meeting.

The bamboo, of course, is Bell's metaphor for business success.

"Think about it — it sometimes takes three, four, five years to get a project going or make a business profitable," said Bell, a motivational speaker and author of "Water the Bamboo."

"Just like giant timber bamboo, it takes patience, persistence, self-discipline and courage to continue to nurture your business or develop your project when you can't yet see results."

Bell's presentation was a fitting wrap up for SEDA's meeting, which began with board chairman Steve Green addressing some 50 area high school seniors about what their futures could hold and SEDA president and CEO Trip Tollison enumerating the economic development organization's top 10 achievements of 2016, none of which were brought to fruition without patience, persistence and a lot of nurturing.

Among those were the creation of the Savannah Harbor-Interstate 16 Corridor Joint Development Authority, a four-county development group committed to working projects along I-16 that might come calling as a result of Georgia Port's massive harbor deepening; more than \$61 million in direct spending by the entertainment industry; global recognition for World Trade Center Savannah; the purchase of a 685-acre parcel off Old River Road in west Chatham County for a new business park; and the return of 14 parcels of improved land to the county tax digest, resulting in nearly \$3 million in additional property tax revenue.

In 2016, SEDA played a role in the following expansions and announcements:

Coastal Canvas

Battery Warehouse

CAP Barbell

Chemgard

Daher-Socata

Floor &Decor

Ghost Coast Distillery

Home Depot

IKEA

MSB Expertise

On Brand 24

Port Logistics Group

Savills Studley

Schneider Logistics

Total Quality Logistics

In his remarks to the group of students, which included the senior class of Bethesda Academy, Green urged them to become the business leaders of the future.

“We’ve invited you here today because the entire Savannah business community wants you in this room. We need you here, not just for today, but in the future.

“Look around and you’ll see business leaders who built large corporations, like Gulfstream and JCB. You’ll see men like Griff Lynch, who leads the Georgia Ports Authority, and Bob James, president and CEO of Carver State Bank. You can meet Greg Parker, who started with one convenience store and now has 80, or Nina Gompels, who started with one McDonald’s restaurant and now has seven.

“You can have jobs in those companies and you can start your own businesses,” Green said. “But there’s one requirement - an education. Lack of an education will keep you out of this room. By combining education with hard work, you’ll be back here, not as a guest but as a full-fledged member of our business community.”
