

It was a blue sky day in Offerman

BY ROBERT M. WILLIAMS, JR.

“Let our work here be a beacon in how to wisely steward our efforts so we both protect and utilize the blessings of the good earth we have inherited.

Let us treat the land we steward with care and concern so generations to come will learn from our commitment and prosper from our determination to leave things better than we found them.”



Those words were spoken by former Congressman and Patterson native, Lindsay Thomas, as part of the meal blessing Tuesday as hundreds gathered in Offerman to celebrate the completion of the Southern Ionics mineral sand processing plant.

The massive, multi-million dollar facility is expected to be a textbook example of how industry and the environment can work harmoniously.

Southern Ionics has worked tirelessly across Southeast Georgia to

show their mining process, expected to remove and replace thousands of tons of sand, can work while leaving the land, air and water around it clean and usable.

The Offerman plant is a major part of that stewardship commitment. While acres of sand will be processed through the plant and hundreds of thousands of pounds of minerals will be extracted, the mine sites are expected to recover more than 95 percent of the dirt when the job is complete. The sand will be put back, the topsoil spread over it

and natural growth re-planted. No chemicals will be used to draw the minerals out of the sand. The entire process is natural, says plant manager, Tim McKeeon.

Southern Ionics' record in other places has proved reliable and local leaders, including Thomas, have faith

the new jobs brought here will not come at any sort of environmental expense.

While many in the crowd of roughly 200 on hand for the celebration and lunch Tuesday were eager to see the paychecks start being pumped into our economy, it was encouraging to see protection of our area's land and water has always been a priority.

Rep. Chad Nimmer may have said it best in his remarks: “Sustainability of the earth, quality of the air we

breathe and the water we drink is vital to everything we do. And we're seeing that here today.”

It's been a long time since new jobs were created on the east side of our county. Tuesday was, indeed, a blue sky day.

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