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Smart Factory Institute
Tennessee



Smart Factory Institute Announces Move to Bradley County Partnerships in Industry & Education (PIE) Innovation Center

New collaboration will help build pipeline of future workforce through STEM-focused programs, advanced manufacturing training, demonstrations, and events

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Cleveland, Tenn. (May 17, 2022) – The [Smart Factory Institute](#) of Tennessee, in a new partnership with the Cleveland-Bradley Chamber of Commerce and Bradley County Schools, announced it is moving its headquarters to the Bradley County [Partnerships in Industry & Education \(PIE\) Innovation Center](#) located in Cleveland, Tennessee.

Formerly the site of American Uniform Co. mill and factory, the 256,100-square-foot complex – now the site of the “PIE Center” – was recently [revamped](#) into a \$33 million vocational training and business facility after gaining support from a coalition of greater Chattanooga area businesses, along with federal, state and local governments.

“Throughout the past year, our incredible community, sponsors, and technology partners have shown extraordinary enthusiasm for our Industry 4.0 workforce and advanced manufacturing programs — at a level we could not have imagined when we first launched the nation’s first Deutsche Messe Technology Academy right here in Chattanooga,” said **Denise Rice, President and CEO of Peak Performance, Inc.**, which operates the Smart Factory Institute. “As a result, we’re thrilled to be expanding our operations in the greater Chattanooga area and moving into a larger space that allows us to grow and increase our offerings while continuing to work closely with our friends at Volkswagen.”

The Smart Factory Institute will occupy a 9,000 square-foot space within the PIE Center and will continue to provide training and workforce development programs to support manufacturing and adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies while partnering with businesses, government agencies, educational institutions, and other professional organizations. The space will be

available to showcase and demonstrate new technologies which will support economic development, draw industry to the region, and expand existing industry by promoting advanced manufacturing.

“We are so pleased with the exceptional growth of the Smart Factory Institute of Tennessee, and we look forward to what this new facility brings for our team. Chattanooga and its surrounding region have once again demonstrated a brilliant ability to stoke innovation and collaboration within the U.S. manufacturing industry,” said **Thomas Rilke, Director of the Deutsche Messe Technology Academy.**

The PIE Center is centrally located to serve students and community members from Bradley, Meigs, and Polk counties. It offers space to house 38 tenants, including the local UT Extension Service, a counseling center, McKee Foods, Wright Brothers Construction, the Center for Sports Medicine, and Cleveland State Community College.

“Our proximity to some of the region’s most prominent economic drivers and educational institutions will enable meaningful collaborations, further advancing the Smart Factory Institute’s mission of making Industry 4.0 advanced technologies available to everyone,” said **Mary Beth Hudson, Executive Director of the Smart Factory Institute.**

With an aim to facilitate better links between schools and businesses, the PIE Center offers work-based learning experiences, certifications, and other apprenticeship programs. It has been praised by local, statewide, and federal Tennessee officials as a model for training and recruiting skilled workers for the many technical, high-demand jobs of the future, and as an investment that is vitally needed to make Tennessee’s rural areas highly competitive.

“Bradley County welcomes the Smart Factory Institute to our unprecedented innovative center – the first of its kind in Tennessee, said **Dr. Linda Cash, Director of Bradley County Schools.** “Our partnership will provide Bradley County and area students with STEM-focused educational programs, embedded work-based learning experiences, and design thinking skills in order to help address the growing need to better prepare students for postsecondary careers and workforce opportunities.”

The Smart Factory Institute will host the PIE Center’s inaugural event, the [Smart Solutions for Smart Factories Expo](#), on August 11, 2022 from 10:00a.m. - 4:00p.m. EDT in the Center’s multi-use space, the “Conclave.” The Expo will feature leading manufacturing and technology vendors demonstrating smart solutions that improve productivity, quality, reliability, and responsiveness in a factory production environment. The Expo will be held in conjunction with the Chattanooga Regional Manufacturers Association (CRMA) [Manufacturers Excellence Luncheon](#), which will take place from 11:30am - 1:00pm EDT during the event. To become an exhibitor or sponsor, please contact Mary Beth Hudson at m.hudson@peakperformanceinc.com or [purchase directly online](#).

Community Support

“We are proud of the tremendous growth of the Smart Factory Institute that embeds Tennessee as one of the top states in the nation for advanced manufacturing. This new collaboration with Bradley County Schools and the PIE Center will further position Tennessee and the U.S. southeast region as a true leader for advanced manufacturing technology. We are extremely grateful for the support from the Tennessee General Assembly and specifically the leadership of the Hamilton and Bradley County legislative delegations for their work to make this a reality, and we look forward to exciting new developments at the Institute,” said **Bradley Jackson, President of the Tennessee Manufacturers Association.**

“It is wonderful to see this project taking on new and exciting roles in the manufacturing industry,” said **Charles Wood, Vice President of Economic Development at the Chattanooga Area Chamber.** “We look forward to the new opportunities around innovation and workforce development the Smart Factory Institute and its partners will bring to the greater Chattanooga region.”

“We are thrilled the Smart Factory Institute chose to partner with the Cleveland-Bradley Chamber of Commerce and expand its operations at the PIE Center. Cleveland is ranked the fifth ‘Best Place in the U.S. to Work in Manufacturing’ according to [SmartAsset’s 2021 data study](#), and has seen a record \$3.7 billion in capital investment by fulfillment and manufacturing companies since 2010. The Smart Factory Institute will not only help our surrounding industry and community maintain and grow its thriving business climate – it will benefit communities and businesses all throughout Southeast Tennessee and the rest of the State,” said **Douglas Berry, Vice President of Economic Development at the Cleveland-Bradley Chamber of Commerce.**

About Smart Factory Institute

The Smart Factory Institute is a business-driven effort guided by the Tennessee Manufacturers Association driving innovation and technology in Tennessee and the southeastern United States. The Institute, operated by Peak Performance Inc. and located at the Bradley County Partnerships in Industry and Education (PIE) Center, is an exclusive U.S. institute providing manufacturers with connections, collaborative relationships, and certifications for improving manufacturing processes by providing them with access to the latest technology in advanced manufacturing. The global network of Smart Factory Institutes by Deutsche Messe is comprised of leading companies and organizations in advanced manufacturing. For more information, visit www.smartfactoryinstitute.com.

About Peak Performance Inc.

Peak Performance Inc. is a workforce training and consulting firm specializing in incumbent worker training for the manufacturing industry, serving businesses across the country from their headquarters in Cleveland, TN. Peak Performance equips its customers to transform their operational strategy through comprehensive, sustainable solutions in people and processes. Their services are unique, customizing the training to their client’s needs, and using real-world simulations and instructors from the manufacturing industry. For more information, visit www.peakperformanceinc.com.







Photos courtesy of Bradley County Partnerships in Industry & Education (PIE) Innovation Center

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