MEDIA RELEASE

OFFICE OF COUNTY MAYOR GLENN JACOBS

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Small Business Series Features Innovate Manufacturing and CONNECT Ministries

KNOXVILLE, Tenn.— Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs interviewed Scott Huff from Innovate Manufacturing and Keira Wyatt, Co-Founder and Executive Director of CONNECT Ministries.

CONNECT Ministries is a Christian-based hands-on community resource networking center that advocates for the underserved, undereducated, underemployed, and underrepresented including disadvantaged youth and veterans and people who are/were homeless or previously incarcerated. Innovate Manufacturing primarily manufactures consumer products like injection molded plastics.

During the series, the Mayor has conducted interviews with small business owners and operators, providing them the opportunity to talk about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their families and employees and share any plans they have for the future. A new vignette runs each week on the county and Mayor's various social media platforms.

In this week's interview, the Mayor, Huff and Wyatt discussed the creation of the CONNECT Works for You Employment, a program wherein those served by CONNECT provide labor for Innovate Manufacturing projects.

"The labor element of some of the products we make was more than we had in-house labor force for and we needed more hands to do it…we weren't sure if we would be able to meet them all in Q4 of last year and we did," said Huff. "And an important part of that was the contribution from CONNECT."

The Mayor shared his thoughts: "Economic opportunity is the root of a lot of problems we see, when we address that, when people have a job—a good job—and get the skills that they need to advance themselves and provide for their families, so many of the other issues sort of fade away."

Wyatt agreed, "It's wonderful to see people come and make a living wage. We are preparing people to work for life and that's outstanding."

To close, the Mayor shared his appreciation for this program saying, "The more we can do to get people in the workforce the better. This model is self-sustaining and will keep growing. I appreciate what you are doing."

To hear more of what was said, check out the video.

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