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**Leadership Success:** JoAnne Lewis, economic development project manager at the Douglas-Coffee County Chamber and Economic Development Authority



success to leadership. Echoing Premium Peanut's observations, Lewis' team worked with local, state and federal leadership to meet the company's needs and move the project forward.

The \$50-million shelling facility is located just west of Douglas and anticipates shelling 110,000 tons of peanuts for the 2015 crop, with plans to grow to 140,000 tons within its first three years. In addition, it will bring about 100 direct jobs to the region, with another 100 estimated indirect jobs, according to Lewis.

Evans describes the indirect growth as "exponential," citing expansion at the company's buying points across Coffee, Jeff Davis, Berrien, Irwin and Appling counties and their additional investments of \$30 million to \$35 million.

"It's not just a Coffee County project," Lewis says. "This is truly a regional project where new investments and jobs are being created in the region." – AB

## COMMITTED TO COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

President of First National Bank of Griffin, Chuck Copeland has been on the Griffin-Spalding Development Authority since 2005, served as vice-chair in 2006 and 2007, and has chaired the authority since 2008. His leadership tenure is credited with more than \$353 million in capital investment in both new and existing industries and some 1,087 new jobs in the community. A highlight came in 2011 when Caterpillar announced a \$120-million expansion project for its Griffin plant that added 200 new jobs, the largest single capital investment project in Spalding County history that was also a GEDA Deal of the Year honoree. For his years of service and leadership, Chuck Copeland received this year's GEDA Volunteer of the Year Award.

According to Griffin-Spalding Development Authority Executive Director David Luckie, Copeland "is a man of great integrity, intelligence and a strong desire to make Griffin-Spalding a better place. It is up to me to be the best economic developer I can be, but I believe the happiness and the success of our communities for people in my position is largely dependent upon the leader-

ship at the top of each authority. I am in good hands because of Chuck and his leadership."

Copeland, a native of nearby Pike County, cites two sources of his commitment to community service, beginning with his father. "From my youngest years," he says, "I remember Daddy and the countless hours he and several others poured into the startup of the Pike County Little League base-



GRIFFIN-SPALDING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

**Volunteer of the Year:** Chuck Copeland, Griffin-Spalding County Development Authority

ball program." The late Ronald Copeland also served as chief deputy for the Pike County Sheriff's Department and police chief of the city of Winder.

"Early on it was instilled in me that one of the responsibilities of a community banker is to promote and improve the well-being of the community you serve," says Copeland, a banker for 30 years. "It has proven out time and again that a community bank will never be more successful than the community where it is located."

Luckie gives Copeland much credit for passage in 2008 of a SPLOST referendum – after two SPLOST attempts a few years earlier had failed – that enabled purchase of 600 acres of land for establishment of The Lakes at Green Valley mixed-use eco park. Since then, three Japanese firms have located new production facilities in Spalding County, which Copeland says he only "assisted the authority" in recruiting.

Copeland downplays his role, saying, "I in no way would ever assume singular credit for these accomplishments, but I have been a proud member of the team." – DS