

# QUICKSTART®

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## Keebler Elves Get Quick Start Training

Keebler's graham cracker line returns to Macon

Elfin magic mixed with feline might as Ernie Keebler and Tony the Tiger welcomed guests at the recent Quick Start training plan signing at the Keebler plant in Macon.

Good buddies since Keebler became a Kellogg's subsidiary last year, the mascot duo posed with such dignitaries as Guy Ball,

plant manager of the Macon facility; Jack Ellis, mayor of Macon; and Dr. Melton Palmer, president of Central Georgia Technical College.

"We are excited to kick off this partnership with Quick Start and Central Georgia Technical College," Ball said. "The benefits of this partnership will extend beyond the walls of our plant. Through programs like this, the state will see firsthand the types of skills that businesses



are seeking. This information will help them prepare our current and future workforce."

The Quick Start program involves the training of some 25 new employees in mixing, baking and packaging the graham cracker line of products. One of six "ovens," or production lines, the graham cracker operation recently returned to Macon from Keebler's Denver bakery, which closed last year.

*"Existing industry is the foundation of the workforce of our community."*

— Dr. Melton Palmer  
Central Georgia Tech President

The 300-foot-long, newly transplanted oven produces 60,000 graham crackers every eight hours. Training is especially critical for graham cracker production, a trickier process than the other

*Continued on page 5*



Hardly camera-shy, the two mascots make sure they're a part of the official signing ceremony with (from left) Quick Start's Jackie Rohosky, Keebler's Guy Ball and Central Georgia Tech's Dr. Melton Palmer.





Continued from page 1

cookies and crackers. The oven temperature is up to 130 degrees higher, and everything must be done strictly by the numbers. Fortunately, new technology helps. The oven gauges thickness, dimension and color, and automatically adjusts settings when needed.

In operation since 1954 and currently employing 418 workers, the Macon bakery is a significant corporate mainstay in the central Georgia city. "I want to thank Keebler for what it has meant to this community," said Mayor Ellis at the training plan signing. "We want to continue to provide quality workers to Keebler."

The 330,000-sq.-ft. facility is also a key component of the Keebler enterprise, as it turns out some of Keebler's most famous branded products, including Pecan Sandies, Zesta saltines and Town House crackers. Moreover, it is the sole producer of the Keebler graham crackers, made in five different flavors.

Ball explained how the Quick Start training will benefit the plant's graham cracker operation. "Employees will be qualified on every piece of equipment," he said. "The training provides employees standardized ways of running



Ernie Keebler and Tony the Tiger evoke a laugh from April Moore, Central Georgia Tech's director of institutional advancement.

## Helping firms in our own backyard

As a prospective new business is wooed to locate in Georgia, it is likely to look around, consider its future here and ask, "What is the state doing to help existing businesses succeed?"

So while new or expanding industries are always the big news in economic development, Quick Start realizes that existing industries also need training when they install new technology or new lines. This is now a possibility with the Legislature's allocation of funds for this very purpose.

A perfect example is Keebler, whose Georgia facilities provide jobs for more than 3,500 people, surpassing the number of employees at the parent-company headquarters in Battle Creek, Mich.



Macon Mayor Jack Ellis cites the importance of retaining existing businesses.

"We are extremely pleased to work with this company," said Jackie Rohosky, head of Georgia Quick Start. "Quick Start has long provided its services to new and expanding businesses, and now we can apply the same strategies to existing industries."

Mayor Jack Ellis commented, "We can and should put as much emphasis on retaining businesses as we do on attracting new businesses."

With five Georgia facilities in Macon, Columbus, Athens, Augusta and Rome, Keebler is likely to work with Quick Start again. Guy Ball, Macon plant manager, says he expects his facility to spend more capital, with plans to add another line. "We will be successful here

and continue a relationship with Quick Start," he predicted.

As Dr. Melton Palmer, president of Central Georgia Tech, pointed out, "Existing industry is the foundation of the workforce of our community."

the equipment, instead of learning three different ways by word of mouth." He added that the Quick Start manuals will aid the company in training future employees.

Ball first encountered Quick Start at another Keebler bakery, in Columbus. "What impressed me was the professional documentation of the process," he said, noting that without Quick Start, training for the new graham cracker line would have been difficult. "It would have taken a lot of resources out of the plant," he said. 

