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## ET energy symposium sees outlook, payrolls up

By Ken Hedler [khedler@news-journal.com](mailto:khedler@news-journal.com)    May 1, 2018



Docent Jay Bissell, second from left, gives visitors attending the East Texas Energy Symposium a tour of the East Texas Oil Museum on Tuesday in Kilgore.

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More than 130 people gathered Tuesday for the ninth annual East Texas Energy Symposium at Kilgore College, with some attendees saying their outlook has improved over the past year.

Several attendees said they have boosted payrolls as oil prices have improved and in turned greased demand for production in the fields. One attendee looked at her smartphone to find Tuesday's crude oil price at \$67.61 per barrel.

The Princess Three Corp. in Henderson, King Oilfield Services LLC of Kilgore, Arpco Valves & Controls in Kilgore and Midland and Energy Weldfab in White Oak are among companies that have seen their fortunes improve over the past year.

Princess Three has doubled the number of employees to 30 over the past year, said Christina Scarborough, vice president of operations of the family-owned business. The company services rigs and plugs wells.

“I just think prices of oil are much higher,” Scarborough said. She said Princess Three’s customers now have money to plug exhausted wells.

Scarborough and Jake King, owner of King Oilfield Services, said they started in the business four years ago, at a time when oil prices began to collapse.

With oil prices rising, King said he went from having 10 people on the payroll this past June to 30 today.

“And we’re still hiring,” he said.

“We are so busy that we reinvested in buying new equipment, testing and scanning equipment,” King said. King’s company inspects and tests tubing in the Haynesville Shale formation in East Texas and Louisiana.

“A million dollars’ worth” of equipment, King said. “We’re fortunate, very fortunate.”

Also fortunate is Arpco, which provides emergency shutdown systems for oil and gas wells, said Bobbie Hurley-Guinn, owner/vice president. The company has grown from 15 to 21 employees over the past year.

“We also do testing and monitoring of the wells to make sure the (oil well) equipment is working properly,” Hurley-Guinn said. “We do that in established wells. We do a lot of that (work) in the Kilgore area.”

While Energy Weldfab has seen its payroll grow from 100 to 130 employees over the past year as business has picked up for its oil and gas separation equipment, sand traps, heater treaters and gas recovery units, Vice President Michael Clements said he sees “challenges.”

Those challenges are shortages of domestic steel, tariffs on imported steel and federal regulations that require truckers to switch from using paper logs to using tablets to create electronic logs.

He said transporting the raw steel has become the main cost as truck drivers are leaving the industry, adding equipment costs have risen 30 percent to 35 percent over the past year.

“On top of that, you have 4 percent unemployment,” Clements said.

Clements and the other attendees at the Devall Student Center on the Kilgore campus came to hear speeches from U.S. Rep Louie Gohmert, R-Tyler; William Ambrose, a research scientist at the Bureau of Economic Geology at the University of Texas in Austin; Phil Thompson of Mobius Risk Group in Houston; and state Rep. Drew Darby, chairman of the Energy Resource Committee.

Darby, R-San Angelo, was the keynote speaker during the luncheon, and talked about the need for government officials to take a more hands-off approach.

Darby, an oil and gas attorney during the 1970s who now represents the Permian Basin in the statehouse, said his job is to “prevent the government from showing up unannounced.”

While criticizing federal meddling, Darby defended efforts by the Republican-controlled Legislature to overturn a hydraulic fracking ban that Denton voters approved in 2015.

Referring to the ban, Darby said, “You can imagine the impact that was going to happen in the state.”

He said the role for regulating the oil and gas industry goes to the Texas Railroad Commission.

Darby said the industry has found “new successes” at the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal government agencies.

He said more than 325,000 people work in the oil and gas industry in Texas, which leads the nation and is likely to surpass Saudi Arabia in oil production in 2019.

Returning to his support for less government regulation, Darby said, “I think you make better decisions with your money than we do.”

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