

# WEEKEND

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## CAROLINA CONNECTION

Shane Beamer unafraid to show emotions, strengthening his bond with players

**Lulu Kesin** Greenville News | USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

COLUMBIA — Shane Beamer's voice trembled. • He was in South Carolina's locker room after the thrilling 17-14 victory at Clemson on Nov. 30. • "For that to be," was all he could say before South Carolina defensive back O'Donnell Fortune walked over to give him shoulder pads to cry on. Beamer latched onto the hug, as his players yelled, "Let it out, Coach!" in a video posted by the team. • The tears Beamer wiped away weren't the first ones shed by the coach at a South Carolina football game.

A year before, after South Carolina lost to Clemson and didn't qualify for a bowl game, Beamer also cried.

"There was criticism that I took then," Beamer told The Greenville News. "People saying, 'He's way too emotional to be a head coach. Look at him right here. They just lost the game, and he was crying.' Well, last year it's a negative thing, because we were 5-7. This year, it's 'Look how much he cares.'"

Sitting on the couch in his office mid-December, South Carolina (9-3) was preparing for Tuesday's Citrus Bowl vs Illinois. Looking around at pictures of his tight ends at Oklahoma, his running backs from Virginia Tech, his family and memories of Columbia on the walls, he explained that's just who he is.

"Players don't know how much you know until they know how much you care," Beamer said.

"When I'm the head coach and the leader, and players see me being willing to put myself out there, I think they're able to do the same. I've always been one of those guys who is not afraid to wear my emotions on my sleeve ... when you care about something and you pour your heart into something, emotions come out."

When he says he's just being himself, that's not a pat on the back, it's deflection from taking credit. It's natural for him but he makes a dedicated effort to care about his players and staff.

"I'm a people person: I like relationships," Beamer said. "I can sit here and tell players stuff, but if you're not who you say you are, if you don't back up what you say, if you're not real and genuine, it doesn't work."

See BEAMER, Page 4A



ABOVE: "I've always been one of those guys who is not afraid to wear my emotions on my sleeve," South Carolina coach Shane Beamer said.

TOP: South Carolina head coach Shane Beamer celebrates after the Gamecocks' win at Clemson on Nov. 30. PHOTOS BY KEN RUINARD/GREENVILLE NEWS

**"Players don't know how much you know until they know how much you care."**

Shane Beamer

## These businesses are headed to the Upstate

**Sarah Swetlik**

Greenville News  
USA TODAY NETWORK – SOUTH CAROLINA

The Upstate has experienced continued growth in 2024, both in residents and in business. Greenville, Spartanburg and Anderson counties netted new business deals and expansions in 2024 and early 2025.

In 2024, the Upstate saw expansion from businesses like Dr Pepper and TJX, along with development promises in the coming year, such as the \$80 million stadium for The Greenville Triumph and Liberty soccer clubs in Mauldin. Early in the year, Tesla announced the opening of a regional distribution center in Fountain Inn. On Valentine's Day, battery and charger manufacturer EnerSys announced a \$500 million investment and 500 jobs to create lithium batteries.

What businesses will join them? From manufacturing to entertainment, here are some of the largest businesses that made significant marks this year or will begin South Carolina operations in the new year.

### Amazon

Online retailer Amazon was recently awarded a property tax break from Greenville County for the company's upcoming move to Fountain Inn. The new facility will provide 200 jobs, and will be a \$47.5 million investment.

Amazon first came to the Upstate in 2012, establishing a facility in Spartanburg a year after South Carolina operations began in Lexington. According to Indeed, there are 14 Amazon warehouses in South Carolina.

### Drive Automotive Industries of America

At the same Greenville County Council meeting, auto part manufacturer Drive Automotive Industries of America received a tax break to expand their existing South Carolina operations. The company said the expansion will provide 200 additional jobs. They'll spend \$194 million to get their new operations up and running in Piedmont.

Drive Automotive Industries of America operates under Magna International Inc. The company produces body panels and parts and has operated in South Carolina since 1994. The Palmetto State is home to several automotive manufacturing companies, including Michelin and BMW in the Upstate.

### Samaritan Biologics

Medical technology company Samaritan Biologics announced a \$5 million investment in November that will provide 85 new jobs in Greenville beginning in January.

The Memphis-based company is moving into a lab at the Clemson University International Center for Automotive Research, leaving its current location at the Clemson University Biomedical Engineering Innovation Campus.

See BUSINESSES, Page 4A

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# Beamer

Continued from Page 1A

## What impressed Sellers about Beamer's approach

South Carolina quarterback LaNorris Sellers walked into Beamer's office one day last season.

"Do you know every player on the team's name?" Sellers asked. "I don't think you don't, but there's just a lot of college coaches that I don't think do."

Beamer knows more than names. He knows where every player is from, the origin of their nickname, their families and why players came to South Carolina. It's not just him; it's a non-negotiable for every coach. He's even had his offensive coordinator stand up and name every defensive player.

"Not just saying we're going to be close and connected, but being very intentional about showing that," Beamer

said.

Beamer wants a culture of openness with individuality. "We don't ask guys to be anybody that they're not," he said.

The massive glass jars of candy on the coffee table in his office have become a vehicle for deeply personal conversations, sometimes tearful realizations, or simple laughter. Each player is welcome to share what makes them the person they are upon grabbing a piece of gum or a Snickers.

"I love the fact that even if they just come in here for five seconds, it's five seconds where I'm able to connect with them," Beamer said. "I love that they can talk (to me) about anything ... There's a lot of things on their plate. I want them to know that door's always open."

## How Beamer recruits

It never gets lost on Beamer that when he's asking for players to dedicate 100% of themselves to his program, they're barely adults.

"They're still young college students

that are going through the same problems and issues that any other college student is going through," Beamer said. "They just happened to be on national television every week and part of a billion-dollar business."

Starting with the 2025-26 school year, athletes will likely be allowed to receive pay directly from colleges, but that doesn't mean difficulties will vanish. Helping athletes through that process is natural for Beamer.

"Truly caring about them and connecting with them, I love that aspect of my job," Beamer said. "That's why the NFL has never appealed to me because they have their own families, but in college, you're getting kids at a critical time in their lives where they're developing and you can help them with things. ... I tell recruits' parents all the time that I don't take that responsibility lightly, that they are entrusting me and this coaching staff with their son."

He's learned his culture shows in unexpected moments.

"I had a recruit tell me that his mom

said, 'You need to consider South Carolina because of the Fantasia video,'" Beamer said, referencing when his team helped him sing "When I See U," by Fantasia to his wife in the locker room after beating Texas A&M on Nov. 2.

"It wasn't the fact that I was singing Fantasia to my wife in front of the team," Beamer said. "It was about 'this coach is willing to put himself out there. You can see the connection that he has with the players.'"

The extra communication is exhausting but it doesn't matter if building relationships with his players in his free time adds to Beamer's already filled schedule.

"There's only 16 head coaches in the SEC," Beamer said. "I am blessed to do what I do. It's very high pressure and and it's 365 days of pressure, but I'm not going to let it take away the joy that I have about being here, and I'm not going to let it keep me from being who I am."

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# Businesses

Continued from Page 1A

Some of the new jobs will include specialized technical positions and executive leadership.

## Harbor Freight Tools

Tool and equipment retailer Harbor Freight Tools announced in November that the company would move into Anderson County with a \$30 million investment, creating 36 jobs.

The new facility will include office space, labs and a warehouse to test and design tools. Initially, the company established South Carolina operations in Dillon County in 2002.

The new facility will be online in late 2025.

## Milo's Tea Company

If you've been to a gathering in the South, chances are you've seen a gallon or two of Milo's sweet tea by the cups. The Alabama-based company announced an 80-job expansion and \$53

million investment in Spartanburg County last month.

The Spartanburg site was the company's fourth overall. They broke ground in March 2023 with a promise to create 103 jobs in the county.

## Smartpress

Minnesota-based printing company Smartpress established its first South Carolina operation in late September, investing \$9.6 million and promising to create 150 jobs.

The company is leasing a print production facility in Duncan. At the time, Gov. Henry McMaster said in a press release that South Carolina was an "ideal location" for the company.

According to news releases, Spartanburg was chosen as a way to expedite shipping times for East Coast customers. The company claims to be carbon neutral and employee-owned.

## AFL

In December, fiber optic product manufacturer AFL announced plans to expand operations in Spartanburg County, creating 150 jobs over the next

two to five years and investing \$155 million.

The company is a subsidiary of Japan-based Fujikura, Ltd. and provides projects to 130 countries. The new facility will be in Duncan.

## County Square

Greenville's County Square redevelopment project is a long-awaited hub for new businesses, including restaurants, grocery and specialty stores and entertainment venues. The project spans more than 40 acres and cost \$1 billion dollars.

Currently, construction is still underway, but Greenville County's offices mark the area where the new County Square will eventually stand.

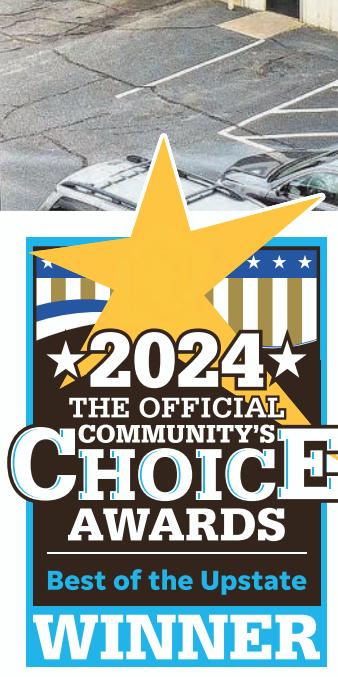
Announced tenants include Whole Foods, JINYA ramen bar, Pins Mechanical and Ben and Jerry's, among others.

*Sarah Swetlik covers business, growth and development for The Greenville News. Previously, she covered environmental issues and climate change. You can reach her at [sswetlik@gannett.com](mailto:sswetlik@gannett.com) or via X at @sarahgswetlik.*



Milo's Tea has announced plans for an 80-job expansion and \$53 million investment in Spartanburg County.

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