



For Immediate Release  
March 6, 2009

For more information, contact:  
Mary Beth West, 865 / 982-6626 or mb@marybethwest.com

## Post Job-Loss, Consumers Should Seek Good Information Before Making Financial Decisions

*LeConte Wealth Management Offers Tips at Blount Chamber Job Resource Day*

**Alcoa, Tenn.** – For any person facing a lay-off or other job loss situation, the stress and bad feelings associated with the experience can be difficult enough. However, on the heels of a job loss, making the wrong decisions about one's 401K and other benefits can make the personal financial impact even worse, beyond the loss of a salary or wages.

Kevin Painter and Andy Oakes of Alcoa-based LeConte Wealth Management, LLC, provided an information session to some 40 participants at the Blount County Chamber of Commerce Job Resource Day on Tuesday, March 3, to help attendees understand the key issues tied to job loss and financial decisions.

"It's critical to take charge of gathering information so that you know what your options are, first-hand," Oakes said. "Don't rely solely on the person who's on the other end of a 1-800 phone line for answers."

"Be persistent about getting all the information you need directly from your former employer and other sources," he said. "You should be able to feel confident about what direction you take in transferring retirement benefits, continuing health care coverage and other issues."

According to LeConte Wealth Management, it is natural to have bad feelings toward a previous employer after a job loss. Problems arise when those feelings drive people to make short-term decisions that have damaging financial consequences in the long-term.

For example, cashing in a 401K for fast money to fund living expenses prior to age 59 ½ can result in high penalty costs on top of income taxes, as well as the loss or severe reduction of retirement assets.

In another example, some people avoid information arriving in the mail from their former employer immediately following a job loss because of the anger they feel about the lay-off.

Oakes said he knew of a situation where a former employee had failed to open a packet received in the mail from the employer because of ill-will. The packet sat on a kitchen table for weeks. As a result, the person nearly missed an opportunity to have health care coverage continued because of time-sensitive instructions that were provided in the packet.

***"It's a natural human response to a lay-off to turn away from the former employer and cut off communication – particularly with an HR department that may have delivered the lay-off news in the first place. But in financial planning terms, that's the worst thing you can do."***

– Kevin Painter, LeConte Wealth Management, LLC

## 2 of 2 – LeConte / Blount Job Resource Day Tips

“It’s a natural human response to a lay-off to turn away from the former employer and cut off communication – particularly with an HR department that may have delivered the lay-off news in the first place,” Painter said. “But in fact, that’s the worst thing you can do. A lay-off should spur a former employee to protect his or her retirement and benefits. The first step toward protecting those interests is to ask questions of the employer and other sources to get all the information you need.”

LeConte Wealth Management recommends that former employees seek out the following sources so they can make informed decisions:

- **Employer’s Human Resources (HR) Department** – Focus on getting all information possible from the HR Department regarding the benefits the company provided and exactly what needs to be done to transfer or continue each of those benefits to the fullest extent possible. If the employer doesn’t have an actual HR Department, ask the business owner or your immediate supervisor who the key contact person needs to be on behalf of the company to answer your questions and provide reliable information.
  - **Benefits Administrator** – Seek out whether your company has a specific person who serves as a benefits administrator, either internal to the company or on an outsourced basis. This individual can provide a great deal of information about what various options are available for the whole slate of benefits that had been provided by the former employer.
  - **COBRA Administrator** – Also, seek out the appropriate COBRA administrator in charge of providing information about continuation of any health care benefits that had been provided by the previous employer.
- **Financial adviser or other trusted source** – Individuals facing a lay-off situation also need objective information about their overall financial picture to answer the bigger questions, like “Where do I go from here to meet my short-term and long-term financial needs?” People can go to many different sources for good information, but above all, individuals should seek out guidance from knowledgeable, qualified and trustworthy sources.

“As bad as a job loss is, the situation can provide a renewed focus for people to get their financial lives organized,” Painter said. “Taking control of getting a financial plan in place can be empowering and help people overcome the down emotions of being between jobs.”

### **ABOUT LECONTE WEALTH MANAGEMENT, LLC:**

Established in 2007 and located at 269 Cusick Road, Alcoa, Tenn., 37701, LeConte Wealth Management, LLC ([www.lecontewealth.com](http://www.lecontewealth.com)) helps clients develop a plan to accumulate and preserve their wealth in pursuit of their unique financial goals. With more than 30 years of cumulative experience, the firm’s team provides asset management, retirement planning, estate planning, risk management and business planning. Securities and Advisory Services offered through Commonwealth Financial Network, Member FINRA/SIPC, a Registered Investment Adviser.