

## Economic Development Staff Changes

**Randy Cardoza** will lead the Montgomery Area Chamber's Corporate Development and Recruitment department as Senior Vice President. Cardoza's responsibilities include all recruiting activities for industrial and corporate facilities. Cardoza is a long time veteran of the economic development industry, serving over 25 years in various chambers and state government positions.

**David J. Cooper** was elected to the board of directors of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama. Cooper is president of Mobile-based Cooper/T. Smith Corporation, one of America's oldest and largest stevedoring and maritime related firms.

**Don Erwin** was elected vice president, Business Development of EDPA. Erwin came to EDPA in January from Alabama Power.

**Steve Sewell** was elected vice president, Marketing and Business Information of EDPA. Sewell has worked for EDPA since 1994.

Montgomery businessman **Todd Strange** was appointed director of the Alabama Development Office by Governor Don Siegelman. Strange has played an active role in economic development in Montgomery as chairman of Forefront Montgomery and his participation in the Montgomery Area Chamber of Commerce's Committee of 100.

*Do you have economic development-related staff changes or job openings?*

*Get the word out!  
Please e-mail the position information to [info@edpa.org](mailto:info@edpa.org)*

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### Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

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November 2001

## Honda Begins Mass Production Six Months Early

Honda Manufacturing of Alabama has already begun mass production of Honda's benchmark Odyssey minivan and the V-6 engine that powers it - approximately six months ahead of the original vehicle launch plan for the plant. Production at HMA will help meet customer demand for the hot-selling Odyssey.

"With dealer inventories currently in short supply it was necessary to accelerate the mass production start-up in Alabama to meet the needs of our customers and dealers," said Mikio Yoshimi, president of HMA. "This is the quickest ever construction of a new Honda auto plant in North America, but our goal is customer satisfaction, not record construction. I am extremely proud of what all of our associates in Alabama have accomplished, advancing the launch date while achieving Honda's high quality level."

Associates at HMA have been conducting trial production for several months, refining new processes

and equipment and learning to meet Honda's exacting standards for quality and efficiency. In fact, the official mass production line-off culminates several weeks of department-by-department production start-ups in stamping, welding, painting, plastic injection molding, engine casting and machining, body and engine assembly and other areas. HMA's engine plant has been casting engine blocks for several weeks that will be used in yet-to-be produced Odysseys.

Honda announced plans to build a plant in Alabama in May 1999, with the original mass production start-up scheduled for April 2002. At the April 2000 groundbreaking, HMA announced it would accelerate the start-up of production to late 2001, with plans to reach employment of 1,500 associates when HMA meets its annual production of 120,000 vehicles and 120,000 engines in late 2002. Currently, HMA

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## New incentives for small industries

A new incentive provides income tax breaks for small industries - a benefit previously reserved for larger companies. Previously, the state would offer income tax breaks to an industry investing at least \$2 million and hiring at least 20 people. The new incentive requires only \$500,000 and five employees for industries going into Alabama's 23 less-developed counties or into areas that have qualified with the state as

Enterprise Zones. Businesses qualifying for the tax break will be allowed to take off 5 percent of the cost of the plant each year for 20 years against their state income tax liability.

## Alabama offers new film incentives

Alabama's mountains, valleys and beaches may now be seen more often on the silver screen.

Governor Don Siegelman recently signed legislation to give tax incentives to film companies that make movies in Alabama.

Siegelman signed the bill in a ceremony attended by filmmakers from across the country, as part of the Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival, which was held in Birmingham.

Companies approved by the Alabama Film Office will receive sales and lodging tax abatements to produce films in the state. The Alabama Film Office will set criteria for films that will receive the tax incentives between now and the end of the year.

HONDA continued ...

employs approximately 1,100 associates.

The start-up of HMA increases Honda's capital investment in North America to more than \$6 billion, raises Honda's North American employment to more than 25,000 associates and brings the number of major Honda manufacturing plants in North America to eleven. HMA will help boost total North American auto production capacity to 1.18 million units by late 2002.

## Profoods announces new plant in Albertville

Profoods International recently announced that it will set up a poultry processing operation in the former Arrow Shirt factory in Albertville. Arrow, which operated in the building for over 30 years, closed last year, laying off over 300 people. Profoods will begin production in mid-December and plans to employ up to 600 people within two years. The Albertville facility will produce specialized poultry products for international and domestic distribution.

## Dallas County spec building ready

The Craig Field Airport and Industrial Authority has completed its fourth speculative building. The 50,000-square-foot structure is 200 x 250 feet. The building is located on 6.4 acres with site work completed for a 25,000-square-foot expansion pad. Infrastructure for all utilities is avail-

able in the Craig Industrial Complex.

The building is located adjacent to a CSX Transportation rail spur and Craig Field's 8,000-foot runway that includes a full instrument landing system. The Craig Industrial Complex is east of Selma on U.S. Highway 80 and is also accessible from Ala. Highway 41 South.

For more information, contact Don Hopper at the Selma & Dallas County Economic Development Authority, (800) 335-1332 or [eda@wwisp.com](mailto:eda@wwisp.com).

## Biotech investor conference a success

Nearly 400 investors and southeastern biotech company executives attended the third annual Southeastern Biotechnology Investor Conference in Birmingham. SEBIO is an annual regional conference organized by the Southeastern Life Sciences Association as a collaborative effort of the leading life sciences technology and economic development organizations in the Southeast.

"The SEBIO conference showcases the 'best of the best' research and development taking place in the Southeastern U.S.," said Patrick Kelly, director of state government relations for the Biotechnology Industry Organization.

"By combining resources, these states have exceeded all expectations in attracting a national audience for this conference."

## Bruno's on top

Bruno's Memorial Classic recently garnered top placement in a ranking of Senior PGA tour stops. Calling the Bruno's "wildly successful," *Sports Illustrated* cited huge crowds, Tournament Director Gene Hallman, and endless perks for the players and their wives as factors in the tournament's success.

The popularity of the tournament surprises some of the players. The article recounts the story of last year's champion Hale Irwin commenting, "My God, this is like Woodstock," upon seeing the crowd of fans as approached the 18th green.

The tournament, held at Greystone Golf and Country Club, is the biggest event in the Birmingham area, after the Winston 500 NASCAR race, held in nearby Talladega.

## Want your news in developments?

Do you have news that you would like to have considered for inclusion in *Developments*? Send it via one of the three methods below to the attention of Wendy Wallace:

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## Accounting firm to focus on international companies

Alabama now boasts an accounting firm that caters specifically to international companies. Rodl Warren Averett, a joint venture of Birmingham accounting firm Warren, Averett, Kimbrough & Marino and the Atlanta office of Rodl Langford deKock, is being seen as a resource for industry recruiters.

Rodl Langford deKock is the main U.S. office for Rodl & Partner, a German accounting firm with offices throughout Europe and Asia. The Georgia office is credited with helping to bring several German and European companies to that state.

Rodl Warren Averett gives Alabama a CPA firm offering special expertise to foreign-based companies - especially those in manufacturing sectors - that are seeking to establish a presence in the state. The firm offers accounting and business consulting services that meet the unique needs of international companies that locate plants/operations in the state.

## State luring European tourists

The State of Alabama has signed a contract with a British company to operate a tourism office for the state in Europe. Global Travel Marketing of London will promote tourism, represent the state at travel shows and encourage tour operators to include Alabama in travel packages. According to Director of Alabama Bureau of Travel and Tourism Mark Berson, over 100,000 foreign visitors spent approximately \$200 million in the state last year.

## Mercedes wins minority business awards

The South Regions Minority Business Council recently named Mercedes-Benz U.S. International as Corporation of the Year. Bill Taylor, MBUSI President and CEO, was named Executive of the Year. SRMBC is the Alabama affiliate of the National Minority Supplier Development Council.

## Russell, VF layoffs open labor force

Massive layoffs by Vanity Fair and Russell in some of Alabama's smaller towns will free up a labor force of almost 3,000 people.

VF is closing apparel factories in Hanceville, Oneonta, Atmore, Red Bay, Russellville and Florence, accounting for 2,700 of the layoffs.

Russell is closing three yarn-making operations in and around Alexander City, claiming 275 jobs.

The closings will be effective by mid-January, and affected areas are eager to bring in new industry.

"We've got to find a way to help [the employees] and the best way to do that is by creating more jobs so they will have a place to use their skills," said Florence Mayor Dick Jordan.

Florence and Lauderdale counties alone lost 1,294 jobs.

## Alabama company nabs Airbus contract

Avionics Express, a small Fultondale-based company, has secured a bilateral agreement with Air France Industries for maintenance and repair on computerized flight systems on Airbus Industries 320 airliners in the Western Hemisphere. The agreement will result in as much as one million dollars in new equipment for Avionics Express and a doubling of its seven-person work force. Avionics Express is the only company in the United States that has the ATEC 5000 Automatic Test Equipment, which tests and troubleshoots flight system computers. The company's goal is to be a one-stop source for Airbus 320 avionic and electronic components.

## Alabama a top ten state for work force training

Alabama Industrial Development Training, the state's award-winning work force training program has been recognized once again. In a survey of site selection consultants in the October edition of *Expansion Management*, Alabama's work force training program ranked seventh in the country. The Southeast made a strong showing overall, dominating the top fifteen.