

Economic Development People in the News

Elmer B. Harris, Chief Executive Officer of the Center for Public Policy and former President and CEO of Alabama Power Company, has been appointed as Honorary Consul General of Japan in Birmingham, Ala. Harris has been involved in promoting Japan-Alabama relations for many years. In 1998, he was chairman of the Southeast U.S.-Japan Association Meeting, which was held in Mobile. He is a former president and active member of the Japan America Society of Alabama, and received its Samuel Ullman Award in 1998.

Alan Harper was named Executive Director of the West Central Alabama Partnership. Harper comes to the WCAP from the Tuscaloosa Industrial Development Authority, where he was a project manager. Harper is active in EDAA and SEDC and holds advanced professional economic development certification from Georgia Tech and the University of Oklahoma's Economic Development Institute. Harper moves into his new role on April 15.

Marshall Rogers is the new Executive Director of the Escambia County Industrial Development Authority. Rogers comes to ECIDA from the Baldwin County Economic Development Alliance. She previously worked for ECIDA as associate director. Marshall is active in EDAA and other organizations.

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

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March 2002

Fiber optics plant announces opening in Auburn

FiberCore will open a \$30 million fiber optics plant in Auburn that will employ 200. The facility, the company's first in the U.S., will primarily manufacture multi-mode fiber for U.S. and global data communications markets.

FiberCore will contribute one-third of the \$30 million estimated project cost, and the remaining funds will be in the form of a 15-year loan approved by the Retirement Systems of Alabama.

David Bronner, RSA pension fund chief, told the *Birmingham News* that Alabama beat out North Carolina's "technology triangle" for the plant. "Anytime you can pull one out of there and bring them here, it's a coup," he said. "This is a unique opportunity to bring a company that has no operations in the United States and bring them to Alabama." FiberCore develops, manufactures and markets single-

mode and multi-mode optical fiber preforms and optical fiber for the telecommunications and data communications markets. It currently operates manufacturing facilities in Jena, Germany and Campinas, Brazil.

Alabama exports on the rise

Alabama's exports increased by 3.5 percent in 2001, ranking the state 12th among 23 states that managed to increase exports last year, according to findings of the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research.

Chief exports among the \$7.5 billion cargo were vehicles, industrial machinery, organic chemicals and electric machinery. Canada was Alabama's top trading partner and Ireland was the state's fastest growing trade partner, increasing its imports by almost 150 percent.

Microwave Roasters locates in Dallas County

Microwave Roasters recently opened in the South Dallas Industrial Park, employing ten. Microwave Roasters manufactures Peanut Roasters, an innovative snack that allows customers to roast peanuts in the microwave while still in the shell.

CEO Steve Grossman, former president of American Candy Company, says the workforce is the primary reason the company chose Dallas County. "I've done business in 70 countries, and I would not trade the workforce at Microwave Roasters for

any workforce in the world," he said.

The company produces approximately 21,000 bags of the peanuts daily, which are marketed to convenience markets, movie stores and supermarkets.

Fabricating equipment facility expands in Pell City

Duraweld Inc. recently opened a new 31,000-sq. ft. facility in Pell City Industrial Park, employing 30 and representing a near \$1 million capital investment for the city.

The multi-faceted manufacturing and fabricating facility relocated from a former site in St. Clair County.

"When business conditions required an expansion that was not feasible in their previous location, they had many options to locate elsewhere," said Stan Batemon, Commission Chairman. "They chose to stay in our county and we are grateful for that decision."

Duraweld specializes in just-in-time delivery of structural steel, light and heavy gauge steel, process piping, handrails and stairs, walkways and other fabricated metal components.

ACIPCO finishes \$80M expansion

Birmingham's American Cast Iron Pipe Co. recently completed an \$80 million, 61,000-square-foot melt shop expansion. The three-mile-long iron pipe casting plant is considered the largest in the world.

The project adds a fifth state-of-the-art electric arc furnace that could add up to 35 new jobs at the facility. The furnace replaces a coke-fired unit that was installed in the 1970s.

ACIPCO employs about 2,300 people at the plant. Founded in 1905, it is the city's second-largest manufacturer and one of the nation's largest makers of iron pressure pipe.

Excellence

Alabama cities among "hottest" in the U.S.

Montgomery, Huntsville, Auburn-Opelika, Tuscaloosa and Decatur are ranked in the top 50 "Hottest Cities in America" for expanding and relocating companies, according to the January 2002 issue of *Expansion Management* magazine. Huntsville is highest on the list at 17.

The rankings are a result of a poll conducted by 75 consultants specializing in locating business and industry site locations. Statistics from 331 metropolitan areas across the country were considered.

City rankings are based in part on business climate, ease of working with local officials, work force availability, worker training programs, taxes, incen-

tive programs, quality of schools, workforce quality and overall quality of life.

Huntsville ranks in top 60 "cybercities"

Huntsville was recently ranked among the Top 60 Cybercities in America according to a study by American Electronics Association and NASDAQ. These cities are the best locations in the U.S. for high-tech companies.

Huntsville joins San Jose, Calif., Atlanta, Ga. and Raleigh, N.C. on the high-tech metro list. City rankings are based on total employment, average wages, total payroll, number of companies, R&D spending and venture capital in the 45 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes that define high-technology industry.

Toyota flooded with applications

Toyota's call for job applicants at its new Huntsville engine plant got 30,000 requests, with about 13,000 completed forms returned by the Feb. 22 deadline.

"We expected to have a good response," said Paula Lillard, general manager of administration for Toyota Motor Manufacturing Alabama Inc. "We never dreamed we would get 30,000."

Alabama Industrial Development Training will screen the applications and provide pre-employment training for those chosen.

The company begins hiring 17 group leaders and 42 team leaders in

April and 221 team members in late fall. Supervisors will be sent to Japan or other Toyota plants around the United States for training.

Automotive companies in the state often get an overwhelming response for applications. Mercedes received 63,000 requests for 1,500 jobs, and Honda received 38,000 requests for 1,500 jobs.

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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Technical training seeing higher numbers

Thousands of Alabamians are going to the state's two-year colleges to learn more skills or begin new careers.

"Once the economy started to turn down, we noticed the increase in our student population," Fred Gainous, chancellor of Alabama's 29 two-year colleges told the *Birmingham News*.

"We've been having double-digit increases at some of our institutions."

Calhoun, Jefferson State, Bessemer State Technical, and Northwest Shoals Community Colleges report an 8.8 percent average increase in enrollment since spring of 2001.

According to admissions directors, many of those students are there to maintain or upgrade their job skills.

Events

Alabama Information Technology Association Annual Forum

AITA will hold their Annual Forum on April 24-25, 2002 at the Huntsville Marriott Hotel.

The forum will include issues crucial to information technology and feature an economic development panel discussion with development professionals and technology representatives from across the state.

Among those scheduled to appear are Jim Carroll of the Microsoft Corporation and Lt. Governor Steve

Windom.

Visit www.alabama-infotech.org for more information or to register for the conference.

Alabama-Germany Partnership Annual Dinner

The Alabama-Germany Partnership will hold their annual dinner on Thursday, April 4 at the Riverchase Wynfrey in Birmingham, with a business breakfast meeting the following morning.

The Alabama Germany Partnership was founded in 1998 to develop and support relationships between organizations and individuals in Alabama and Germany.

Contact the Alabama-Germany office for more information at 943-4772.

SAE Southern Automotive Conference and Exposition in Greenville

The SAE SAMC meeting will take place at the Palmetto Expo Center in Greenville, South Carolina, April 8-10. The meeting was originally scheduled for October 8-10, but was rescheduled due to the events of Sept. 11.

SAE International is sponsoring the conference along with host company for the program, BMW Manufacturing Corp.

For more information see the web site at www.sae.org/samc.

Buy.com returning to Prattville

It's official - the Buy.com Tour championship will return to the Robert Trent Jones Capitol Hill golf course in Prattville.

This is the sixth straight year that the championship has been held on one of Alabama's Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail courses and the second for the new Capitol Hill course.

Attendance at last year's event topped 47,000. The final day alone attracted 17,000.

"All I heard and the letters I got back from the tour, The Golf Channel and all the players involved was that they've never been anywhere they were treated so well and had a better time," said Tournament Director John Cannon.

The event, which will be aired on the Golf Channel and Fox Sports Netwok is scheduled for the week of Oct. 21-27.

EDPA

Rodl Warren Averett joins EDPA

Birmingham accounting firm Rodl Warren Averett is the newest partner of EDPA.

The firm, founded last year, offers special expertise in accounting and business consulting to foreign-based companies that are seeking to establish a presence in the state.