

Hayes Appointed Interim President of EDPA

Jim Hayes is interim president of the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama.

Hayes, a Birmingham businessman, was Commissioner of the Department of Revenue from January 1999 to December 1999 and later served as senior advisor to Gov. Don Siegelman. In addition to his role as senior advisor, he was director of the Alabama Development Office.

Hayes served in the administration until January of this year. He was senior advisor and executive secretary to the governor at the time of his departure.

"Jim Hayes brings considerable experience and insight that will be extremely valuable to EDPA," said Garry Neil Drummond, chairman of the EDPA Board of Directors. "He understands economic development and is very familiar with both EDPA and the economic development community in Alabama."

Hayes began his work at EDPA last month.

"Everyone is aware of EDPA's contribution to Alabama," Hayes said. "The Partnership's work has been absolutely critical to Alabama's economic development success and it will continue to play an important role in the state's efforts to attract leading companies," Hayes said.

"I am honored to be asked to assist the organization during this interim period."

www.edpa.org

Economic Development Partnership of Alabama

500 Beacon Parkway West
Birmingham, Alabama 35209
(205) 943-4700 telephone
(205) 943-4703 facsimile
www.edpa.org ~ info@edpa.org

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Contact information incorrect? Fax corrections to 205.943.4715, or e-mail wwallace@edpa.org

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Innomotive locates U.S. headquarters in Tuscaloosa

Innomotive Systems recently broke ground on a \$17.6 million facility at the Airport Industrial Park in Tuscaloosa that will employ 120.

Innomotive will manufacture front and rear end modules at the plant, which will also serve as the U.S. headquarters for the German-based company.

Innomotive was recently awarded business for the Mercedes-Benz Grand Sports Tourer and the next generation M-Class, which will both be produced at Mercedes' Tuscaloosa County facility.

The selection of Tuscaloosa County was the result of an extensive site search that included U.S. and Canadian locations.

Innomotive Systems U.S. is a subsidiary of ISE Innomotive Systems Europe GmbH, which is based in Bergneustadt, Germany. ISE has investments throughout Europe, South Africa and China.

Japanese auto supplier chooses Cullman

Tokyo-based Topre Corp. is investing \$45.7 million in a 250,000 square-foot metal stamping facility in Cullman Industrial Park No. 3.

The company, which supplies stamped parts to Honda and Nissan, hopes to land additional contracts with other automakers and suppliers.

Topre plans to increase the plant to 700,000 square-feet over three phases for up to a \$100 million investment. Employment may reach 300.

Cullman beat out sites in Tennessee and Kentucky for the project. Cullman officials say that the strengths of the community and work force ultimately won the project.

"It came down to a feeling about where they believed their company would be successful and their relocating families would be happy," said Dale Greer, project coordinator for the Cullman Economic and Community Development Agency.

Toray Group expands in Morgan County

Japan-based Toray Group, the parent company of Toray Carbon Fibers, will open another plant in Decatur. Toray Fluorofibers Inc. will begin construction in early 2003 for a \$30 million plant to produce a Teflon fiber. The fiber will be used for parts, sealants and other compounds in a variety of industries. Construction on the plant, which will employ 53, is scheduled to be completed in late 2004.

Meow Mix moving into Nestle Purina facility

Decatur will be home to the only pet food plant in the U.S. to solely manufacture dry cat food as Meow Mix takes over the Nestle Purina PetCare plant. Meow Mix hired approximately half of the former plant employees, who were laid off when the plant closed in early August. Meow Mix will spend \$12 million for upgrades of the operations. In addition to manufacturing, the facility will also house as a distribution and R&D center.

Growth brings pallet company

CHEP, an international pallet and container pooling company, will open a pallet depot at the Birmingham Food Terminal to serve the growing distribution and automotive industries in the area. Company officials predict that 4.1 million pallets will move through the facility annually. Customers of CHEP include Home Depot, Wal-Mart, Target, Mercedes and Honda. Amware Pallet Group will operate the Birmingham facility.

Plastipak locates Southeastern hub in Jefferson Co.

Plastipak Packaging will locate a \$30 million plastics plant in the Jefferson Metropolitan Park.

The plant, which will initially employ 50, will serve as the company's Southeastern hub.

The company chose a 100,000 square-foot speculative building for the plant, which will be expanded to 280,000 square-feet.

The hub will supply Pepsi Cola bottlers, barbecue sauce makers, Procter & Gamble, and others. It will also be used to ship finished products and raw materials to some of the company's other plants in Atlanta, Texas, Ohio, Illinois and Massachusetts.

Roofing manufacturer expanding in Tuscaloosa

Elk Corporation of Alabama will spend \$77 million to add a second shingle production line at its Tuscaloosa facility. The investment will more than triple production at the plant and will add over 100 jobs. Elk is wholly owned by Elcor Corp.

Johnson Systems locating in Florence

Johnson Systems, which designs, fabricates and installs dust-control systems, is relocating from Moultrie, Ga. to the Florence-Lauderdale Industrial Park. The company serves 250 clients, such as cotton gins and feed mills, which are located throughout the Southeast. The company will employ 15 at startup and nearly 30 by early 2003.

New Mercedes to be built at Tuscaloosa County plant

What is part touring car, part station wagon, part sport utility vehicle and has a three-pointed star? The new Mercedes-Benz Grand Sports Tourer, which will be produced at the Tuscaloosa County plant.

The GST, which was unveiled as a concept car at the North American Auto Show in Detroit this January, will be geared for the North American market.

The concept car is a six-passenger, 15-foot long vehicle with a 5.5-liter V8 AMG engine, butterfly side doors that open in opposite directions, and a glass roof that tints at the touch of a button.

Officials have not decided whether the GST will be built at the original plant, or the on-site \$600 million expansion, which is expected to be completed by early 2004. The GST is scheduled to begin production by the end of 2004.

Applications abound for auto jobs

Alabamians are clamoring for the 4,350 automotive jobs at Mercedes, Toyota and Honda. Nearly 50,000 completed applications have been received - more than 10 times the needed employees. Here's a breakout of the numbers:

Mercedes will hire 2,000 workers for its \$600 million expansion. More than 24,000 people submitted applications.

Toyota will hire 350 workers for its V8 engine plant in Huntsville. More than 13,000 people applied for those jobs.

Honda's \$425 million expansion will require 2,000 more workers. The deadline hasn't been reached for those applications, and already more than 11,000 have been received.

Keep in mind that Hyundai has yet to begin advertising for its 2,000 jobs.

Want your news in developments?

Do you have news that you would like to have considered for inclusion in *Developments*? Send it to Wendy Wallace:

fax:

(205) 943-4703

e-mail:

wwallace@edpa.org

mail:

500 Beacon Parkway W.
Birmingham, AL 35209

State training program begins in Wetumpka

Wetumpka will join Montgomery, Anniston, Eutaw and Selma as a location for Alabamians to attend the 32-week intensive Manufacturing Technology Institute program.

The program is available at no cost to state residents with a high school diploma and no criminal record.

Trainees gain skills in basic and advanced machining and should qualify for manufacturing jobs with starting pay between \$10 and \$12 an hour. Trainees may also choose to pursue an associate degree in Machine Tools Technology at one of the Alabama College System partner campuses.

To enter the program, students must complete the 10-week Fast Track Training program. Fast Track is a basic work skills course that refreshes reading and math skills as well as provides training on specific workplace skills.

The Fast Track and MTI programs were created by the Alabama Works initiative. For more information, visit www.alabamaworks.org.

Southern Business Leadership Council formed

Leaders from across the South have joined together to form the Southern Business Leadership Council. The council will focus special attention on enhancing the employability of low-income parents and their access to affordable child care, adequate health coverage and reliable transportation.

Bill O'Connor, president of the Business Council of Alabama, represents Alabama on the council.

The SBLC was formed through the Southern Institute on Children and Families, an independent, non-profit public policy organization.

Alabama lands a "Big Fish"

Scenes from Alabama will make the Tim Burton movie "Big Fish" all the more genuine.

The movie is based on a novel by Birmingham native Daniel Wallace, "Big Fish: A Novel of Epic Proportions." The book tells the story of a dying father and his son, who is trying to learn more about his dad by piecing together the stories he has gathered over the years. The son re-creates his father's elusive life in a series of legends inspired by the few facts he knows.

Albert Finney will play the dying father, while Ewan McGregor will play the character in his younger years.

"All of my books take place in Alabama," said Wallace. "It's gratifying that the film will create the same background that I've always had in my own mind."

Filming is slated to begin in January. Producers on the Columbia Pictures project are Dan Jinks, Bruce Cohen and Richard D. Zanuck.

RTJ gains notice in NY Times

Readers scanning Friday the 13th's *New York Times* "Escapes" section for somewhere to go were treated with a half-page photo of the Capitol Hill golf course in Prattville and a lengthy article about Alabama's Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail. Calling it "some of the best public golf you'll find in the world," the article chronicles the author's trek through Alabama to play 126 of the Trail's 378 "wrenching" holes...well-earned publicity for one of the state's biggest draws for tourism and industry.

2002 Alabama IT Technology Summit

The 2002 Alabama IT Technology Summit will be held October 1st at the Wynfrey Hotel in Birmingham. The Summit, hosted by the Alabama Information Technology Association, will address the latest trends in technology, offer networking opportunities, showcase some of the best technology start-ups in the state, and detail state leaders' views on technology issues. Attendance is limited to 300. For more information, or to register, visit www.alabama-infotech.org.