



Growing Interest in North Dakota

VERACITY CONFERENCING SERVICES CENTER WILL BE LARGEST IN REGIONAL AREA

Veracity Communications, Inc., an emerging leader in voice conferencing, data conferencing, and streaming media services to businesses, reached an agreement for placing its primary customer service center in Grafton, ND.

The agreement is with the ND Department of Commerce, the Red River Regional Council, the Walsh County Job Development Authority, the City of Grafton, and the city of Park River.

“Our company focuses on customer care,” says Veracity President Max Roesler. “It is critical that our customer service center be able to recruit and retain high-quality people. Grafton offers a workforce that exceeds our needs.” Veracity expects to hire more than 100 people in the next three years.

“From a capacity perspective, Veracity will be the largest conferencing services provider in a four-or-five-state area,” adds Veracity CEO Dan Bye.

Veracity Communications was formed in Minneapolis in March 2001. Through a combination of private equity, vendor financing, SBA-backed bank debt, and economic development incentives, the corporation has raised more than \$2.5 million. ■

COMMERCE DEPARTMENT HOSTS MINNEAPOLIS RECEPTION

Nearly 60 guests representing more than 30 Minneapolis-area companies attended a recent ND reception at the Hôtel Sofitel in Minneapolis. ND Commerce Commissioner Lee Peterson, ED&F Director Linda Butts, and ED&F’s entire business development team treated guests to elegant hors d’oeuvres, fine piano music, and intimately casual conversations about doing business in North Dakota. Commerce staff also met with 11 area businesses during their stay.

“This event is part of our long term plan to increase the visibility of North Dakota as an excellent place to do business,” said Butts. “Minneapolis is a strong North Dakota market, and we plan to host regular events in the Twin Cities.” ■

“PARTNERS IN MARKETING” GETS CITIES, COUNTIES, AND ND REGIONS TO MAJOR TRADE SHOWS

ED&F’s Partners in Marketing plan is a brand-new way to offer financial help to local developers who want to market their areas in innovative ways or participate in major trade shows.

Local development corporations (LDCs) interested in partnering with ED&F need to complete the Partners in Marketing application and send a marketing plan or strategy to ED&F. ED&F has earmarked \$175,000 for the Partners in Marketing program.

“Everybody wins,” Mike Strotheide, ED&F vice president of business development says. “We all benefit from the combined expertise and knowledge. The LDC’s presence enhances the state’s visibility. And the LDC has a chance to form valuable relationships with industries they might otherwise never be exposed to.”

2002 trade shows in the near future include:

World Outsourcing Summit *Lake Buena Vista, FL, Feb. 18-21*

To promote rural outsourcing and strengthen relationships with Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 companies, ED&F will participate in the 2002 Outsourcing World Summit. The event features the latest business thinking and the field’s top outsourcing providers.

Partners in Marketing participants will include the cities of Bismarck-Mandan, Grand Forks, and Mayville, as well as Griggs and Steele counties.

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“In today’s competitive international environment, major corporations are always exploring new opportunities. Many are making outsourcing a major part of their strategic plans,” says ED&F business developer Sandy Opp.

For three years, North Dakota has been an associate sponsor and exhibitor at the Summit, and it is the only state directly involved with the event. This year, North Dakota will host a winetasting event to give attendees even more opportunities to strengthen working relationships with out-of-state companies that could benefit from outsourcing to North Dakota.

National Association of Manufacturers *Chicago, IL, March 18-21*

During National Manufacturing Week, Chicago’s McCormick Place is the site of the National Association of Manufacturers trade show, one of the largest in the nation. The ND Dept. of Commerce will have a booth and representatives at the trade show, but also plans a March 20 reception in Galileo’s Café, part of the Adler Planetarium on the shores of Lake Michigan.

At the reception, ND Gov. John Hoeven, Dept. of Commerce staff, and North Dakota developers will host some 200 manufacturing guests. Participants will be able to get “up-close and personal” with a full-size Bobcat, a Samsara pool table and pool cues (Rugby), a GEM car (Fargo) and Imation CDs and diskettes (Wahpeton). Business representatives will talk to guests about the advantages of doing business in ND and why their companies have been successful here.

Later in 2002, ED&F and partners will participate in these shows:

- **CoreNet Global Summit** (real estate),
Salt Lake City, UT, May 8
- **Supercomm** (communications),
Atlanta, GA, June 3-7
- **Medical Devices Manufacturing**,
New York, NY, June 4-6
- **Semicon** (electronics),
San Jose, CA, July 17-24

For more information about becoming a marketing partner with ED&F, contact Mike Strotheide, ED&F business development vice president, 701-328-5322, mstrothe@state.nd.us. ■

“PARTNERS IN MARKETING”: 4 GRANTS APPROVED

“Partners in Marketing” grants totaling \$80,000 have been approved for four areas of the state.

“We were excited that many of the applications included a regional approach to marketing,” said Tracy Metzger, ED&F marketing vice president. “By pooling the talents of neighboring communities, a region can appeal more strongly to a prospective business and is eligible for a larger amount of grant funding.”

Recipients of the four approved grants:

- **Devils Lake Region** (including Cando, Devils Lake, Langdon, and Rolla): \$40,000 for marketing and advertising materials and out-of-state trade missions
- **Southwest Region Developers** (including Amidon, Beach, Bowman, Dickinson, Hettinger, Killdeer, and New England) \$20,000 for marketing materials
- **Valley City-Barnes County**: \$15,000 for marketing materials and out-of-state trade missions
- **Rugby JDA**: \$5,000 for marketing materials

For more information on “Partners in Marketing” funds, designed to encourage the growth of primary-sector business and the creation of new wealth, contact Tracy Metzger, 701-328-5352, tmetzger@state.nd.us. ■

CREATIVE THINKING IN ASHLEY, ND NETS 10 AREA NURSES AND \$360,000

Ashley, ND, pop. 1,052, understands how to leverage a little money into big economic development benefits.

Several years ago, the town invested \$62,000 to help

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10 area residents become licensed practical nurses through distance learning. Those 10 students have now graduated and returned to higher-paying jobs in the community. Even more important for Ashley, those 10 nurses are helping to keep area hospitals and nursing homes open, adding to the economic viability of the region.

Ashley also recently received two grants totaling \$35,000 and two loans totaling more than \$325,000 from the US Department of Agriculture Rural Development Agency.

- A \$20,000 Rural Business Opportunities grant went to the Ashley Job Development Authority to help TechLink, Inc. develop a working relationship with Fifth Generation Technologies, Chennai, India. The two companies have already shared a number of software development and web media contracts, and the goal is to have a Fifth Generation branch office in Ashley sometime early this year.
- A \$15,000 Rural Business Opportunities grant went to the city of Ashley for technical assistance in writing the McIntosh County strategic plan. The plan will be used to apply for a county empowerment zone that includes the towns of Napoleon, Edgeley, and Kulm. If the empowerment zone application is successful, McIntosh County will have access to about \$20 million over the next 10 years.
- Loans of \$89,393 to the Ashley Job Development Authority and \$235,617 to T.J. Inc. will be used to help with the building, equipment, and operating expenses of newly reopened Blumhardt Equipment, which produces injection-molded plastic components and is expanding its product line. ■

IMATION CUTS 1,000 JOBS WORLDWIDE, BUT WAHPETON PLANT JUST KEEPS GROWING

Imation Corp. is a \$1.2 billion manufacturer of computer storage technologies, with sales in more than 60 countries. It started its Wahpeton, ND, plant in 1977 with 13 employees. Today it employs more than 700 people in Wahpeton, and until recently had another 3,300 employees around the world.

Imation recently sold its color proofing and color software business to Kodak, moving 500 jobs away from Imation. The company now plans to eliminate another 500 employees worldwide.

For the Wahpeton plant, however, Imation plans an expansion, adding a new 100,000-square-foot building to its existing 240,000-square-foot site.

Imation worked closely with the ND Dept. of Commerce and the Wahpeton Community Development Corporation to make the expansion a reality.

“Imation’s success is a good example of why we targeted advanced manufacturing in our economic-development strategy,” said ND Gov. John Hoeven. “Its success is a credit to a fine company, to state and local economic development agencies—and especially to North Dakota’s skilled and dedicated workforce.”

In 2001, *Industry Week* magazine named Imation’s Wahpeton plant one of the top 14 manufacturing companies in North America. ED&F used the company as the “poster child” for its 2001 California marketing campaign. ■

HISTORY, WIDE-OPEN SPACES SHOULD APPEAL TO GERMAN AND SCANDINAVIAN TOURISTS

The ND Dept. of Commerce’s Tourism Division and a group of private-enterprise representatives and local convention and visitors’ bureaus traveled to Norway recently to continue the state’s successful courtship of Scandinavian tourists.

For the third consecutive year, North Dakota will be represented at Reiseliv, an Oslo travel show that attracts more than 45,000 people.

“It’s important to let the rest of the world know that North Dakota is a great vacationland with rare, wide-open space,” said ND Gov. John Hoeven. “Whether your interest is history, living the cowboy life, bird watching, hunting, or fishing, North Dakota is a safe and wonderful place to visit.”

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International markets—especially the Scandinavian countries and Germany—are an important part of the state’s tourism marketing plan, according to Tourism Division Director Allan Stenehjelm. “The benefits are so great that we have 10 private enterprise players who participate at their own expense,” he added.

North Dakota will be represented at six travel shows in Norway, Sweden, Iceland, Finland and Germany between January and April. ■

DOC FOCUSES ON IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT AT PACIFIC NORTHWEST FOOD PROCESSORS SHOW

ND Dept. of Commerce staff and representatives from across the state participated in the 2002 Pacific Northwest Food Processors Annual Meeting and Trade Show last month. This is the sixth year that ND development organizations have participated. The Pacific Northwest Food Processors Association membership base has strong North Dakota business connections and significant investments in the state. As in previous years, North Dakota highlighted the food processing opportunities in this state and focused strongly on irrigation development. ■

CYRENA WEEKS JOINS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STAFF

Cyrena Weeks, new administrative officer in the Workforce Development Division, is originally from Williston, ND. Her degree is in business administration, and she has worked for the State Investment Board through the Retirement and Investment Office (RIO). Cyrena helped to develop and design the RIO web site. 701-328-5311, cweeks@state.nd.us. ■

"Friendly people, affordable living, great schools, and wonderful neighborhoods in which to raise a family make living and working in Fargo a dream. We have a beautiful operation here with about 200 engineers producing world-class electronic products."

Barry Batcheller, CEO
Phoenix International Corporation, Fargo, ND
(comment from the 2002 Governor's State of the State Address)

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