

volume 5, issue 1

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division of economic development & finance

commerce matters



Officials work to retain Valley City manufacturer

State and local economic development officials are working with Vansco Electronics Ltd. in Valley City to retain nearly 80 high-paying jobs and assist the company in expanding into additional markets. The Valley City-Barnes County Development Corporation received \$265,250 in city sales tax funds to assist the company with a three-year business retention program. The Community Services Division of the Department of Commerce and the South Central Dakota Regional Council will provide \$125,000 per year over three years in Community Development Block Grant funds.

"The growth and prosperity of existing North Dakota companies like Vansco is important to Valley City and it is important to North Dakota," said Commerce Commissioner Lee Peterson. ●

American Express expands in Dickinson

American Express Corporate Travel will again expand its interactive travel center in Dickinson. The company expects to hire 20 navigational consultants and a team leader in response to high demand for its online corporate travel reservations service. The news follows an earlier expansion in December 2003, which brought on an additional 43 new employees. The new hirings announced today bring the total number of employees up to 210.

"Clearly, American Express is finding the kind of workforce and community assets it prizes in Dickinson," Hoeven said. "We are grateful for this expansion, and will continue to work with American Express officials to encourage additional growth in North Dakota." ●

Together, we will succeed

North Dakota personifies the good life. Our communities provide a solid foundation for the values by which all North Dakotans live. A growing and prospering economy is key to expanding our state's good life to all North Dakotans. As Gov. Hoeven has said, "North Dakota is a community, not just an address." At the Division of Economic Development and Finance (ED&F), we understand nurturing new businesses and assisting entrepreneurs to expand their operations requires a partnership between local communities and the state.



Linda Butts

We must partner and support local economic development efforts to accomplish this goal. To that end, there are 11 ED&F programs designed to support local and state economic development efforts. In the coming issues of this newsletter, I will write briefly about each of these programs, the investment made in them, and the applicable return on investment to North Dakota. It is our belief that working together, we will succeed in making North Dakota an even a better place to live, work, play, and be in business! ●

Feb. 23 Business Reception planned in Chicago

The Economic Development and Finance Division of the Department of Commerce will host a North Dakota Business Reception on Monday, Feb. 23 at The Chicago Club in downtown Chicago. The business reception will be held in conjunction with National Manufacturing Week, Feb. 22-26. Its purpose is to continue building relationships with business

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clients in the Chicago market, as well as open doors with new company executives. North Dakota Ambassador Chuck Dauk has been instrumental in planning the reception. Expected attendance is 50-75 guests. ●

Tourism Conference planned Feb. 29 – March 2

The 2004 North Dakota Tourism conference will be held Feb. 29 – March 2 at the International Inn in Minot. A brochure swap gets things rolling on Sunday at 3 pm. February 10 is the deadline for the annual tourism awards, presented during the event. For more information on the awards or the tourism conference, contact the North Dakota Tourism division at 328-2525 or your local convention and visitors bureau. ●

Labor study updates are underway

The Workforce Development Division of the Department of Commerce is coordinating efforts to update the statewide Community Labor Availability and Underemployment Studies first completed in April 2002. Over 25 communities and counties have expressed an interest and made a commitment to participate in the 2004 study updates. The 2004 study updates should be complete by June 1 of this year. ●

Jamestown company receives award

Agri-Cover, Inc., Jamestown, the manufacturer of the AC-CESS® Roll-up Cover and SNOWSPORT® Personal Utility Plow received the prestigious "GM Best New Product of the Year" award for SNOWSPORT®. This coveted award stands for quality, function, and consumer satisfaction, proving a perfect fit between the SNOWSPORT® Personal Utility Plow and top-quality vehicles from General Motors. To find out more go to www.mysnowsport.com, or call 800-233-4655. ●

MEP continues growth and services

The North Dakota Manufacturer's Extension Partnership (ND MEP) has helped nearly 200 manufacturers in the state

improve their productivity, profitability and competitiveness. During the first three quarters of operation, ND MEP assistance to manufacturers resulted in:

- increased or retained sales of \$17.5 million,
- cost savings of \$6.9 million,
- new investments of \$5.2 million and
- nearly 100 jobs created or retained.

Currently, the ND MEP is ranked number one among all MEP centers nationally for bottom-line client impact ratio and customer satisfaction. ●

Governor's Choice winners tell their stories

The 2003 Governor's Choice Awards winners will join ED&F Division Director Linda Butts on a panel for the North Dakota Housing Conference, Feb. 18-19. The session is entitled, "Improving the Quality of Life for the People of North Dakota," and each panelist will discuss their involvement in economic development, as well as the integral role housing professionals play. Butts will moderate the panel, which includes Mark Draeb, Grizella Corp., Hebron (2003 Project of the Year); Dale Niewoehner, mayor of Rugby (2003 Volunteer Developer of the Year); George Youngerman, Devils Lake Region Partnership (2003 Professional Developer of the Year); and Jay Feil, Bismarck-Mandan Development Association (nominator for Project of the Year). ●

North Dakota in the News

- *The Manufacturer*, December 2003, "Have Plug, Will Travel", two-page story on editor's visit to North Dakota and GEM;
- *Business Facilities Point/Counterpoint* column, "Is Business Coming Back Downtown?", interview with Lee Peterson; and
- *Software Development*, January 2004, "North Dakota: Is This Near-Shore Enough?", four-page story on editor's visit to North Dakota. ●

economic development association of north dakota



Economic development works at the local level

Development strategy for a small rural community involves a broad range of views, usually micro perspectives of larger, more developed areas. As local developers, we generally try to clear barriers for business development in the community. We become advocates for improved transportation, technology, recreation and general infrastructure. We know these things must be in place before we will have success in new business recruitment.



Gene Veeder

We focus a great deal of our time on local business expansion because we know it is easier to keep a company and encourage expansion than it is to recruit a new company. We work closely with the retail and service sectors in our communities, knowing this is not “primary sector” development, but these services are necessary to keep a community thriving and of interest to companies looking to expand or relocate. Finally, we provide good research on the business climate in North Dakota to prospective businesses.

Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND) serves the same function on a state level. When we advocate better transportation systems or lessening bureaucratic burdens on business, we provide a better atmosphere for business growth and development. EDND has been successful in collectively expressing the importance of economic development issues on a statewide basis. We provide a voice on the issues to officials and continue to “pound the drum” for sound thinking on promotion of the state’s workforce, education and natural resources.

I look forward to working with a great group of professionals on the EDND board and with our membership to continue the positive communication with the North Dakota Department of Commerce and the North Dakota Legislature. ●

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