

volume 5, issue 6

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division of economic development & finance

commerce matters



MTI Announces Ninth North Dakota Location

Midwest TeleMark International (MTI) recently announced its ninth North Dakota location in Fessenden. MTI is a fully automated, customer sales and service company that specializes in telecommunications. The company also has locations in Boissevain and Brandon, Manitoba. Other North Dakota locations include Mohall (headquarters), Beulah, Grafton, Kenmare, Bottineau, Langdon, Stanley and Rugby. MTI provides about 500 part- and full-time positions across North Dakota. The company paid out \$6.7 million in wages in 2003. "MTI is a wonderful example of a North Dakota company that is growing and prospering in the state," Gov. John Hoeven said. When the final seven employees complete their training this summer, MTI will bring 30 new jobs to a community of 625 and more than 500 jobs to North Dakota — that's good news for all of us."

Partners on the project include Central Dakota Development, the city of Fessenden, Wells County Job Development Authority, South Central Regional Council, Otter Tail Power, North Dakota Telephone Company, and the divisions of Community Services and Economic Development & Finance at the North Dakota Department of Commerce. ●

Commerce Quick Facts

- North Dakota is the safest state in the nation. *Morgan Quitno Press, 2004 (we've held this ranking seven out of 11 years)*
- North Dakota exports nearly 70 percent of the electricity it produces. *2000, Energy Information Administration*
- North Dakota ranks #1 with the highest number of students (95%) with a high school credential. *2002 Measuring Up Report*

Change Is A Good Thing

Over summer, the Division of Economic Development & Finance is embracing change. We are greeting some new faces and saying good-bye to others.

The North Dakota Development Fund contracted with Scott Long as a credit analyst for the fund. Scott most recently worked for BNC Bank in Bismarck. Cornelius Grant, a longtime friend to many of us in economic development, retired from his position with the North Dakota Rural Development Council effective June 30. Corn will work on the Americorp project for our Workforce Development Division on a temporary basis.

Mike Strotheide, VP of Business Development, took a position in Claremore, OK. He will continue his work in economic development. Project manager Brenda Stone left the business development team; she will contract on a part-time basis to complete online marketing research for ED&F. Christine Martin, state director for the Small Business Development Centers, will move to the Department of Commerce effective Aug. 1.

Each of these new changes brings with it new opportunities. We look forward to enhancing our current team and working with our partners to achieve greater success in the future! ●

Minnesota Company Announces Mandan Site

Verifications, Inc. (VI) announced it will expand in Mandan, N.D. The Minnesota-based company is the premiere provider of background investigations and employment screening services.



Linda Butts

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“Verifications, Inc. is a flourishing company that has chosen to expand operations in North Dakota over neighboring states because of our outstanding work ethic, educated workforce and business-friendly environment,” Gov. John Hoeven said. “When Curt and I first spoke about this project four months ago, we talked about 150 jobs in North Dakota and today, the potential is closer to 250 jobs — that’s good news for all of us.”

The Bismarck-Mandan Development Association facilitated the project on behalf of the city of Mandan. Partners on the project include the Bismarck Vision Fund, Job Service North Dakota, Lewis & Clark Regional Council, Mandan Growth Fund, North Dakota Development Fund, and the divisions of Community Services and Economic Development & Finance at the North Dakota Department of Commerce. ●

National Journalists Visit North Dakota

June 23-25 marked the first of three planned media tours of North Dakota companies in 2004. The North Dakota Department of Commerce, along with local economic developers, hosted editors from *Plants, Sites and Parks*; *Industrial Maintenance and Plant Operations*; and *Material Handling Management*. The journalists visited manufacturers and food processors in Bismarck, Jamestown, Fargo and West Fargo. During 2003, DOC hosted 10 national journalists; to date, they have written seven stories with an advertising impact of \$461,100. Two of the three journalists who visited North Dakota in June have already written editorials about their visits. To read their comments, visit <http://www.mhmonline.com/viewStory.asp?slID=%7b4A7678D1-C316-4308-93A5-7290CFA16FD7%7d&S=1> and www.impomag.com under “Current Issue/Editorial Comments.” ●

CDBG Funds Available For Tourism

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program has funded several tourism businesses and now, the program will

go a step further and actually state that tourism businesses will be considered as retail businesses eligible for funding. This is the result of coordination between the Community Services and Tourism divisions of the North Dakota Department of Commerce. To apply for CDBG funds, contact the Regional Planning Council in your area. For more information, call Bonnie Malo at 328-2476 or bmalo@state.nd.us. ●

Ambassador Program Continues Growth

The North Dakota Ambassadors program continues to grow. Currently, there are over 850 friends of North Dakota in eight states committed to spreading positive news about the state. In addition, they are opening doors for meetings with potential clients; sharing intelligence about businesses in their areas; and some of them are even expanding their own operations in North Dakota. To date, three North Dakota Ambassadors have expanded their companies in the state: Mark Draeb, Grizella Corp., Hebron; Rock Clapper, Datatic Technologies, Langdon; and Tim and Elaine Auen, AWM Staffing, Hazen. In addition, Bismarck, Cooperstown, Dickinson, Grand Forks and Jamestown have all launched their own ambassadors’ programs with assistance from Linda Butts, director of the Economic Development & Finance Division of Commerce.

The newest component of the Ambassadors program is the “Employee Alert.” When a North Dakota company needs to reach potential employees with a specific skill set, the Ambassadors have been able to help. For example, Microsoft Business Solutions in Fargo was able to fill several positions and keep these high-paying jobs in Fargo thanks to an Employee Alert that ED&F sent out to our Ambassadors. Contact Linda Butts at lbutts@state.nd.us or 701-328-5311 for details. ●

Governor’s Choice Awards Presented Dec. 7

The third annual Governor’s Choice for Economic Development awards will be held in conjunction with the fall/winter meeting

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of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota on Dec. 7-8 in Bismarck. The North Dakota Department of Commerce will recognize the 2004 Volunteer Developer of the Year, Professional Developer of the Year, Project of the Year and Ambassador of the Year (a new category). The application deadline is Oct. 1, 2004. Applications will be available online after Aug. 1. Think now of whom you might nominate. ●

Out-Of-State Marketing Events Planned For Fall

You will have three opportunities to join the North Dakota Department of Commerce in hosting and sponsoring events in San Francisco, Minneapolis and New York City this fall.

- Sept. 12 North Dakota Business Reception
San Francisco, CA
- Oct. 20 North Dakota Business Reception
Minneapolis, MN
- Nov. 13 North Dakota Business Gathering
New York City, NY

If you want to participate in any of these events, contact Tracy Finneman at 328-5352 or tfinneman@state.nd.us. ●

Commerce Staff Visit Watford City, New Town

As part of our regular outreach to our partners across the state, North Dakota Department of Commerce Commissioner Lee Peterson, division directors and staff recently visited Watford City and New Town. The visits provide an opportunity for Commerce and community leaders to discuss successes and challenges for both. In addition, a tour of the community or a local business is also included. The next Commerce Community Visit is planned for Sept. 8 in southeastern North Dakota. ●

Dalrymple Named Chair of Trade Office

Lt. Governor Jack Dalrymple was elected as chairman of the North Dakota Trade Office at the first meeting of the group's board of directors. House Majority Leader Rick Berg was named vice chairman of the group, and Linda Butts, Economic Devel-

opment and Finance Director for the North Dakota Department of Commerce, was elected secretary-treasurer. The North Dakota Trade Office was formed earlier this year to expand exporting out of North Dakota. It is a public-private partnership between the North Dakota Department of Commerce and the North Dakota District Export Council, a nonprofit organization.

Other Board members include Jon Rustvang, Northern Plains District sales manager for UPS; Neil Whittey, chairman of the North Dakota District Export Council and CEO of LAS International; Kurt Haws, international product manager of Bobcat Company; and Les Knutson, president of Superior Grains in Crosby and Williston. The North Dakota Trade Office recently completed a series of roundtables across the state to identify and discuss exporting barriers and opportunities for North Dakota businesses. ●

North Dakota In The News

The North Dakota Department of Commerce continues to pitch positive stories about North Dakota to national media. The following are a list of our most recent results:

- *Manufacturing Today*, May/June, 2004, "State of Opportunity," www.manufacturing-today.com/content_archives/MayJune04/04.html advertising impact = \$29,000
- *Foreign Direct Investment*, April 5, 2004, "Take the initiative," http://fdimagazine.com/news/fullstory.php/aid/627/Take_the_initiative.html advertising impact = \$102,500
- *Defense Daily*, May 20, 2004, "North Dakota, CSC In Partnership For border Security," advertising impact = \$9,500 ●