

Growth



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WINTER 2011

Verve

The Spirit of Small Business

Most buildings start with a single brick to form a solid foundation. In a similar fashion, so do businesses – especially this newsletter's feature company. In truth, that's probably because it specializes in the design of complex facilities. MEP is an engineering consulting firm offering design services that include geothermal, mechanical, electrical, civil, plumbing, fire protection and commissioning.



Jeff Urlaub, PE, founded MEP Associates in 2001, and the business was incorporated in 2002. At that time, the vision for the engineering firm was to provide mechanical, electrical and plumbing (which is what MEP stands for) to the local west-central Wisconsin and eastern Minnesota communities.

Jeff Urlaub, MEP Associates

MEP attributes its growth to its focus and experience in renewable energy and medical/healthcare markets, as well as a high level of customer service and satisfaction.

"Once established, MEP's high level of customer service and satisfaction sustained a wider area of practice that has led to the company's success and national recognition," said Dan Gerth, Director of Business Development and Senior Project Manager for MEP Associates.

Since 2001 MEP has grown to approximately 70 employees and has four offices, including Eau Claire, Eden Prairie and Rochester, MN, and Norman, OK.

MEP Associates' primary client markets include campus geothermal campus systems, higher education, science/technology, healthcare, government, commercial/industrial and K-12

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\$1.2 MILLION NEAR EQUITY FUND NOW AVAILABLE

In early December, the EDC in partnership with area financial institutions, Xcel Energy and the Chippewa Valley Innovation Center announced a \$1.2 million Near Equity Fund available to finance emerging companies seeking an Eau Claire location.

The purpose of this fund is to assist companies that are scaling from a start-up or early stage to an established organization. During this emerging growth stage, revenues are often not sufficient to support cash flow needs. This program is designed to provide companies with liquidity needed to transition through this difficult stage and become strong, local businesses, with the goal of creating economic prosperity for area residents.

Eight local organizations have each made \$150,000 available to this fund. The organizations include Eau Claire Area EDC, Royal Credit Union, Charter Bank, Xcel Energy, Chippewa Valley Innovation Center, Northwestern Bank, United Bank, and Citizens Community Federal.

The fund is modeled after the Madison Development Corporation's Venture Debt Fund, which has a proven track record in Dane County, providing over \$5 million in financing for emerging growth companies.

To be eligible to apply for a loan from this fund, businesses must operate within the City of Eau Claire or Eau Claire County. Loans from this fund can range from \$100,000 to \$250,000 with an interest rate ranging from prime +2% to prime +4% based on the situation and needs of the borrowing company.

For more information or to apply for a loan, please contact the EDC at 715-834-0070.

THE IDEA CHALLENGE: \$5000 GRAND PRIZE AWARDED

The EDC awarded the \$5,000 grand prize at an award ceremony for The Idea Challenge Monday, December 5th.

Rubber Max, submitted by Kevin Rosenberg, president of Adhesive R&D, was presented with a jumbo-sized \$5,000 check on behalf of the EDC and Northwestern Bank, the 2011 program sponsor. This money is reimbursable towards expenses to advance Rubber Max to the marketplace.

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MEP ASSOCIATES (CONT.)

education. The company also offers commissioning and retro-commissioning services.

One of the many things MEP Associates prides itself on is its focus on sustainability and commitment to renewable design practices.

“As MEP has grown, so has the need to excel in the area of energy conservation, a path which MEP Associates have taken the lead in the engineering industry,” said Gerth. “A great deal of our work begins with a detailed energy analysis of proposed building systems that provide our clients options to consider in reducing energy and maintenance costs for their new or renovated facilities.”

MEP Associates works on a variety of projects at any given time. In the past few months, MEP finished a project for the University of Minnesota, relocating the current Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) Research Lab to an existing underground parking garage, renovating that space in the process. Renovations included the elimination of the sloping floors and the addition of an entire new level.

The company is also working on the largest geothermal project in the nation, converting the Ball State University campus cooling and heating plant to a district geothermal system. The project is expected to cut the university’s energy costs by an estimated \$2 million annually while reducing carbon emissions.

It is clear that MEP Associates has an understanding of how to tailor engineering solutions to individual projects. The EDC looks forward to the future that MEP is building in Eau Claire and across the United States.

UTILIZE EDC SERVICES IN 2012

As you plan for 2012 remember the EDC can serve as a resource to your business. Call us to learn more about the many services we offer free of charge to support business and job growth.

- ✓ **Business expansion assistance**
- ✓ **Business loan/grant application services**
- ✓ **Financial packaging and loans**
- ✓ **Early-stage business formation**
- ✓ **Business recruitment & marketing**

Also, as a new service in 2012, the EDC is working on a skill gap analysis for the area workforce. Please communicate your workforce needs to us.

GLOBAL FINISHING SOLUTIONS CREATING 111 NEW JOBS

Global Finishing Solutions is expanding its Osseo, WI. facility as part of a consolidation project involving relocating manufacturing capacity from a facility in Mexico to Osseo. The expansion is projected to create 111 new jobs at the company headquarters, which currently employs nearly 300 workers. The EDC provided GFS with technical support, structuring its financing and the application for financial assistance from the state.

Even though Osseo is not within Eau Claire County, the EDC recognized that GFS is one of southern Eau Claire County’s largest employers and about 35% of the employees at the GFS headquarters reside in Eau Claire County. The EDC supports growth that will provide employment throughout the county and surrounding counties.

“Global Finishing Solutions is excited about the expansion of our Osseo headquarters and our commitment to create so many quality jobs over the next three years,” said Rick Binder, President of GFS in a news release. “After moving an acquired second manufacturing facility from Canada to Mexico several years ago, we have determined that the consolidation of this manufacturing capacity in Osseo will allow us to provide better customer service, higher quality control and increased responsiveness to the markets we serve.”

Governor Scott Walker announced that GFS is eligible for up to \$600,000 in economic development tax credits from the State of Wisconsin for the project. He added that he appreciated the company’s commitment to the state and was pleased the state could provide assistance to move the project forward.

SAVE THE DATE: EDC ANNUAL LUNCHEON

Please join the EDC and fellow community members for our annual luncheon! The event will include a keynote speaker, a review of 2011, and the presentation of the 2012 Paragon Economic Impact Award.

Date: Monday, February 6th
 Location: Florian Gardens
 Time: 11:30 – 1:00pm
 Cost: \$25 per person

To reserve your seats, contact Gwen Schuppel by January 27th at 715-834-0070 or Gwen.Schuppel@eauclaire-wi.com. Payment must be made in advance to reserve your seat.

GOT A NEW PRODUCT IDEA?



**THE IDEA
CHALLENGE**

Think: New, Different, Better

WE CAN HELP TAKE IT TO MARKET!

www.theideachallenge.com

IDEA CHALLENGE (CONT.)

"Programs such as the Idea Challenge offer entrepreneurs not only financial benefits, but also affords an opportunity to learn from seasoned business professionals, and gain insight into available local resources," stated Rosenberg.

Rubber Max is a rubber anaerobic gasketing material developed by Adhesive R&D. Adhesive R&D researches and manufactures high performance industrial strength anaerobic and structural adhesives. Rubber Max addresses a problem with thermal expansion and contraction, improving upon current gasket technology. To learn more, visit www.adhesivernd.com.

Rubber Max was selected from five finalists. The five finalists presented their ideas to The Idea Challenge Judges earlier in the day on December 5th. The judges included Gerald Jacobson, Northwestern Bank; Curt Tambornino, CURT Manufacturing; Rich Schoenthaler, Ayres Associates; Randy Hulke, UW-Stout/Discover Center, and Mickey Judkins, Details, Inc.



Idea Challenge Grand Prize Check Presentation
From left -Gerald Jacobson, Kevin Rosenberg, Brian Doudna

The five finalists previously received a \$500 cash award in the first stage of The Idea Challenge, and three received an additional \$1,000 in technical assistance.

"Northwestern Bank is proud to be a sponsor of an event that fosters economic development in the Chippewa Valley," said

Gerald Jacobson, President of Northwestern Bank. "Most of the bank's business customers started out with a person having an idea and then proceeding to grow that idea into a business that eventually employed others. The Idea Challenge is important to allow the process to start, since one of the main obstacles is lack of funds to grow an idea into a working company."

The Idea Challenge is a contest open to any individual or company with an idea for a new product or service. The EDC accepts applications for The Idea Challenge year-round.

Apply online now for the 2012 awards at theideachallenge.com

PAM HALLER JOINS EDC STAFF



Pam Haller,
EDC Project Manager

The EDC is pleased to announce the hire of Pam Haller as project manager for the EDC. In this role Pam will work primarily with the Innovation Foundation of Western Wisconsin's administration, marketing, strategy and development needs.

Pam joins the EDC after 18 years as director of sales and marketing for the Eau Claire Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. Pam oversaw budgeting, goal setting, strategic planning, sales development and marketing technology initiatives. Pam is also currently working on a Masters in Business Administration from Cardinal Stritch University.

WELCOME NEW EDC BOARD MEMBERS

The EDC is pleased to announce two newly elected members to our board of directors, Peter Farrow of Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire and Tim Pabich of Royal Construction. Janice Lemminger and Joe Mirr have also been reelected to the EDC's board of directors. Each of the four will serve a three year term through 2014. The EDC welcomes them and looks forward to working with them to advance the area's economy!



Peter Farrow
Group Health Cooperative

Peter Farrow is CEO and general manager of Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire. In the 12 years since his arrival, Group Health Cooperative has more than tripled its enrollment while consistently achieving the highest level of member satisfaction among regional health plans and among the top five percent nationally.

Prior to joining Group Health Cooperative, Farrow served as Assistant Deputy Insurance Commissioner for the State of Wisconsin. In addition to his insurance background, Farrow is a former small business owner and served as press secretary for Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin. He received his bachelor's degree in economics from Marquette University.



Tim Pabich
Royal Construction

Tim Pabich became President and Owner of Royal Construction, Inc. in 1990. Since then Tim has refocused the company's construction goals from residential to commercial and industrial. Tim offers a wealth of construction knowledge to each project Royal Construction completes.

Tim is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Stout with a B.S. in Industrial Technology with a focus in Building Construction and a minor in Business Administration.



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Brian Doudna, *Executive Director*

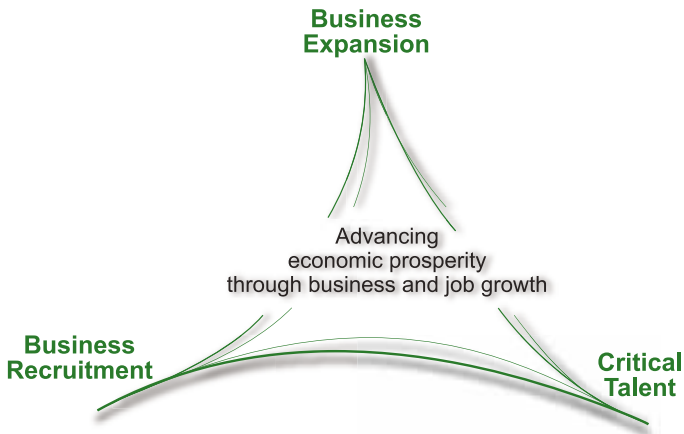
Gwen Southard-Schuppel, *Business Development Director*

Angela Niska, *Marketing Manager*

Pam Haller, *Project Manager*

Tarissa Moss, *Graphic Design Intern*

Nick Hogan, *Marketing Intern*



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