

# AREA Growth

EAU CLAIRE AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

[www.eauclaire-wi.com](http://www.eauclaire-wi.com)

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## Verve

*The Spirit of Small Business*

### M.R.S. MACHINING

Recently named one of American Machinist Magazine's "10 Best Machine Shops", M.R.S. Machining of Augusta has come a long way since opening its doors in 1986. Starting operations out of a garage, the company has grown over the years to occupy over 20,000 sq. ft. of building and warehouse space today.

With an innovative spirit and a culture based on customer service, M.R.S. Machining makes what Vice President Matt Guse calls gradual progress to become the best in the metal industry.

"We're always thinking outside the box, and never get stuck in a rut," Guse said. "There's always a better way with technology or different processes."

Guse said receiving the "10 Best Machine Shops" award means national recognition for what the company is doing, putting M.R.S. Machining a little bit above average. Guse attributes the company's success to good customers and suppliers.

"It's all about the people," Guse said. "I can't stress that enough."

see M.R.S. Machining, pg. 2

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## RECENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

### CURT MANUFACTURING

Curt Manufacturing (Altoona) is investing about \$2.5 million in building and equipment improvements. The company is expanding its facility in order to address size limitation issues. The expansion will add 33,000 sq. ft. to the company's existing 140,000 sq. ft. facility.

The State of Wisconsin has approved a \$206,000 Public Facilities for Economic Development grant to the City of Altoona to cover a portion of sewer and water extension costs. Eau Claire County and the City of Altoona will provide forgivable loans totalling \$114,000 to help Curt Manufacturing fund the expansion.



Curt Manufacturing

Curt Manufacturing will create 50 jobs by October 2010 through this expansion. Approximately 17 jobs will be related to warehousing operations, and the other 33 will be related to the company's manufacturing process.

### INDIANHEAD FOODSERVICE WAREHOUSE

Indianhead Foodservice Distribution, or IFD, is expanding its cold storage freezer space. The expansion will include freezer and cooler storage areas and a refrigerated loading dock with mezzanine, adding a total 23,200 sq. ft. of food storage space to IFD's existing facility.

"We can fit over 100 truckloads of product into the new addition," said IFD Vice President Jesse Gillett. "At the same time we are upgrading the current refrigeration system to be up to 20 percent more energy efficient."

see RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, pg. 5

# Upcoming Events

## OFF THE SHELF

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Off the Shelf is an exclusive event for patent holders, business executives and owners, and successful entrepreneurs that provides an opportunity to build awareness of emerging technologies and develop strategic partnerships.

## DOING BUSINESS GLOBALLY 2008

Thursday, May 15, 2008



The Wisconsin Dept. of Commerce has directors positioned globally to help Wisconsin businesses develop markets internationally and increase worldwide sales. These foreign experts are coming to Eau Claire to

answer questions and give current updates on the markets in their countries.

## INVESTOR BRIEFING

Thursday, May 29, 2008

The ECA-EDC will provide an overview for current investors and volunteers of how we're accomplishing our goals, plans for the future, ongoing projects and new projects.

## ADVANCING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AWARDS LUNCHEON

Thursday, September 18, 2008

The ECA-EDC and Downtown Eau Claire Inc. (DECI) will hold an awards luncheon at the Ramada Inn and Convention Center to recognize the winners of the Creating Your Own Business Contest (ECA-EDC) and the Jump-Start Downtown Competition (DECI). Reservations required.

**For details on any upcoming events, call the ECA-EDC at 715.834.0070.**

## M.R.S. MACHINING

*continued from pg. 1*

M.R.S. Machining has an education center where employees receive extensive on-the-job training. Guse said investing time and money in employees will make M.R.S. Machining more prosperous and competitive in the future. M.R.S. Machining competes primarily with the Minneapolis and southern Wisconsin markets. Guse's goal is to stay competitive and keep a fun, family-oriented business.



**M.R.S. Machining Staff**

A machinist by trade, Guse admits a lack of business knowledge can make areas like financials difficult to manage. For this reason, M.R.S. Machining hires people to specialize in those areas.

"Our philosophy is that we always like to hire people who are smarter than we are," Guse said.

M.R.S. Machining has drawn on local resources including the ECA-EDC to help the business grow.

"We bought equipment and needed a loan to do so. Going through the ECA-EDC to get that loan, we were able to get a much lower interest rate, which really helped us out."

M.R.S. Machining has also received consulting help from Northwest Wisconsin Manufacturing Outreach Center and has hired 28 students out of CVTC.

## BLUGOLD FUND

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Foundation recently partnered with the ECA-EDC to utilize the Idea Challenge program as the primary mechanism for students to gain access to early-stage funding through the UWEC Foundation's Blugold Fund.

The Blugold Fund is made possible by gifts from alumni and friends of the university, providing monetary assistance to current students who are seeking to launch new businesses or products in the Chippewa Valley. The Blugold Fund targets growth businesses likely to create jobs in areas such as manufacturing and technology.

The ECA-EDC presented to students in March to inform them of both programs that can assist them with early-stage idea development. One student has already presented to Idea Challenge and Blugold Fund representatives, and will receive funding to develop his idea.

ECA-EDC Executive Director Brian Doudna emphasized the importance of this collaboration to provide opportunities for students to start new companies in the Eau Claire area.

# Moving Innovation Forward

## IDEA CHALLENGE CONNECTS NEW IDEA WITH RESOURCES

### SIMPLY STONE SIDING

Since early 2007, the ECA-EDC has been receiving ideas for new businesses, products, and services that local residents want to pursue. One of these ideas is now on its way to being a full-fledged business, thanks in part to the resources provided through the Idea Challenge.

Simply Stone Siding owners submitted their idea last fall and met with ECA-EDC staff to determine specifics and opportunities of their new product idea. In January Idea Challenge partners met with Simply Stone Siding owners. The group identified assistance needs and put an action plan together to move the idea forward. Some of the connections and resources made available for this company through the Idea Challenge include:

- Northwest Wis. Manufacturing Outreach Center – providing manufacturing and production assistance to address facility and volume issues
- ECA-EDC Family & Friends Innovation Fund – financing a portion of needed technical assistance
- WEN Early Planning Grant – Approved \$3,000 toward business plan assistance
- UWEC Entrepreneurship Program – providing vital management expertise and business planning assistance

The Idea Challenge is a program to engage local residents in the process of ideation and innovation with the goal of facilitating early-stage business development in the Eau Claire Area. For more information or to submit an idea, please visit [eauclaire-wi.com](http://eauclaire-wi.com).

### FAMILY AND FRIENDS INNOVATION FUND

The ECA-EDC created the Family and Friends Innovation Fund in February 2006 and designated \$10,000 to assist in advancing companies with technologies that have potential patents. The Family and Friends Innovation Fund Committee oversees the program and provides funding approvals. In April the committee approved \$5,000 in funding for Simply Stone Siding to be used toward patent application costs, market research and other technical assistance.

### ABOUT SIMPLY STONE SIDING

Simply Stone Siding is a privately held company with over 30 years of experience in the cultured stone industry. The company has spent the last 5 years producing and installing its own cultured stone, an exciting industry innovation called Simply Stone Siding.

Simply Stone Siding is a mortar-less stone siding made with a specially designed aluminum lip poured into a cultured stone. This innovative



new design allows the lips of each piece of aluminum to overlap each other, creating a watertight seal much like roof shingles. Each poured multi-rock piece of stone is individually placed on the wall just like siding. Simply Stone Siding can be screwed or nailed to any surface, making it easy to use for anyone regardless of experience level. Simply Stone Siding is used in residential and commercial applications, offering an affordable alternative to real stone mason products. The company has been approved to sell its product in Menards' Eau Claire northwest store.



Eau Claire northwest store.



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## ACROSS THE BOARD



**Mike Ehr, AT&T**  
*Board President*

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The board of directors plays an important role in the ECA-EDC's operations by assisting the corporation in developing and implementing policy decisions. As the new president of the board, it is my pleasure to introduce this year's members:

#### Board Officers

##### Vice President

Stuart Schaefer, Commonweal Development

##### Secretary

Brian Doudna, ECA-EDC

##### Treasurer

Laura Talley, M&I Bank

##### Past President

Dennis Pope, Luther Midelfort

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Jason Plante, Market & Johnson

Stuart Schaefer, Commonweal Development

Ellis Stewart, Clearwater Group, LLC

Del Thorson, City of Augusta

Kay Vande Loo, Impact Advertising

## COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

### AREA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

*Chair: Connie Pedersen, M&I Bank*

The ABD committee has been working on creating targeted networking events to facilitate strategic partnerships that will add real value to existing businesses or new ventures. These events will begin in May.

The Creating Your Own Business contest and Idea Challenge are in full swing, driving innovation and entrepreneurship in our area. For details on these programs, visit our Web site at [www.eauclaire-wi.com](http://www.eauclaire-wi.com).

### BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

*Chair: Janice Lemminger, Manpower*

The ECA-EDC is working in partnership with local organizations on a specific strategy to attract early-stage companies and technologies to the Eau Claire area. The spring campaign focuses on NanoRite's available space, equipment, and expertise offerings for start-up companies. Other targeted campaigns will follow throughout the year to attract new business and industry to the Eau Claire area. The ECA-EDC continues to meet with site selectors in both the Chicago and Minneapolis markets to seek new business recruitment projects. The organization is finalizing research to help develop positioning statements for additional target industries, which will be part of the future business recruitment campaigns that the ECA-EDC will implement in the fall of 2008.

### CRITICAL TALENT

*Chair: vacant*

Governor Doyle recently announced that the ECA-EDC has received a Community Based Economic Development (CBED) grant from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce in the amount of \$36,000 to support critical talent strategies in 2008. This grant will allow the ECA-EDC to move forward with the SMARTT Network initiative. The CBED program provides financing assistance to local governments and community-based organizations that undertake planning or development of projects, or provide technical assistance services that support business development.

### INVESTOR RECRUITMENT

*Chair: Ellis Stewart*

Four new committee members met in March to discuss investor recruitment efforts for the corporation. This committee, formerly the Community & Investor Relations Committee, was modified this year to focus primarily on investor recruitment because of the corporation's growing need for private sector funding in the upcoming years. Thanks to Chuck Forster, Denny Burkhardt, Jason Plante, and Ellis Stewart for joining the committee and helping the ECA-EDC to reach its investment goals for 2008.

# RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

continued from pg. 1

## INDIANHEAD FOODSERVICE CONTINUED

Gillett said the added freezer space will allow IFD to operate more efficiently and expand its frozen and refrigerated product lines. The expansion will allow IFD to meet its sales objectives and provide up to 10 new jobs in the next year. IFD has been in business for over 60 years and employs over 150 people. The company provides employees with competitive pay and comprehensive benefits packages. IFD is also planning a 30,000 sq. ft. dry warehouse addition.

## GATEWAY CORPORATION LAND PURCHASE



Gateway Industrial Park Corporation recently acquired 114 acres of land to add to its existing industrial park located on Eau Claire’s northwest side. The acquisition came from the heirs of Rody Carroll; the Carroll family farmed this property for many years. The land will be incorporated into the park and developed to provide additional land for potential expansions in Eau Claire.

“It’s an important piece because the land is surrounded by Gateway [Industrial Park] on the north, east, and south,” said Jeff Halloin, Gateway

Corp. principal. “Gateway has hoped to acquire this for a long time.”

The ECA-EDC has been a partner in this process from the very beginning; the organization assisted in approaching the family twelve years ago, when acquiring this land was first proposed. See our next issue for a more in-depth look at the Carrolls’ story.

## DAIRYLAND POWER EXPANDS PLANT

Dairyland Power Corporation, the parent company to Eau Claire Energy Cooperative, recently completed its expansion of the Veolia ES Seven Mile Creek Landfill gas-to-energy facility in Eau Claire with the addition of a fourth generator and gas conditioning system.

Plant capacity expanded with the new addition, generating enough renewable energy to power 3,325 homes in the Dairyland system.

Dairyland Power has a contract with Veolia ES to purchase methane gas collected at the Seven Mile Creek Landfill, a regional collector of residential waste. Dairyland uses the methane gas, a natural by-product of the landfill, to generate renewable energy for residential and business consumers in the cooperative system.

Dairyland Power provides wholesale electricity to 25 member distribution cooperatives and 19 municipal utilities. Dairyland Power is a Touchstone Energy Cooperative servicing 62 counties in four states.

# OTHER ACTIVITIES

## NEW OAKWOOD MALL DISPLAY

The ECA-EDC recently completed a new display at Oakwood Mall to build awareness of the ECA-EDC and its programs related to entrepreneurship and innovation. Thanks to Oakwood Mall’s donation of the space, the display is located in the Younkers wing through June.



## VOLUNTEERS ASSIST WITH BUSINESS RETENTION EFFORTS

Volunteers from the Area Business Development Committee will be making introductory calls to local businesses in the upcoming months for the ECA-EDC annual Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program.

The goal of the BRE program is to identify immediate needs, future plans, training and technical assistance needs, and opportunities of local companies. This will help the ECA-EDC deliver programs and services to meet those needs and help companies take advantage of opportunities. The volunteers’ roles are to inform businesses of the BRE program, to notify ECA-EDC staff of immediate concerns, and make appointments for ECA-EDC staff to meet directly with businesses. In 2007, nearly 70 businesses were contacted by volunteers and staff.

## CREATING YOUR OWN BUSINESS

The ECA-EDC’s annual Creating Your Own Business Contest aims to award outstanding innovative business plans with cash and business services. Winning plans will demonstrate the best market-based ideas, strong operational plans, and potential for success.

### Deadlines

- Application: May 23, 2008 (Required)
- Business Plan Submission: June 27, 2008

For more information, visit [www.eauclaire-wi.com](http://www.eauclaire-wi.com)



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 Lacey Keil, *Graphic Design Intern*  
 Emily Fiedler, *Economics Intern*

**Call the ECA-EDC when you are:**

- ✓ Creating new jobs
- ✓ Investing in new technology
- ✓ Developing a new product or business idea
- ✓ Buying equipment
- ✓ Considering a new location and/or additional space



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