

AREA Growth

EAU CLAIRE AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

www.eauclaire-wi.com

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Verve

The Spirit of Small Business

ACCU-TECH PLASTICS

Many area companies have research and development departments, but not all of these companies are directly competing with the low cost production countries of the Far East. Since Accu-Tech Plastics incorporation in 1997, the company has employed an in-house research and development team that provides them the competitive advantage. This research and development team has designed and built most of the equipment, products, and processes that produce sales for the company.

One of the main tasks of the research and development team is to generate innovative ideas. The team constantly looks into new ways to advance the company's technologies and processes through its prototyping capabilities. The R&D team will explore different applications for products, explore new product ideas, and find new techniques or will make modifications to their machinery to achieve the necessary outcomes.

Overall, the in-house research and development team helps Accu-Tech Plastics provide better customer solutions and service. A solution can be found and created within days while maintaining quality and reducing customer costs.

Co-owner Ron Pribyl attributes the company's success in part to the in-house research and development team and the organizational structure of the company.

see ACCU-TECH Plastics pg. 3

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BALANCE YOUR BEST INTERESTS.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THAT CREATE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

ECA-EDC GETS READY TO LAUNCH NEW TALENT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation is spreading its wings this fall with the launch of a new, innovative talent management strategy that will reach out to individuals who have connections to the area and link them to current opportunities right here in western Wisconsin.



This new Strategy for Marketing And Recruiting Top Talent, called the SMARTT Network, is an online resource that connects talent to economic opportunities including career, business, and technology opportunities within the region. SMARTT focuses on building and maintaining relationships with people located in and those that have a previous connection to the region.



IDENTIFYING THE GAP

A 2007 study by the Wisconsin Tax Payers Alliance, revealed that from 1995 to 2000 Wisconsin experienced a significant trend related to migration by age groups. The biggest out-migrations are among those ages 20 to 29 (early career development) and 55 to 79. The state experiences high in-migration rates among school-age children (ages 5 to 19), ages 30 to 50 (raising families), and those over the age of 80 (require high quality health care).

A 2006 UW-Madison survey of over 4,000 alumni supports the Taxpayers Alliance findings and even suggests that recruitment earlier in their professional careers may also be successful. Of the respondents that had moved out of the state of Wisconsin after graduation, 58.9% of the alumni would relocate back to Wisconsin for the right opportunity. Of those that had left the State and already returned, nearly 75%

see The SMARTT Network, pg. 3

Upcoming Events

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.

OFF THE SHELF

September event being planned

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.

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

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

PIZZA RANCH TO BUILD IN GATEWAY WEST

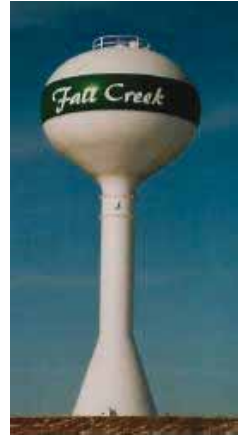
The Gateway Industrial Park Corporation recently sold 2.9 acres of land for the construction of a Pizza Ranch restaurant in Eau Claire. The franchise started in Hill, Iowa and has expanded to 8 states in the Midwest. Wisconsin locations include Baraboo, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin Dells, Oostburg, Reedsburg and Waupun. The western themed restaurant specializes in pizza and chicken while offering customers a “legendary experience.”

The Pizza Ranch’s land was the last commercial site available in the Gateway West Business Park. The park still has industrial sites available to purchase. The Gateway Corporation also owns the Gateway Northwest Business Park with commercial and industrial sites available.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

FALL CREEK UNDERTAKES DIRECTIONAL STUDY

The Village of Fall Creek created a Blue Ribbon Taskforce in April of 2008 to prepare a report that outlines community projects and activities. The directional study process is designed to identify community projects that create partnerships between residents, businesses, and the Village. Over the past several months, the taskforce has completed a SWOT analysis and identified common barriers that can directly impact community enhancement.



The meeting process has identified the following community strategies as priorities:

1. Create community focal points
2. Enhance community entrances
3. Enhance access and mobility of residents
4. Strategic development of underdeveloped and vacant sites
5. Adopt and enforce ordinances that:
 - a. Reduce visual clutter
 - b. Beautify the community
 - c. Maximize opportunities

The taskforce is now identifying specific projects that will be prioritized based on the following factors: impact, costs and potential for community partnerships.

The Blue Ribbon Taskforce and the ECA-EDC will provide the Village of Fall Creek with potential projects that include estimated costs, potential project leaders, and funding options. The final report will be submitted to the village in August.

B ABLE TO, INC.

As the 2004 winner of the Creating Your Own Business competition in the Micro business category, B Able To, Inc., launched its company by creating an adaptive cutting tool designed for small children, the elderly and handicapped people. The company is now launching its second product, Adapt-A-Hold, which is a straight edge, ruler, holder serving the same markets.

From the day of launch, Kathryn Rulien Bareis, President, has continued to work full time as a school teacher in the Eau Claire school district. This



fact hasn’t impacted the product development cycle of the company. Since 2004, the company has secured two additional patents and has another three patents pending that will diversify their product offering. The new product lines will expand the company’s offerings to key target industries of educational institutions, occupational therapy departments, and rehabilitation centers.

The ECA-EDC will be working with the company to facilitate operational and distribution channel solutions for their current and future products. More information about B Able To, Inc., can be found at www.bableto.com.

Recent Developments continued on pg. 5

Moving Innovation Forward

THE SMARTT NETWORK

continued from pg. 1

had returned within six years of graduation and almost 50% had actually returned within three years. The alumni listed the lack of early career opportunities as the primary reason for leaving the state.

As the UW-Madison study shows, the majority of graduates who have left the state are highly receptive to returning to raise children, be closer to family, or enjoy the quality of life that Wisconsin offers. For this reason, it is critical to maintain relationships with them, so that when opportunities become available, they can more easily find opportunities that advance their personal and professional goals.



FILLING THE GAP

To meet the needs of talent who are likely to return to the region, as well as talent who are already living and working here, the SMARTT Network offers a unique, skills-based database to connect talent with opportunities located in the region. SMARTT allows talent to confidentially market their skills without actually posting a resume.



Users can search through a qualified talent pool for skills needed to fill certain needs, hire consultants or contractors, or start building relationships with key individuals. Subscribers can alert talent of key opportunities through SMARTT's monthly communications or in the subscriber's profile.

SMARTT also provides to its subscribers real-time feedback and reporting mechanisms, company

branding opportunities, and tools to reduce barriers that deter talent from relocating.

TECHNOLOGY AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to career-related opportunities, talent has the ability to engage in other entrepreneurial activities through SMARTT such as:

- exploring early-stage technologies
- buying or selling existing businesses
- finding business services available in the region, or
- early stage business and product experience



The SMARTT Network continued

Because SMARTT provides these additional avenues for entrepreneurial and business development, talent does not necessarily need to relocate to the market in order to advance the regional economy. Their participation – whether discussing ideas for new products or making an investment in a business – can benefit the region even from a distance.

MOVING FORWARD WITH SMARTT

The SMARTT Network will launch November 1, 2008 starting with electronic marketing campaigns, as well as local marketing and public relations campaigns.

Earlier this year, ECA-EDC staff contacted several local companies to be founding subscribers of the SMARTT Network and assist in development of the tool. This process is to ensure that SMARTT provides true value to local and regional companies. These subscribers include: Xcel Energy, Phillips Plastics, KRM Information Systems, Hutchinson Technology (HTI), Manpower, Realityworks, and Luther Midelfort-Mayo Health System.

The SMARTT Network is currently in development with Applied Data Consultants of Chippewa Falls.

If you are interested in learning more about the SMARTT Network, would like to be part of the beta testing group, or would like to become a subscriber, please contact Gwen Schuppel at 715.834.0070 or gwen.schuppel@eauclaire-wi.com.

ACCU-TECH PLASTICS

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“As a small company with few layers, we can explore innovative requests quicker,” says Pribyl. “While our competitors are passing similar requests between layers, we have already allocated resources to bring the product closer to the market.”

Accu-Tech Plastics, located in the SkyPark, is a global supplier of plastic sheeting and carrier tape products. The company sells 85% of its production outside of the United States with clients in Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Accu-Tech Plastics has found a niche providing component packing to the electronics industry but remains open to exploring other industries to diversify its revenue streams.

ACROSS THE BOARD



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

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the year 2008 hits its half way point, the ECA-EDC continues to move forward with efforts to advance our mission of “facilitating quality job opportunities.” With the launch of the SMARTT Network in November, the

corporation will be fully implementing the Critical Talent component of the ECA-EDC business model adopted in early 2007.

This business model continued our focus on traditional economic development efforts such as Business Recruitment and Area Business Development while embracing the need for innovation and talent (people). In 2007, as part of the new business model, the ECA-EDC expanded our entrepreneurial services with the launch of the Idea Challenge. This program has already proven successful in bringing new product ideas from concept to equity investors within its short 18 month history.

This fall, the corporation will be launching new online services that will allow businesses and individuals to directly access business and product development tools and articles through our corporate web site. This on-line service is addressing the growing demands of ECA-EDC clients that are either researching a new product or seeking to implement an early stage business.

The board has emphasized the need for an expanded business retention call effort in 2008. The economy and other economic pressures are directly impacting businesses and the ECA-EDC is uniquely positioned to try and facilitate business solutions for local companies. The results of these meetings will be summarized and begin to be part of a quarterly report to the board of directors dealing with measurements and outcomes.

In closing, the corporation will be conducting a full day strategic planning session in September. This planning process will be focused on updating our mission and keeping our direction and activities consistent with our community’s values and needs. We look forward to sharing the results of the strategic planning session with you in the next edition of this newsletter.

-Mike Ehr

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

AREA BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Chair: Connie Pedersen, M&I Bank

Members of the Area Business Development committee and staff have been making contacts with local businesses as part of the business retention program. To date, ECA-EDC staff have met with over 30 companies.

The committee has also been reviewing the ECA-EDC awards strategy and is developing a new award focused on innovation.

The committee also celebrated successes with the Off the Shelf networking group and Idea Challenge programs, as both are helping to develop promising relationships and drive innovation in the Eau Claire area.

BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

Chair: Janice Lemminger, Manpower

The ECA-EDC continues to work in attracting companies to the area through direct marketing campaigns tied to specific industry sectors. The most recent campaign is tied to the businesses that utilize MEMs technology in the state of California. These types of firms would benefit from resources found at the area educational institutions. Future marketing campaigns are now being finalized. The ECA-EDC is also working with the Chippewa Valley Regional Airport in development of marketing materials for business sites near the airport and Chippewa Valley Industrial Park.

CRITICAL TALENT

Chair: vacant

The committee has met to review marketing concepts for the SMARTT Network. The committee is serving as a review panel for the SMARTT Founding Subscribers Taskforce. The Founding Subscribers Taskforce is actually reviewing the various Critical Talent committee recommendations to ensure that the solutions are consistent with the experiences that their companies have in recruitment of talent. The SMARTT Network will be conducting outreach to potential subscribers later in the fall.

INVESTOR RECRUITMENT

Chair: Ellis Stewart

Committee members continue to meet to discuss investor recruitment efforts for the corporation. This committee focused primarily on investor recruitment and sponsorship opportunities because of the corporation’s growing need for private sector funding. Thanks to Chuck Forster, Denny Burkhardt, and Ellis Stewart for joining the committee and helping the ECA-EDC to reach its investment goals for 2008.

LAND SALE FULFILLS FAMILY'S VISION OF GROWTH

Earlier this year, the Gateway Industrial Park Corporation acquired 114 acres of land to add to its existing industrial park located on Eau Claire's northwest side. The non-profit organization obtained the land from the heirs of Roady and Irene Carroll, long-time residents and active community members in Eau Claire. The land served as a homestead for the Carroll family for several decades, but to Roady and Irene, it represented more than that; it represented an opportunity for Eau Claire to develop and expand.

The couple's property was positioned between two of Roady's family members' property and was the perfect place for the couple to raise their twelve children. The family grew several small crops, working together to make the farm prosperous. As the farm flourished, Roady and Irene began to see the economic changes in Eau Claire that would eventually traverse their homestead.



Roady & Irene Carroll

Though the North Crossing wasn't completed until 1993, Roady and Irene envisioned a need for such a route early on and understood that the area would endure substantial development. The couple anticipated that the city would need their land to aide expansion and development, and received many offers over the years to purchase the land.

However, the couple remained focused on their community. Roady and Irene spent many years volunteering their time in Eau Claire, and they were not going to relinquish the property unless the offer showed a genuine commitment to the community. So, the couple decided to make it a priority to sell the land to an organization that would use the land to create jobs for the community.

When Irene passed away in 1994, Roady made the decision to retain the family's land and put the rights into a trust for their twelve children. Roady passed away in 2006, and the family agreed that it was time to sell the land and fulfill their parents' dream of expanding the community to create jobs and facilitate growth.

Roady and Irene were first introduced to the Gateway Corporation by the ECA-EDC in 1993. Because Gateway shared Roady and Irene's vision on how the land should be used and did not to pressure the family to sell, the Carroll family chose to sell the land solely to Gateway Corporation.

Today, the Gateway Corporation, the ECA-EDC, and the City of Eau Claire are pursuing several options for business expansion and development of the Carroll property in the Gateway Northwest Industrial Park. It is their goal – as was the goal of Roady and Irene Carroll – to create jobs for Eau Claire residents and advance economic growth in the community.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

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REGIONAL BUSINESS FUND, INC.

A new \$15 million dollar loan fund has been created to promote business and economic development efforts in west central Wisconsin. This loan fund is being offered through the Regional Business Fund, Inc., which is currently administered by the West Central Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission. This loan pool was created by the non-entitlement (federal definition) communities consolidating their local revolving loan funds in order to address potential gaps in private capital markets for long-term, fixed-rate, low down-payment, and low-interest financing.

Businesses located in Eau Claire County but not in the City of Eau Claire are currently eligible for this loan pool. The City of Eau Claire is an entitlement community and is working with the Regional Business Fund to identify ways of making the City of Eau Claire businesses eligible for these programs.

The programs offered through the RBF, Inc., include:

- Revolving Loan Fund—a flexible loan for commercial and industrial projects with the purpose of creating jobs and increasing the tax base
- Downtown Façade Loan— provides financial assistance to encourage property and business owners to revitalize downtown commercial buildings
- Loan Fund— provides financial assistance to startup, newly established, or growing small businesses that normally have a difficulty accessing debt financing

The Regional Business Fund will be using the ECA-EDC Revolving loan fund committee to approve loan fund requests of \$150,000 or less for eligible businesses in Eau Claire County.

The ECA-EDC does offer other financial programs to help area businesses in Eau Claire County and the City of Eau Claire. A list and description of these programs can be found at www.eauclaire-wi.com.



For more information on eligibility and procedures for the Regional Business Fund, go to www.wcwrpc.org and click the RBF, Inc., link.



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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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