

MISSISSIPPI DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FRIDAY FACTS

Volume 5, Number 25

July 13, 2001

From the Executive Director. . .

Workforce development and training is a major component of the Advantage Mississippi Initiative. Mississippi has a quality workforce, providing us with the competitive advantage for securing higher paying jobs. We are pleased with the implementation of the Workforce Investment Act last July. Six local Workforce Areas have been established, each with local Workforce Boards and Youth Councils. Sixty (60) One-Stop Centers have been established, serving individuals seeking a first job or a better job.

The Employment Training Division of the Mississippi Development Authority is tasked with administering the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program in Mississippi. The WIA forms the framework for the Workforce Investment Network – WIN in Mississippi, the name of the one-stop system designed to streamline access to information on employment and training opportunities. The hallmark of the WIN in Mississippi system is the creation of WIN Job Centers throughout the state. In one convenient location, employers and job seekers can access a wide variety of job training, education and employment information and services.

At the WIN Job Centers, employers have access to a database of qualified skilled workers, and Center staff can assist employers with recruiting and screening new candidates for employment. Other Center services for employers include: assistance with writing job descriptions, proficiency testing for employees and free access to the Internet to post job listings or review resumes. Information on WIA Customized Training and On-the-Job Training programs to help businesses is also available through the Centers. With Customized Training, training for employees is designed to meet the special requirements of the employer. WIA pays up to 50 percent of the cost and the employer commits to employ an individual on successful completion of the training. On-the-Job Training benefits business by reimbursing the company for its cost of training employees. Qualified applicants are placed in jobs and receive training by the employer, while earning a regular salary and benefits. Employers are reimbursed up to 50 percent of the cost of the employees' wages during the training. The length of time for reimbursement for training depends on what is appropriate for the occupation.

Our greatest asset is our people. A strong workforce makes Mississippi the first choice of business and industry looking to relocate or expand. I would encourage you to explore the variety of services provided by our Employment Training Division. Our team of dedicated professionals is working toward the goal of developing a strong workforce that is self-sufficient, fully employed, educated, trained and comfortable within a structured work environment. For information on these and other programs, contact the Employment Training Division of the Mississippi Development Authority at 601-359-9250.

- J.C. Burns

MSU MAKES "TOP 500" OF SUPERCOMPUTING SITES

Mississippi State University's Engineering Research Center (ERC) has made the latest "Top 500" list for supercomputing sites in the world. The list was compiled by the University of Mannheim in Germany and the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

MSU ranked 158th in the world, 85th in the US and 13th among American universities, the only school from the Southeastern Conference. ERC has generated more than \$20 million in annual research expenditures.

MSU first made the list in 1996, debuting at 359. It has moved up in the rankings mainly due to a new system that is actually a cluster of computers. "The cluster contains 165 dual-processor Pentium III computers using special software and a high-speed network to make them function like a single supercomputer," said Roger Smith, Computer Specialist with ERC. "ERC started research with clusters in 1987, and the current system is our fifth generation cluster."

Scientists in the ERC's Computational Simulation and Design Center use the supercomputing system for fluid dynamics research, with applications as diverse as submarines, surface ships, tiltrotor aircraft, turbomachinery and automobile components. MSU plans to double the capacity of its cluster over the next few months.

TECHNOLOGY MEETINGS SCHEDULED FOR JULY 16 AND JULY 20

Mississippi Technology Alliance will host two meetings next week to explore ways Mississippi communities can benefit from the advancement of technology. "Technology @ Home in Mississippi" is a multi-part tour of the state; each region of the state will be visited throughout the summer, concluding the tour in September. The first of the sixteen scheduled sessions was held on the Mississippi Gulf Coast on July 9.

On Monday, July 16, the tour will stop in Brookhaven, MS. The session is scheduled from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. in the State Room of the State Band and Trust Company at 112 Cherokee Street in Brookhaven. Contact Chandler Russ at 601-833-1411 for more information about this meeting.

Friday, July 20 will find the tour in Hattiesburg, MS at the Lake Terrace Convention Center from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Contact Gray Swoope at 601-296-7513 for more information about the Hattiesburg meeting.

All meetings are free of charge. Individuals can register or get more information by calling 601-960-3610 or visiting www.technologyalliance.ms.

DEADLINE FOR NISSAN APPLICATIONS APPROACHING FAST

For those seeking employment at the Nissan facility coming to Canton, MS, the deadline to submit applications for production worker and maintenance technician positions is fast approaching.

All applications must be received at the Mississippi Employment Security Commission - or postmarked - by Monday, July 30. Mail all applications to:

*Mississippi Employment Security Commission
PO Box 1247
Canton, MS 39046*

Applications meeting the requirements will be forwarded to Nissan for consideration.

For more information about jobs at Nissan in Canton, visit www.mississippiandnissan.com or call the Nissan Jobline at 601-961-7697.

ATTALA COUNTY'S DISTRICT 4 RECEIVES DESIGNATION AS A GAP DISTRICT

The Attala County Board of Supervisors recently learned that District 4 of Attala County has been designated as a Growth and Prosperity (GAP) District based upon the county's application to the Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) in March 2001.

To qualify for GAP designation, a supervisor's district must be located contiguous to a designated GAP county - in this case, Holmes County - and must have a poverty rate of at least 30%. Any business that locates in District 4 (within eight miles of Holmes County) and creates at least ten jobs may qualify for a ten-year exemption from all state and local taxes, except the local school tax and that portion of the ad valorem tax that funds law enforcement and fire protection.

The following types of new or expanded businesses are eligible to participate under the GAP program:

- Manufacturing
- Processing
- Assembling
- Storing
- Warehousing
- Servicing
- Distribution or sale of any goods, including products of agriculture
- Enterprises for research and development, including, but not limited to scientific laboratories
- Other business or industry that meets the guidelines of the GAP program as determined on a case-by-case basis by MDA and that creates a minimum of ten jobs.

Board President Troy Hodges expressed appreciation to the Mississippi Development Authority, Governor Musgrove and the Mississippi Legislature for their assistance. He also reported that Attala County may be more competitive for new jobs with the GAP designation.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL TRADE TARGETED ON EUROPEAN SALES MISSION

Representatives of the Mississippi Development Authority, Division of Tourism, along with tourism representatives from Tupelo, Natchez, Greenville and Memphis, Tennessee have returned from a successful European sales mission. Countries targeted for a focused marketing approach included: United Kingdom, Holland, Belgium and France.

"Through a combination of meetings and sales presentations with various international tour operators and travel media we were able to further educate the travel trade and promote Mississippi as a travel destination to the international market," said Darienne Wilson, Director Tourism.

The participants, through a series of pre-scheduled appointments, met with tourism product developers of leading tour companies and travel editors of leading travel magazines having the potential of including the Mississippi tourism product in their tour brochures and magazines.

The delegation also coordinated a tradeshow booth and displayed the Mississippi tourism product at the Toulouse, France Garonne le Festival, which featured the Mississippi River as the theme and highlighted artists and musicians from Mississippi, Louisiana and Tennessee.

BROOKINS NAMED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HCEDD

Jason H. Brookins has been named the executive director of the Hinds County Economic Development District.

"A local, regional and nationwide search was done," said Preston McGough, president of HCEDD's board of trustees. "(We) were careful to choose the best person suited for this area, for what we want to do and what we are able to do."

Brookins said, "In the simplest of terms, I intend to target industry clusters to include manufacturing, distribution centers and telecommunications. I want to encourage development throughout all Hinds County."

Brookins, 32, is a native of Meridian. He has been with HCEDD for four years, originally serving as assistant director of business development before

becoming manager. Brookins also served a nine-month stint as West-central Mississippi industry liaison for the Mississippi Development Authority.

Brookins earned a Bachelor's degree from Mississippi State University and a Master's from the University of Southern Mississippi. He and his wife, Felicia, have one child, Phillip.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY LEASE PROGRAM REDUCES ORIGATION FEES

In an effort to resolve the financial burdens of pursuing energy projects in public jurisdictions, the Mississippi Development Authority, Energy Division has developed a financing program that utilizes existing funding resources to implement identified energy conservation measures. This program provides public entities access to prearranged tax-exempt lease purchase financing. A public entity can reduce high origination fees associated with individual project financing and streamline the otherwise lengthy funding process by participating in a program that has incurred costs associated with developing documents and a process that meets federal and state laws. Program participation provides access to a team of technical, legal and financial professionals. If you would like further details, please contact the Energy Division at (601) 359-3449.

For other energy news, view a copy of the Energy Division's latest newsletter - "Mississippi Energy Facts" - on the web at www.mississippi.org and go to Energy Programs.



* CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU *

The Mississippi Development Authority

- **Don O'Connell of O'Con Manufacturing** . . . on leasing the former National Guard Armory in Magnolia to establish a jewelry facility creating 25 jobs for Pike County.
- **Michael Kincses of Kincses Tool & Molding Corporation** . . . on the investment of over \$500,000 in new equipment and electrical systems and the recent growth that created 22 new jobs.
- **Rex Jones of Gulf Coast Enterprises** . . . on leasing the Jefferson Davis County Complex in Prentiss creating 10 jobs for the assembly of anti-pollution and fuel treatment systems.
- **Solon Scott, III of America's Catch, Inc.** . . . on the announcement of a \$5.5 million expansion, including new processing lines, holding freezers, and a spiral freezer and the creation of at least 52 new jobs over the next two years for LeFlore County.
- **Alex Malouf of The John Richard Company** . . . on purchasing the large facility formerly occupied by the Baldwin Piano and Organ Company to serve as a manufacturing and distribution center for existing and new production lines in LeFlore County.
- **Jerry Redmond of Whirlpool Appliance Group** . . . on the recent launching of the KitchenAid "Pro Line" of innovative cooking products at their Oxford plant creating 70 new jobs.
- **Jack Hughes of PlanHouse, Inc.** . . . on the grand opening of the PlanHouse Gallery.
- **Steve Carroll of Georgia-Pacific Corporation** . . . on beginning construction of a \$25-million facility at the Lafayette County Industrial Park site, to house the largest melamine manufacturing plant in the U.S. creating 55 new jobs in the future.
- **J. Kelley Williams of ChemFirst, Inc.** . . . on the high-tech advances that ChemFirst and its California subsidiary, EKC Technologies, have achieved in utilizing the DMOP process.