

business and development

Generating new jobs key to county's economic recovery

By Will Davis

DIRECTOR, CHESTERFIELD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

This year (2010) has been a challenging but very exciting time for the Chesterfield Economic Development Department.

In a recovering economy, our team has worked hard to capture a wide variety of new business projects. These projects will generate jobs and investment in our community that will help improve the business climate for everyone.



Will Davis

We were delighted that DuPont announced it will build its new \$20 million manufacturing facility for Energain™ Separators right here in Chesterfield. These nanofiber-based separators will help generate more power and longer battery life for hybrid and electric vehicles. This project is a perfect example of a "green" industry, which is an important component of our advanced manufacturing target-marketing program.

DuPont could have chosen to build this new operation in any number of other localities. Due to the nature of the operation, competition among communities to land the project was fierce. But DuPont picked

Chesterfield because of the tremendous local work force and success it has achieved at its other Chesterfield operations.

Austin Brockenbrough & Associates also recently expanded into new offices at the Boulders. This expansion resulted in a \$700,000 investment and the creation of 11 new jobs. The Brockenbrough office is the first "green" certified interior design in the Greater Richmond region and the only private sector interior design project in Chesterfield County to earn the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Commercial Interiors (LEED CI) certification. This investment reflects Brockenbrough's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability.

However, recruiting new business and assisting existing businesses is not enough. The biggest job creators in the county are small businesses. So we are making it easier for entrepreneurs to start and grow new businesses in Chesterfield.

In September, Chesterfield Economic Development and the Chesterfield County Public Library partnered to launch the new small business initiative, "My Business Starts Here." Local business operators now have an easier, more comprehensive way to get the information and support they need when starting or sustaining a small business. A new web portal, www.MyBusinessStartsHere.com, helps potential entrepreneurs and existing small businesses navigate the abundant resources available. Users can be

guided, step-by-step, through the process of starting a business, zero in on industry specific requirements, ask specific questions about doing business in the county, get guidance about regulations or county processes or identify potential sources of capital.

The Chesterfield County Public Library's new Small Business Resource Center is designed with the small-business operator's needs in mind. The center can be used as a second office, a meeting place, a staff-training facility or a research lab. Desktops, laptops, current books and magazines and a variety of small-business tools are available –

all free of charge. Users can also receive one-on-one assistance from professional librarians or economic development staff. The first Small Business Resource Center opened within the Meadowdale Library branch but future plans include additional centers in other libraries and locations throughout Chesterfield County.

We are beginning to see hopeful signs of recovery in our local economy. With the expansion and growth of our existing businesses and an easier path to starting a business, business really does start and grow in Chesterfield County!

More help for businesses

Chesterfield Economic Development (CED) offers several other resources for starting and sustaining a business in the county. They include:

- CED works on a free and confidential basis with domestic and foreign companies planning to establish new facilities, relocate existing facilities or expand current facilities. Assistance with site-selection requirements, information and research needs, public relations and relocation services, small business issues or streamlining regulatory processes can be found at www.chesterfieldbusiness.com. A small business assistance program pro-

vides one-on-one assistance and access to business resources.

- The Small Business Development "Interactive Guide to Setting Up a Business in Chesterfield County" CD-ROM provides a single resource to starting a business. The program leads a potential entrepreneur through every stage of starting a business, and includes information on management skills, the employment process, planning tools and county requirements. This guide is free.

For more information on business resources, visit www.chesterfieldbusiness.com or call 318-8550.

Taking care of business

Below is a listing of county business groups:

Chesterfield County Chamber of Commerce, 748-6364, www.chesterfieldchamber.com. With more than 600 members, the Chesterfield County Chamber of Commerce is the largest business organization in the county. Networking opportunities include breakfast and luncheon meetings, "Chamber Night Out" events, an annual golf tournament, wine festival and more.

Chesterfield Business Council, Danna Geisler, program manager, 783-9309, danna.geisler@gccc.com. The Chesterfield Business Council is an advocacy arm of the Greater Richmond Chamber that works to identify and address issues, as well as serve as a networking avenue for the business community, with both a local and regional perspective pertinent to the county. Topics include economic development, pro-business programs, transportation, education and quality of life.

Gateway Association, 272-5108. The Gateway Association comprises businesses and residents along the eastern section of Midlothian Turnpike roughly between Chippenham and Powhite parkways. Members include Crosland, developer of the Cloverleaf Mall site, Bond Companies, owner of Spring Rock Green (formerly Beaufont Mall) and the communities of Surrywood, Crest-

wood Farms and Forestdale. The association meets the third Thursday of each month at Brandywine Realty in the Arboretum at 7 p.m.

Western Chesterfield Business Alliance, info@wcba.biz, www.wcba.biz. The Western Chesterfield Business Alliance focuses on issues and activities affecting the western part of the county, particularly the Village of Midlothian. The organization does not advocate or take positions on any political, legal or regulatory matters and is solely a forum for the exchange of information. The alliance meets every other month, generally on the first Thursday of the even months.

Greater Southport Business Association, www.southportassociation.com. The Greater Southport Business Association focuses its attention in the vicinity of the Midlothian Turnpike corridor, from Powhite Parkway to Woolridge Road, and along the Huguenot and Courthouse roads corridors from Bellgrade to Lucks Lane. Association members were recently successful in securing funding for landscaping along Midlothian Turnpike by lobbying for the creation of a new tax district. The association meets quarterly for luncheons.

Interested in having your business group listed in our spring/summer Guide to Chesterfield County? E-mail newseditor@chesterfieldobserver.com.

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