

The Columbia County Business Review

A publication of the Development Authority of Columbia County (DACC) Georgia

Visit us on-line at www.ChooseColumbiaCounty.com

March 2010

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENTS

Augusta Marine, a boating retailer that began operations back in 1989, is expanding with a new retail location on Belair Frontage Road, near Exit 194 of Interstate 20. **B. R. Walden Construction, Inc.**, is serving as general contractor. According to the company, the new facility will feature a 33,600 sq. ft. showroom and maintenance/repair center. Augusta Marine, which is locally owned by entrepreneur David Whyte, is a full-service marine retailer that sells and services Ranger Bass Boats, Hurricane Deck Boats, Carolina Skiff Center Consoles, and Stratos Bass Boats, in addition to outboard motor engines manufactured by Mercury, Yamaha, and Honda. The firm currently employs 9 people. For more information on the company, visit www.augustamarine.com.

Georgia Iron Works (GIW) has announced plans to expand the size of its **Hydraulic Lab and Testing** facility, located on the grounds of its Grovetown manufacturing plant. The expansion will add approximately 20,000 sq. ft. to the present laboratory building, permitting GIW's team of engineers to analyze the workings of its slurry pumps and devices in various conditions. The lab has developed a world-wide reputation as an educational institute, one that the company has operated for more than 30 years for engineers and construction supervisors; the program regularly produces over 40 graduates each year and draws participants from every continent. For additional information on GIW or its **Technical Training Series**, visit www.giwindustries.com.

Venerable Augusta-based law firm, **Hull Barrett**, has announced plans to open an Evans law office in the Security Federal Bank Building, a three-story office building constructed in 2008. Established in 1916, the Hull Barrett law firm, which currently has more than 25 practicing attorneys, is expected to lease approximately 3,000 sq. ft. of space in the bank building. The Evans office will complement the firm's other two offices, located in Augusta and Aiken, SC. According to the firm, the new Evans office will permit it to better serve an expanding client base in Columbia County. To learn more about the law firm, visit www.hullbarrett.com. [For information on leasing tenant space in the Security Federal building, go to www.securityfederalbank.com.]

SPOTLIGHT ON: *Norvell Fixture and Equipment Company*

Located near Grovetown since 1988, ***Norvell Fixture and Equipment Company*** is a family-owned food service equipment company that services restaurants and commercial kitchens throughout Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina. The firm currently employs 15 people. The company was started in Augusta in 1943 by Marion Novell, who had worked for years in the candy manufacturing industry. Initially, Norvell Fixture and Equipment targeted small pharmacies in Georgia, selling and installing soda fountains. By the 1950s, the business had expanded into selling a full line of food service equipment. The senior Novell was later joined in the business by his son-in-law, Bill Sherrill, who is still active in the business, along with his son, Will, and Novell's son, Bill. For more about the company, visit the firm's website at www.norvellfixture.com.

COLUMBIA COUNTY AWARDED FEDERAL BROADBAND GRANT

In March, U. S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke announced that Columbia County's Information Technology (IT) Division was the recipient of a \$13.5 million broadband infrastructure grant to construct a 220-mile fiber optic network within the county. The project is expected to connect more than 150 community institutions to enhance healthcare, public safety, and government services throughout the county, while furthering the economic development potential of the county through the attraction of private-sector firms requiring very-high bandwidth, for applications such as digital media, software development, and E-commerce. The grant is also expected to help create a high-capacity data center for the ***Medical College of Georgia (MCG)***, to support its medical technology outreach efforts in the eastern portion of the state. Other project elements under the grant include improvements to a county-wide traffic and water control system, the establishment of 60 free WI-FI hotspots in public locations, and the construction of five wireless towers to enhance public safety communications as well as improve wireless communications capabilities throughout the CSRA region.

County officials have pledged support to the ***CSRA Regional Commission*** in its attempt to obtain similar Federal funding for a 13-county broadband grant to install a much larger "middle-mile" fiber optic ring within the Central Savannah River Area. A final announcement on the outcome of that grant application is expected by autumn 2010.

TRAVEL WRITERS TOUR COUNTY

In March, the ***Columbia County Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB)*** hosted a group of free-lance travel writers on a tour of communities in eastern Georgia. A project coordinated by the four-county ***Clarks' Hill Lake Partnership***, the tour gave communities in the region a chance to showcase local amenities and events, and increase publicity.

ENTREPRENUERIAL TRAINING PROGRAM OFFERED

The **Georgia Small Business Development Consortium (SBDC)**, in conjunction with utility provider **Georgia Power**, has announced plans to offer to Columbia County businesses the nationally-acclaimed FASTRAC – Growth Venture entrepreneurial training program. The FASTRAC program permits a business owner – over the course of 10 two-hour long sessions – to identify growth opportunities for their firms and pinpoint methods for accessing the human, financial, and business resources necessary to take advantage of market openings. Participants use their companies as case studies, sharing best practices and solutions to problems affecting all firms; they are also given access to specialized FASTRAC on-line tools for business planning and market analysis.

To enroll in the spring session of FASTRAC (which begins on April 20th), contact SBDC business consultant Debra McKenzie at 706-721-4545, or electronically at dmckenzie@georgiasbdc.org.

MARTINEZ AREA FOCUS OF REDEVELOPMENT STUDY

The **Columbia County Development Services Division** and its director, Richard Harmon, plan to revisit the findings of a 2005 redevelopment study for the Martinez area, in hopes of maintaining that area’s retail vibrancy. The study, conducted by the firm Tunnell-Spangler-Walsh & Associates, identified several key components such as retail clustering (grouping complementary businesses together), building and signage aesthetics, and alternative redevelopment uses. The division intends to bring property owners and tenants together for a series of meetings this spring and summer to address ways to implement select elements of the redevelopment study. Excerpts from the Tunnell-Spangler study are available for viewing on-line at www.columbiacountyga.gov.

OPPORTUNITY ZONE STATUS SOUGHT FOR GROVETOWN

Following the recent designation by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA) of U.S. Census Tract No. 305.02 as a “less developed census tract,” or LDCT, the Development Authority of Columbia County has announced plans to file an application for the designation of a state “Opportunity Zone” in the tract.

An opportunity zone permits businesses either locating or expanding within a particular geographic boundary to apply for state tax credits against a firm’s corporate income tax and state payroll withholding. The qualification requirements for tax credit eligibility (pertaining to job creation numbers) are significantly less for a firm within an opportunity zone than one located outside of a zone. For additional information on opportunity zones and other programs of DCA, visit www.dca.state.ga.us.

FORT GORDON: Fact or Fiction?

There are approximately 73,000 vehicles registered on Fort Gordon. **FACT or FICTION?** Fact. In addition (according to www.edmunds.com and area auto dealers), the average driver at Fort Gordon buys a different vehicle every five-to-six years – resulting in 13,000 vehicles sold annually to people affiliated with Fort Gordon. Now that’s economic impact! [Source: *The Alliance for Fort Gordon*.]

SELECT AVAILABLE BUILDINGS IN COLUMBIA COUNTY *As of March 2010*

308,000 sq. ft. industrial facility, on a 30-acre site in the Columbia Industrial District (near the town center of Evans). For sale, but current occupant is willing to consider a long-term lease for approximately 100,000 sq. ft. of space. For more information, contact the DACC at 706-312-1375 or tpost@choosetocolumbiacounty.com.

50,000 sq. ft. concrete panel constructed building, on a 4.5-acre site in the Horizon South Business Park, near Grovetown. For sale or lease. Contact the DACC at 706-312-1375 or tpost@choosetocolumbiacounty.com.

ABOUT COLUMBIA COUNTY

Columbia County is located in eastern Georgia, in a region known as the Central Savannah River area (CSRA); it is bordered by the Savannah River and Clark Hill’s Lake, one of the largest freshwater bodies of water in the southeast. With a population of more than 100,000 – and more than 500,000 in the Augusta (GA) – Aiken (SC) metropolitan statistical area (MSA) – the county’s economy is based upon a diverse mixture of government, medical, military, professional, and light industrial sectors. The home to world-class firms such as **World Color**, **Club Car**, and **John Deere**, the county has one of the area’s highest standards of living, a fact frequently noted in nationwide surveys by **Money** magazine and **U.S. News & World Report**.

Visit the county’s award-winning website at www.ColumbiaCountyGA.gov for information about living and working in the county.

THE COLUMBIA COUNTY BUSINESS REVIEW is published quarterly by the Development Authority of Columbia County (DACC). Please address any comments or questions to Troy Post at 706-312-1371 (electronically via tpost@ColumbiaCountyGA.gov); or, just deposit them in a time capsule and wait fifty years before opening.

A non-profit economic development agency, the Development Authority of Columbia County (DACC) provides technical assistance to businesses seeking financial assistance or site selection services. To learn more, visit www.ChooseColumbiaCounty.com.

**The Development Authority of
Columbia County (DACC)**
604 Government Center Way, Suite 4
Evans, Georgia 30809

