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An Electronic Update on Economic Development Activities in St. Croix County

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Please Distribute to All Interested Persons in Your Organization

St. Croix Among the Nation's Top Counties in 10-Year Growth St. Croix's 33.55% increase ranks 45th nationally as an urban fringe county

From 2000 to 2010, St. Croix County, Wisconsin was among the top population-gaining fringe counties in the U.S. according to the Census Bureau.

The Census Bureau has four classifications for U.S. counties that are based on size and location. 'Metro-central' counties are located at the core of large, urbanized metropolitan areas. A county like St. Croix, located 20 minutes east of St. Paul, Minnesota and 40 minutes from Minneapolis, is designated as 'metro-outlying'. 'Micropolitan' areas are smaller versions of heavily populated metro-central areas. And lastly, 'rural counties' are areas with low population density and the population may be growing only slightly or not at all.

About 672 counties in the U.S. have the metro-central designation. Another 428 counties are considered metro-outlying. From 2000-2010, St. Croix's population increased by 33.55% to rank it as the 45th fastest-growing metro-outlying county in the U.S. St. Croix's increase was well above the combined rate of 16.8% for all 428 metro-outlying counties.

Other counties within the 13-county Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington metro area also made the fastest-growing list. Wright County, Minnesota ranked 32nd (+38.52%), followed closely by Sherburne County, also in Minnesota, at 36th (+37.27%) and Chisago County (MN) ranked 59th (+31.06%). Pierce County, Wisconsin, just south of St. Croix, is also included in the federal definition of the 13-county metro area, and reported a 10-year population increase of 11.69%

The Census Bureau estimated that metro-central counties grew by 10.3% from 2000-2010 and now have 236.8 million of the 308.7 million people in the U.S. About one hour east of the Wisconsin-Minnesota border is the Eau Claire metro area, comprised of Eau Claire and Chippewa counties. Chippewa recorded a population increase of 13.04% to rank third among Wisconsin's metro-central counties while Eau Claire was further down the list in tenth place with an increase of 6.02%.

Even the smaller micropolitan areas grew between 2000-2010. Nationally, the 688 micropolitan areas grew by 5.9%. In Wisconsin, Sauk County is the fastest-growing micropolitan area. It grew by 12.30% over the 10-year census period. Closer to St. Croix, Dunn County grew by 10.05% to rank as Wisconsin's 4th fastest-growing micropolitan. To qualify for this designation, the federal Office of Management and Budget requires the area to have at least 50,000 residents, but the anchor central city can be as small as 10,000 residents.

St. Croix Valley Job Fair in New Richmond on May 4th

Make your plans now to participate in an upcoming 2011 St. Croix Valley Job Fair on Wednesday, May 4, 1-5 pm at WITC-New Richmond, 1019 South Knowles Ave., New Richmond.

Wisconsin Job Centers regularly sponsor Job Fairs to connect job seekers with the businesses in their areas. To participate, use the Contact information found in the list below.

For more info contact Ed Metten at mettened@workforceresource.org or 715-426-0388.

March Home Sales and Prices Decline in St. Croix

County follows statewide and regional trends

Home sales and median prices in St. Croix County, Wisconsin declined in March 2011 according to information released by the Wisconsin REALTORS® Association (WRA) on April 18.

WRA says 75 home sales occurred in St. Croix in March 2011 compared to 89 sales one year ago, for a decline of 15.7%. The statewide decline was 18.5% and the decline in WRA's west region was 28%. The median home price in St. Croix fell 22% from March 2010 to March 2011 (173,000 to \$135,000). The statewide median price dropped 9.6% from \$136,000 to \$123,000. WRA's estimates for the west region showed a 6.5% decline in median home prices from March 2010 to March 2011.

Home sales and prices in the St. Croix Valley region of Polk, St. Croix, and Pierce counties also declined. Homes sales in Polk dropped 25.4% from March 2010 to March 2011 (59 sales v. 44) and the median sales price fell 13.2% over the same time period (\$87,000 v. \$75,500). In Pierce County, 33 existing homes were sold in March 2011 compared to 43 one year ago (a decline of 23.3%). The median price in Pierce was off 19.3% over the same time period (\$178,000 v. \$143,600).

Year-to-date sales in St. Croix for 2011 were off less than one percent compared to 2010 (211 sales in 2010 compared to 209 in 2011). The year-to-date median sales price in St. Croix was off 19.9%, and fell from \$166,000 in 2010 to \$133,000 in 2011. The year-to-date statewide estimate for existing sales shows a decline of 5.8% (9,572 sales in 2010 to 9,017 in 2011). The year-to-date median price across the state declined 9.3% (\$135,000 in 2010 to \$122,000 in 2011). WRA's 2011 year-to-date sales in its west region fell 16.3% compared to the 2010 time period (1,120 in 2010 v. 937 in 2011). The 2011 year-to-date median home price in the west region is off 8.3% (\$127,551 in 2010 v. \$117,000 in 2011).

Year-to-date sales in Polk County declined by 4.0% (126 sales in 2010 v. 121 in 2011) and the year-to-date median sales price was off 1% (\$95,000 in 2010 v. \$94,000 in 2011). Year-to-date existing home sales in Pierce County were off 24% (96 in 2010 v. 73 in 2011). The year-to-date median sales price in Pierce declined 7.4% (\$155,000 in 2010 v. \$143,600 in 2011).

St. Croix's 2011 median sales price for both March and 2011 year-to-date median price remain above WRA's estimates for the west region and the entire state.

| | <i>Median Price March 2011</i> | <i>Median Price March 2010</i> | <i>Change</i> | <i>Sales March 2011</i> | <i>Sales March 2010</i> | <i>Change</i> |
|-----------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| St. Croix | \$135,000 | \$173,000 | -22.0% | 75 | 89 | -15.7% |
| Polk | \$75,500 | \$87,000 | -13.2% | 44 | 59 | -25.4% |
| Pierce | \$143,600 | \$178,000 | -19.3% | 33 | 43 | -23.3% |
| WRA West | \$121,000 | \$129,400 | -6.5% | 406 | 564 | -28.0% |
| Wisconsin | \$123,000 | \$136,000 | -9.6% | 3,753 | 4,605 | -18.5% |
| | <i>Median Price 2011 YTD</i> | <i>Median Price 2010 YTD</i> | <i>Change</i> | <i>Sales 2011 YTD</i> | <i>Sales 2010 YTD</i> | <i>Change</i> |
| St. Croix | \$133,000 | \$166,000 | -19.9% | 209 | 211 | -0.9% |
| Polk | \$94,000 | \$95,000 | -1.1% | 121 | 126 | -4.0% |
| Pierce | \$143,600 | \$155,000 | -7.4% | 73 | 96 | -24.0% |
| WRA West | \$117,000 | \$127,551 | -8.3% | 937 | 1,120 | -16.3% |
| Wisconsin | \$122,500 | \$135,000 | -9.3% | 9,017 | 9,572 | -5.8% |

Source: Wisconsin REALTORS® Association and St. Croix Economic Development Corporation

Tom Mews Named President of First National Community Bank

John Soderberg, Chairman and Chief Executive officer of First National Community Bank announced that the bank's board of directors appointed Tom Mews President at the April 19th board meeting.

Mews has been with First National Community Bank for ten years, during which time the bank has enjoyed expansion and tremendous growth.



Tom Mews

"Tom has been instrumental to the growth and success of First National Community Bank," said John Soderberg. "He is committed to our customers, the bank, and the growth of the communities we serve. I thank Tom for his dedication and I look forward to working with him in his new role."

Mews and his family reside in New Richmond. He is the past president of the New Richmond Area Chamber of Commerce and is active in the New Richmond Area Community Foundation.

Center On Wisconsin Strategy Releases March 'Job Watch'

On April 28th, the Center On Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) released its monthly snapshot of the state's job picture and key economic trends. The summary represents data for March 2011.

COWS says the Wisconsin economy added 9,100 jobs in March, marking the first time that there have been three consecutive months of job gains since the recession began in December 2007. Even with three months of gains, the Wisconsin labor market has 126,900 fewer jobs than it did at the beginning of the recession.

Unemployment remains at a high rate, estimated at 7.4%. COWS notes that over the past 12 months, the unemployment rate has inched downwards, and is now 1.8 percentage points lower than it was one year ago.

Both the construction and manufacturing sectors have been hit hard in this recession. Wisconsin's manufacturing sector posted growth in each of the last three months, and added another 2,800 jobs in March. The manufacturing sector is still 52,900 jobs behind its level when the recession started in December 2007 (-10.6%). The construction sector has 28.4% fewer jobs in March than in December 2007, or a decline of 35,100 jobs.

The March Jobs Watch report can be viewed at www.cows.org.

Information provided in the report is based on federal Bureau of Labor data compiled by the Economic Policy Institute.

Larsen Sports Medicine & Physical Therapy Moves to Towerview Business Center

In early May, Larsen Sports Medicine and Physical Therapy will move its Hudson, Wisconsin operations to the Towerview Business Center, located at 2365 Willis Miller Drive in the St. Croix Business Park (Hudson, Wisconsin). The company will occupy 7,000 square feet of leased space at Towerview. Ascent Companies will provide the tenant improvements.

Larsen Sports provides physical therapy and athletic training services throughout west central Wisconsin. The company has additional offices in Roberts, Wisconsin and Hastings, Minnesota.

Beekeepers Monthly Meeting on May 12th

The St. Croix County Beekeepers Meeting is set for Thursday, May 12 at 7 p.m. (on the second Thursday of each month) at Peace Lutheran Church, 2084 County Rd N, Baldwin WI. This month they will discuss keeping your bees healthy and when to super.

For questions contact Paul VanDenMeerendonk at 715-781-0640 or email vanden@baldwin-telecom.net.

Small Business Conference Scheduled for May 17th

All are invited to attend a small business conference on Tuesday, May 17th, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Kilkarney Hills Golf Club in River Falls. The day-long session will begin at 8:30 with registration.

Guest speakers will begin at 9:00 a.m. and will cover such topics as: “Why should I buy from you” focusing on value of your business proposition; “How to revitalize your web site and help it make money”; “How to hire the right people”; and “Who’s got your back insurance checkup.” The lunch keynote speaker will be Toby Madden from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Mr. Madden will share his thoughts on the regional economy and how to position your company in this time of economic recovery. The day will wrap up with a facilitated problem solving session from 2:15 to 3:00 pm.

The seminar, which is sponsored by the River Falls Chamber of Commerce, Ellsworth Area Chamber of Commerce, Prescott Area Chamber of Commerce, the Baldwin Chamber of Commerce and SCORE, is being held to help businesses cope with the many challenges they face today. The goal of the conference is to help businesses get real help, not just theoretical, and in turn make more jobs as every small business begins to grow and prosper.

Registration, to cover the cost of breaks and lunch, is \$20 before May 10th and \$25 after that date and at the door. Registration includes all sessions, morning refreshments and lunch. Register online at www.rfchamber.com or by calling 715-425-2533. Credit cards accepted.

For more information please contact the River Falls Chamber of Commerce at 715-425-2533 or any of the sponsoring organizations.

One-Day Conference Explores International Trade

If you currently sell internationally, or are considering selling your products internationally, please consider attending the “Doing Business Globally 2011” conference on Thursday, May 12, 2011 at 29 Pines/Sleep Inn & Suites Conference Center, located northwest of Eau Claire, Wisconsin at the intersection of State Highway 29 and County Road T (Exit 69).

The conference is an opportunity to shape and refine international strategies for new and existing export markets. Attendees will learn about: product potential in foreign markets; identification of agents/distributors, and buyers; foreign business practices; and accessing legal, banking, and translation services

The conference runs from 9:30 a.m. (registration) to 2:30 p.m. and includes a half-hour of post program networking. Timmothy Boettcher, president of Realityworks, Inc., and the winner of the 2002 Wisconsin Export Achievement Award (small industrial/manufacturing) will deliver the keynote address starting at 10 a.m.

Attendees can bring international business questions and get answers from experts who understand foreign markets and Wisconsin business concerns. Stanley Pfrang, with the Wisconsin Department of Commerce (608-267-0639) is scheduling one-on-one appointments with Commerce’s International Directors from Brazil, Canada, China, and Mexico, which are top destinations for Wisconsin products.

Registration is available at www.uwec.edu/lce and payment of \$49.00 (students \$20) is required at the time of registration. Call or e-mail in the event of questions at 715-836-5811 or ce@uwec.edu

St. Croix EDC to Conduct an On-Line Constituent Survey *Results Will Frame Strengths, Weaknesses and Branding Initiative*

St. Croix EDC is conducting an on-line constituent survey as part of several new activities from its marketing and communications committee. With support from the board of directors, the committee determined that the EDC must evolve and adapt to changing economic conditions. Changes in marketing and technology are driving the EDC to become more efficient in carrying out its mission

of business retention, expansion and recruitment.

The committee has discussed branding; a value proposition or impression that customers/members have of a company or organization. Survey results will go a long way in helping the EDC determine its brand and how it can improve service to St. Croix County.

The survey will be directed to many of the EDC's constituents including current members (public and private sectors), non-renewing members and partners in the EDC's resource network.

Members of the marketing and communications committee include Mark Casey, Lisa Knutson, Michelle Erdman, Greg Gerard, Roger Humphrey, Jeremy Price, and Gregg Knapp.

You may participate in the survey by clicking on this link <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/scedccsf>. The survey will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your input is appreciated. Thank you in advance for your participation.

St. Croix County Recycling Events Schedule Changes for 2011 Season

St Croix County made adjustments to the recycling event schedule for 2011 in response to changes in state law and reductions in grant funding. These adjustments have brought greater access to locations for residents to dispose of their electronics, but also resulted in changes to the Clean Sweep hazardous waste collections from 2 one-day events to a single 2-day event for 2011. In addition to the Clean Sweep hazardous waste collection, there are collection events for appliances and tires. These events are open to all County residents to ensure proper disposal of these difficult to dispose of items.

Electronics Collection Available from Local Businesses

In January 2010, a new state law took effect requiring manufacturers to collect and recycle certain electronics from Wisconsin households and schools. As a result, several businesses in and around St Croix County are offering year-round and one-day electronic waste collections. The increased availability and access to electronics collection makes future county-sponsored electronics collections unnecessary. These sites include: Habitat for Humanity ReStore, New Richmond, at 715-246-4441; St Croix Electric Co-op, Hammond, at 715-769-7000; Ecycling, Hudson, at 715-381-5900; Best Buy, Woodbury, MN at 651-739-1899; JR's Advanced Recyclers, Inver Grove Heights, MN at 800-358-6563.

Saturday, June 4th ~ Tire Collection, four sites: City of Hudson, Town of Hammond, Town of Richmond and Town of Troy. Prices: Car (up to 16 inches) \$2 w/o rim or \$4 with rim; truck (17-22 inches) \$4 w/o rim and \$8 with rim; tractor \$15; heavy equipment tire \$20; and bicycle tire 50 cents.

Saturday, June 4th ~ Appliance Collection, three sites: City of Hudson, Village of Woodville, and Town of Troy. Prices are \$11 for most appliances, \$16 for air conditioners and water softeners.

Clean Sweep Hazardous Waste Collection ~ Friday, September 16th 1 - 4 p.m. & Saturday, September 17th 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Location at the County Highway Shop, 666 Highway 12 East, Hudson. Households and farms with up to 500 pounds of waste, are fee-exempt. Latex paint and used oil will not be accepted. Fluorescent bulbs and oil filters will be accepted for a fee. A special collection for small businesses (those generating no more than 200 pounds of waste per month) will take place on the morning of Friday, September 16th by appointment only. Businesses are encouraged to participate, but WILL BE CHARGED based on the type and weight of material. Farms and businesses must pre-register by September 13th by calling 715-386-4675.

Saturday, September 17th -- Appliance Collection, two sites: Glenwood City and Town of Richmond. Prices are \$11 for most appliances, \$16 for air conditioners and water softeners.

Cash and checks will be acceptable forms of payment at all events with fees. Look for more details on these events in the Spring 2011 edition of the Your Wasteline recycling newsletter, or go to www.sccwi.us/recycling under Calendar of Events, for collection details and maps to each location. For more information on these collections or other recycling programs, contact Recycling Specialist, Jennifer Havens, at 715-386-4675 or jenniferha@co.saint-croix.wi.us.

St. Croix County’s Unemployment Rate Drops Slightly

68 of 72 Counties Report Lower Monthly Rates

On April 20th, Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Manny Perez announced the preliminary March unemployment rates for Wisconsin’s 72 counties. St. Croix’s rate was estimated at 7.5% which is lower than the February rate of 7.6% but higher than the January rate of 7.0%. A year ago, the county’s unemployment rate was estimated at 9.9%.

DWD said 68 of the state’s 72 counties had lower unemployment rates in March than in February.

Seventeen counties had unemployment rates lower than St. Croix in March. Dane County recorded the lowest rate at 5.3%, followed by La Crosse at 6.1%, Ozaukee at 6.3%, and Eau Claire at 6.6%. Vilas County had the highest rate in March at 13.5%, followed by Menominee at 13.2%, Door at 13.2%, and Rusk at 12.8%.

The preliminary (seasonally adjusted) unemployment rate for Wisconsin in March was estimated at 7.4%, which is same rate as January and February but lower than December’s rate of 7.5%. The state’s seasonally adjusted rate was 9.0% one year ago.

The preliminary unemployment rate in the U.S. in March was estimated at 8.8% which is February’s rate of 8.9% and January’s rate of 9.0%. One year ago the U.S. rate was estimated at 9.7%.

March’s estimates are preliminary and are subject to revision within the next few weeks.

| County | March 2011 Unemployment Rate | Rank | Rate One Year Ago | County | March 2011 Unemployment Rate | Rank | Rate One Year Ago |
|------------|------------------------------|------|-------------------|-----------|------------------------------|------|-------------------|
| Barron | 9.4% | 32 | 11.2% | Pepin | 7.2% | 60 | 9.6% |
| Chippewa | 8.6% | 42 | 10.4% | Pierce | 7.0% | 66 | 9.2% |
| Clark | 9.9% | 25 | 12.7% | Polk | 9.6% | 29 | 13.0% |
| Dunn | 7.4% | 58 | 8.7% | Rusk | 12.8% | 4 | 15.6% |
| Eau Claire | 6.6% | 69 | 7.9% | St. Croix | 7.5% | 55 | 9.9% |

Source: Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development; St. Croix Economic Development Corp.

Note: The 10 counties of western, west central, & northwest Wisconsin comprise Momentum West, a regional economic development & marketing organization

Please Remember to Take the St. Croix EDC Constituent Survey

Your opinion will assist the EDC in its efforts to improve service to St. Croix County businesses and residents.

The survey will take 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

Click here to take survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/scedccsbf>

Thank you for your participation.