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16th Annual Business of the Year Banquet Set for Feb. 25th Winners Will be Announced January 13th

St. Croix EDC's 16th annual Business of the Year banquet is set for Thursday, February 25, 2009. The banquet's location and the 2009 winners will be announced by the EDC's president Patti Robertson on January 13th. Interested parties are asked to reserve the evening of February 25th on their calendar.

The EDC honors three businesses from around St. Croix County, including an Emerging Business of the Year (based in St. Croix County and in business for five or fewer years), a Small Business of the Year (29 or fewer employees), and a Business of the Year (30 or more employees).

Activities on February 25th include registration, networking and cash bar (5:30 to 6:30 pm); dinner (6:30 to 7:15 pm); and keynote speaker and awards program (7:15 to 8:30 pm).

The 2008 winners were BOH Electronics (emerging) K-Sun Corporation (small) and Derrick Companies (business of the year).

Invitations will be sent out in mid-January. The event is open to the public, but reservations are required. Except for guests, each attendee is responsible for the cost of his or her respective meal. For additional information, contact Jacki Bradham at (715) 381-4383 or jacki@stcroixedc.com.

Recovery Zone Bonds Available in St. Croix County Interested Parties May Contact St. Croix EDC for Details

Under the provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, many counties in the U.S. received an allocation of special bonding authority from the federal government called Recovery Zone Facility Bonds (RZFBs). St. Croix County received an allocation of Recovery Bonds totaling \$5,040,000. They are intended to promote economic development and job creation.

The bonds may be used for depreciable property (i.e. land, building, equipment) located within a designated recovery zone. On September 22, 2009 the St. Croix County Board of Supervisors designated the entire county as a recovery zone.

The bonds are very similar to Industrial Revenue Bonds (IRBs), but provide for a broader range of uses. Limitations include residential rental housing, private or commercial golf courses, country clubs, massage parlors, hot tub facilities, suntan facilities, racetracks or other facilities used for gambling, or liquor sales for consumption off premises.

The benefits of RZFBs include access to long-term, fixed-rate financing at tax-exempt interest rates. The tax-exempt rates are ultimately determined by the purchaser of the RZFBs, based on the credit worthiness of the private borrower.

Time is of the essence for utilizing RZFBs. They need to be issued and closed before January 1, 2011.

Persons or businesses with a possible project in mind are asked to contact St. Croix EDC at (715) 381-4383 about the applicability of RZFBs.

U.S. House Passes Jobs for Main Street Act

On December 17th, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Jobs for Main Street Act (H.R. 2847). With its passage, the H.R. 2847 will redirect \$75 billion in Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) savings from Wall to Main Street as a way to fund infrastructure and job investments. It will extend emergency unemployment benefits and COBRA health insurance subsidies through June 2010, avoiding a year-end cut-off to safety net programs created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. In addition, H.R. 2847:

Invests \$48 billion in highways and mass transit, school renovation, clean water facilities and affordable housing

Invests \$72 billion in saving or creating 250,000 education jobs, saving or creating 5,000 law enforcement and firefighting jobs, and training students and workers in high-growth industries

Extends Recovery Act initiatives to help small businesses by eliminating fees on Small Business Administration loans and encouraging banks to lend to small businesses

Wisconsin's Seventh District Congressman David Obey, Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, introduced the Bill. The Jobs for Main Street Act passed by a vote of 217 to 212.

The Senate is expected to take up the measure in early 2010.

League of Women Voters of WI Says State Could be Under Counted in 2010 Census

Wisconsin Went from 9 Congressional Seats to 8 Following 2000 Census

Andrea Kaminski, the executive director of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin has a warning for Wisconsinites about the 2010 Census. "A number of retired individuals often winter in the south," said Kaminski. "They consider their permanent residence in Wisconsin. In past years, there were clear instructions on filling out the form if you received it in Tampa, but had your full-time residence in Stevens Point. That is not the case this year."

For individuals who go south in the winter the 2010 Census form does not offer clear instructions on how to best complete it. The U.S. Postal Service does not forward Census forms, so many people are likely to fill out the questionnaire they receive at their winter home.

The results of the Census are used to determine Congressional seats, legislative districts, and the distribution of over \$400 billion in federal grants and aid. "Wisconsin already ranks low in receiving federal dollars," said Kaminski. "We don't want an undercount to exacerbate that situation."

For 2010, Question 10 of the Census asks if a person sometimes lives elsewhere, and if so, at a seasonal or second residence. Even if respondents indicate a second residence, they will be counted in the southern state's population. To ensure an accurate answer, respondents should not complete the southern questionnaires. They should write down 'zero' for the number of April 1st residents, put "usual residence elsewhere" somewhere on the form and mail it back. Kaminski urged people to wait until they return to Wisconsin. They should fill out the northern address questionnaire or respond to a 2010 Census taker during door-to-door canvassing. In addition, they should indicate that they "lived" at the northern address on April 1st, after all, they actually did, but were just away on an extended vacation.

Governor Doyle Signs Bill Banning Oil Filters and Absorbents From Landfills

State Senator Sheila Harsdorf and Brian King of CRI Recycling (Woodville) Witness Signing

On December 2, 2009, Governor Jim Doyle signed Assembly Bill 258 into law. The bill prohibits the disposal of used automotive oil filters and materials that have been used to absorb spilled or used automotive engine oil from Wisconsin's landfills. The ban will take effect in December 2010.

State Senator Sheila Harsdorf (10th Senate District) and Brian King, the president of CRI Recycling Service (Woodville, Wisconsin) witnessed Governor Doyle's ceremonial signing of the bill.

"I am pleased that we are taking additional steps to prevent oil from entering our landfills and ultimately getting into our water supply," said Senator Harsdorf. "I have worked on this legislation for years, and believe new technologies make recycling oil filters and absorbents easier and more convenient."

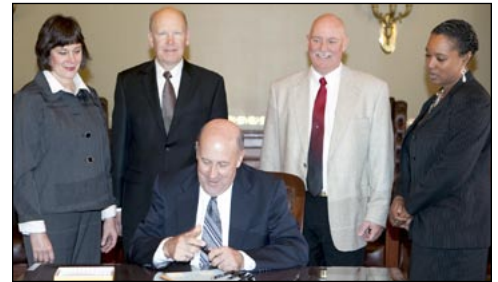
"This bill makes sure that material like oil filters and oil soaked mats and pads are not a risk to our groundwater, but instead, will be recovered in a safe manner and returned to our economy as recycled products," added Brian King. CRI Recycling is a pioneer in an oil and absorbent recycling service. The company's patented solvent extraction process removes over 98% of typical total oil and grease and recycles over 99% of cleaning solvents.

King said Assembly Bill 258 has three primary outcomes – oil is taken out of Wisconsin's water systems; the reclaimed oil is recycled, and given the world's energy shortage, is an alternative source of energy; and metal from the oil filters is recovered and used elsewhere. King estimates his company recycles 80 gross tons of steel per month from filters and 15,000 gallons of oil.

St. Croix EDC named CRI Recycling Service as the Small Business of the Year in 2004.

A 2008 study conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center found that approximately 11.4 million oil filters were sold in Wisconsin in 2007. Only 19-21% of them were recycled, potentially resulting in 900,000 gallons of waste oil being sent to landfills. An estimated 54.6 million pounds of oil absorbent material were sold in Wisconsin in 2007, but only 2.9% of these were recycled.

"St Croix County is excited about the economic and environmental benefits locally and statewide with the passage of AB 258 into law," states County Recycling Specialist, Jennifer Havens. The County expects to see growth in opportunities to recycle oil filters and absorbents and prevention of waste oil in landfills.



As he signed Assembly Bill 258 into law, Governor Jim Doyle was joined by co-authors State Senator Sheila Harsdorf and Senator Lena Taylor, along with representatives from Woodville-based CRI Recycling Service Brian King and Joe Mattson.

2010 Governor's Business Plan Entries Run Through January 31st

The Wisconsin Governor's Business Plan Contest is accepting entries on-line for its 2010 competition. Entries will be accepted through 5 o'clock p.m. on Sunday, January 31, 2010. The contest's grand prize is worth \$50,000 in cash and services.

This contest is the nation's first statewide, technology-based business plan competition. It is managed by the Wisconsin Technology Council, and sprang out of a conversation with Governor Jim Doyle in 2002. The mission of the contest is to encourage entrepreneurs in the creation, start-up, and early-growth stages of high-tech businesses in Wisconsin. The contest leads to valuable public and media exposure. Past finalists have also raised a reported \$11 million in private equity from angel investors and venture capital firms. Since inception in 2004, more than 1,500 entries have been received and \$1 million in cash and in-kind prizes has been awarded. A record 326 entries were submitted in 2009.

Wisconsin residents 18 years and older are eligible, as are teams from Wisconsin-based businesses and organizations. Businesses or teams from outside the state are also eligible to compete as long as they plan to base their business in Wisconsin. Entrepreneurs may

enter multiple ideas as long as each idea is separate and distinct.

For initial entries, contestants will submit 250-word idea abstracts on-line at www.govsbizplancontest.com. Contestants who advance to subsequent evaluation rounds will have the opportunity to expand their plan or idea. More than 70 judges from finance, sales, marketing, research, and specific technology sectors will score the entries and provide feedback.

The 2009 winner was Eso-Technologies, a start-up company that has developed a monitoring device to reduce the risk of heart attacks for people undergoing surgery. The company hopes to replace an existing product, which is an invasive pulmonary artery catheter that leads to an estimated 45,000 operating room complications per year. Heart attacks are the main cause of health in surgery.

Governor Doyle Announces Regional Marketing Grant for Momentum West

On December 2nd, Governor Jim Doyle announced that Momentum West received a \$100,000 Regional Marketing Grant from the Department of Commerce to develop a comprehensive strategy to market west central and northwest Wisconsin.

Momentum West is an external marketing and collaborative economic development organization representing a 10-county region of west central and northwest Wisconsin that includes Barron, Chippewa, Clark, Eau Claire, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Rusk, and St. Croix counties.

Mickey Judkins, the executive director of the division of global ventures at the Department of Commerce, presented a ceremonial check at Momentum West's annual meeting luncheon held at the Student Memorial Center at UW-Stout in Menomonie.

"We must draw on the resources and talent of all our communities to grow the state economy," Governor Doyle said in a press release. "I look forward to working with Momentum West as we invest in West Central Wisconsin and drive economic growth in the region."

"This grant will allow Momentum West to move to a new level of operation as it takes on many of the duties formerly done by Forward Wisconsin," said Bill Ihlenfeldt, interim executive director of Momentum West. "This grant, in addition to \$250,000 from forty founding investors in the region, will allow Momentum to help stimulate economic activity and development in the region," he added.

Momentum West, Inc. will use its grant to identify a brand strategy to grow the region's economic base. Specifically, Momentum will:

- Conduct a branding study for the region, develop a brand, and establish brand-related marketing materials to reach target markets;
- Develop an up-to-date website that emphasizes the new brand, creates the proper image and provides the necessary materials for customers using electronic media;
- Develop a library of materials and services to assist regional companies as they seek to become successful in international markets;
- and Coordinate trade shows, site selector events and call trips for the region.

The total project cost is \$229,000.

About 100 people attended Momentum's luncheon. Several business people from the area serve on Momentum West's board of directors, including Dale Jorgenson (River Falls), Gene Haberman (Hudson), Rosanne Bump (River Falls), Tom Elbert (rural New Richmond), and Trudy Popenhagen (Town of Warren).



(l-r) Mickey Judkins, Wisconsin Department of Commerce; Bill Ihlenfeldt, interim executive director, Momentum West; and Jason Plante, board president, Momentum West.

Momentum West Announces 2010 Legislative Day in Madison 10-County Organization & Volunteers Will Travel to Madison on February 16

A joint legislative advocacy event under the direction of Momentum West, a 10-county external marketing and collaborative economic development organization in west central and northwest Wisconsin, will take place in Madison on Tuesday, February 16, 2010.

Tentative plans call for attendees to arrive in downtown Madison by 10:00-10:30 a.m. for a briefing on the issues, followed by lunch, afternoon appointments with legislators, and a reception. A coach bus will provide transportation to and from Madison for those wishing to utilize this service.

February 16th is designated as a legislative floor session, meaning the state senators and representatives are expected to be in their respective chambers or offices. There is greater likelihood of meeting directly with senators and representatives instead of their staff.

Both regional issues and local ones will be presented to legislators. St. Croix EDC is preparing issues for consideration. Suggested issues can be presented to the EDC by calling (715) 381-4383.

Information on corporate sponsorships and registration can be obtained from Louise Bently at (715) 874-4673 or lbentley@cvtc.edu.



St. Croix EDC helped organize United St. Croix Valley Legislative Days from 2006-2009. St. Croix, Pierce, and Polk counties are all aligned with Momentum West, which will organize a legislative advocacy event in 2010. (l-r) St. Croix EDC board member: Roger Humphrey; Patti Robertson; Jeremy Price; and Ryan Sicard in Madison last February.

St. Croix County's Unemployment Rate Rises

On December 23rd, the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) released the November unemployment rates for Wisconsin's 72 counties. St. Croix's rate was estimated at 7.0%. It is up from the October and September rate of 6.8%. A year ago, the county's unemployment rate was estimated at 4.7%.

Seventeen counties had unemployment rates lower than St. Croix in November.

Unemployment rates from October to November decreased in seven Wisconsin counties and remained the same in seven. Dane County recorded the lowest rate at 5.6%, followed by Dunn at 5.6% and Buffalo at 5.7%. Menominee County had the highest rate in November at 12.2% and Rock was at 11.3%.

The adjusted unemployment rate for Wisconsin in November was estimated at 8.2% which is lower than the October rate of 8.4% and the September rate of 8.3%. The state's rate was 5.4% one year ago.

The U.S. unemployment rate was estimated at 10.0% which is down from the October rate of 10.25. September's rate was estimated at 9.8%. One year ago the U.S. rate was estimated at 6.8%.

County	December 2009 Unemployment Rate	Rank	Rate One Year Ago	County	December 2009 Unemployment Rate	Rank	Rate One Year Ago
Barron	7.7%	48	5.9%	Pepin	6.0%	65	4.4%
Chippewa	6.7%	59	5.5%	Pierce	6.2%	62	4.4%
Clark	8.3%	38	5.5%	Polk	9.3%	18	6.0%
Dunn	5.6%	71	4.0%	Rusk	11.3%	2	6.7%
Eau Claire	5.8%	69	4.2%	St. Croix	7.0%	55	4.7%

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