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Article for Governor's Newsletter—Mississippi Progress

The Mississippi Development Authority (MDA) has been involved with an enormous amount of diversified economic development activities throughout the past few months. Extensive efforts were launched to create new industries throughout the state and to assist existing industries considering expansion.

In late December 2001, the Alcoa plant in Hernando, Miss., initially considered downsizing or possibly closing operations of their facility. But, after further review and analysis, Alcoa decided to expand the plant rather than close it. This was a result of Alcoa's motivated workforce and the possibility of manufacturing another more profitable product. After a \$16 million investment and doubling the workforce to 500 employees, the Hernando plant is now a viable, profitable company making windows and doors. In addition, Whirlpool announced in early 2002 that it would expand its Oxford, Miss., plant after closing its Canada operations. MDA's existing Industry and Business Division reports the company will add at least 150 new jobs and invest \$10 million in the north Mississippi plant.

MDA also participated in the location of several Tier One suppliers for the Nissan plant. Unipres Southeast, Inc., celebrated the groundbreaking of its 150,000 square-foot Forest, Miss., facility in late March. M-Tek, Inc., broke ground on its \$25 million

Madison County plant in early May. The company hopes to employ as many as 150 new workers and is one of several suppliers currently scheduled to be located in Madison County. Outside of the Madison County area, TKA Fabco announced plans for a body panel plant in Tupelo, which will provide 50 jobs. The Brown Corporation will open a plant in Greenville, employing 200 workers to make stampings, welded assemblies and seat frames.

MDA's Minority Business Enterprise Division announced a series of workshops designed to inform small business owners about the automotive industry. The workshops, to be conducted at the Nissan Training Facility in Canton, Miss., are designed to promote a better understanding of the automotive industry and its benefits to the community, to increase business participation with the industry and to enhance the skills of its participants.

In an effort to create jobs and relocate displaced workers, MDA's Employment Training Division, through its Workforce Investment Areas and various community partners, hosted several job fairs around Mississippi. In April, the Twin Districts held a job fair in Clarke County, providing assistance to former Burlington Industries employees. Thirty-two employers participated, receiving 827 resumes and conducting 631 job interviews. Over 150 job offers were made, and officials project 300 hires from this job fair over the next year. Another successful job fair, held in early May at Wood College in Mathiston, had 25 participating employers receiving 643 resumes. Of the 346

on-site interviews conducted, 92 job offers were made, and 164 are projected from this job fair over the next year.

MDA's Tourism Division launched a new tag line "Mississippi...Feels Like Coming Home." Governor Ronnie Musgrove and MDA's Tourism Division Director Darienne Wilson announced the new tourism slogan and a newly created song written by Raphael Semmes. Wilson said that her division had conducted extensive research to identify what makes Mississippi unique, and found the common denominators are "the people and the hospitality combined with Mississippi's many wonderful attractions. 'Mississippi...Feels Like Coming Home' best represents our state." The tag line and the song written for the tag line will become part of the tourism advertising campaign.

MDA also launched the Mississippi World Trade Center (MSWTC). MDA's National/International Development Division worked diligently with World Trade Center officials in New York to launch the franchise, which is a global landmark for worldwide trade. Governor Musgrove accepted the charter from Herb Ouida, Executive Vice President of the World Trade Center Association of New York. The MSWTC will serve as a central site for the coordination of international programs and services in the state.

Through a grant from MDA's Energy Division, American Pride Paint, an agriculturally based paint developed and produced through the Thames School of Polymers and High Performance Materials at the University of Southern Mississippi, was shipped to Washington, D. C., to be used in repainting the rebuilt wing of the Pentagon.

The paint, with a castor oil base, is unique in that it is virtually odorless. Pentagon officials stated that because of the low odor, employees would not have to be moved in order for the painting work to be done, saving taxpayers thousands of dollars.

Communities across Mississippi have benefited from over \$6 million in loans and grants, approved by Governor Musgrove and administered through MDA's Community Services Division. These funds provide communities with the capacity to make infrastructure improvements, purchase safety equipment and generally improve their overall economic development potential.

MDA's services include a variety of programs designed to assist businesses and communities. Whether companies or communities need assistance with existing business, business recruitment, job training, tourism, energy programs, finance programs, community services or minority business programs, MDA offers a variety of diversified, comprehensive services designed to enhance the overall quality of life for our citizens.

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