

# Advances

## Alabama in “Good Hands” With Allstate

Insurance giant Allstate recently announced that Hoover, in the Birmingham Metropolitan Area, will be the site for a regional customer service center that will employ 300.

“Allstate chose Birmingham to locate our new office because we were enticed by the available labor market, the quality of living we can offer our employees and were also impressed by current and potential growth of the Birmingham area,” said Allstate spokeswoman Nancy Lemke.

The service center will serve Allstate customers in the Central Time Zone. Alabama competed with other sites in the same time



zone for the project.

Consulting group CB Richard Ellis brought the project to Alabama where a team including EDPA, the Metropolitan Development Board of Birmingham, Alabama Industrial Development Training and

the Alabama Development Office worked together to land the project.

One key to winning the project was an office park developed by Daniel Corp. Buildings in the office park feature large open spaces with 50 percent more park-

ing spaces per square foot than most suburban office buildings.

The Allstate Corporation is the nation's largest publicly held personal lines insurer. ■

## Alabama and Its Cities Rank High for Logistics Says Magazine

Mobile and Birmingham both rank in the top 20 of *Expansion Management* magazine's "The 100 Most Logistics Friendly Cities." The study, which appeared in the September 2001 issue, also ranked the state as the tenth-best state for logistics overall and the ninth for road conditions. Alabama cities also claimed half of the top 10 cities with the most roadway miles per 1,000 population.

Anniston, Florence, Dothan, Gadsden and Decatur all appeared in this ranking.

The study focused on the transportation infrastructure of the 328 Metropolitan Statistical Areas and Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas in those areas important to supporting a manufacturing and distribution facility. ■

## Wal-Mart Selects Pike County for \$40 Million Distribution Center

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. will build a \$40 million, 600-worker distribution center in Pike County in south Alabama. Construction of the 900,000-square-foot distribution center is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2002 and be completed

by September 2003. Wal-Mart already employs 700 at its 880,000-square-foot distribution center in Opelika along Interstate 85. The company completed construction of the \$50 million center during the summer of 2000. ■

## Alabama Schools Place in Top 25 for ACT Scores

Four Alabama high schools placed in the top 25 in the nation for ACT scores. The Jefferson County International Baccalaureate School ranked seventh; Birmingham's Altamont School ranked 11th; and the Alabama School of Math and Science in Mobile, and Lamp Magnet School in Montgomery placed between 20th and 25th in the nation.

Rankings were based on the averages of total scores earned by the class of 2001. The ACT is a standardized test covering English, math, reading and science reasoning. Both the ACT and SAT are used in college admissions. The ACT is more popular in the South.

## Alabama Restaurant Ranked Fifth in the Nation

Birmingham's Highlands Bar and Grill has been ranked number five in the nation by *Gourmet* magazine. The October 2001 issue lauded chef Frank Stitt, calling his cooking "all-American and extremely French, as if Alabama were somehow sandwiched between Mississippi and Provence."

The top five restaurants are: Chez Panisse, Berkeley, Calif.; Jean Georges, New York City; The French Laundry, Yountville, Calif.; Spago Beverly Hills, Los Angeles; and Highlands Bar and Grill, Birmingham, Ala. ■

## Automotive Plant Opening at Fort McClellan

Hunjan Moulded Products, a Canadian plastic injection manufacturer for the automotive industry, announced that it will open a factory at Fort McClellan in Anniston. Hunjan is the first industrial development at the former Army base, which was closed in 1999.

The company will locate in a 96,000 square-foot building that was formally used for training soldiers and military police. It will spend more than \$2 million to upgrade the facility. Hunjan will employ 20 at start up and may employ as many as 300 at full production.

Hunjan is a second-tier supplier to companies such as Honda-Canada, Ford and General Motors.

CEO Bal Hunjan said locating in Alabama gives his company an advantage in a state where the automotive sector has grown by leaps and bounds over the past decade. ■

## Alabama Offers Film Incentives

Alabama's mountains, valleys and beaches may now be seen more often on the silver screen. Governor Don Siegelman recently signed legislation to give tax incentives to film companies that make movies in Alabama. Siegelman signed the bill in a ceremony attended by filmmakers from across the country, as part of the Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival, which was held in Birmingham. Companies approved by the Alabama Film Office will receive sales and lodging tax abatements to produce films in the state. The Alabama Film Office will set criteria for films that will receive the tax incentives between now and the end of the year. ■

## New Incentives for Small Industries

A new incentive provides income tax breaks for small industries—a benefit previously reserved for larger companies. Previously, the state would offer income tax breaks to an industry investing at least \$2 million and hiring at least 20 people.

The new incentive only requires \$500,000 and five employees for industries going into Alabama's 23 less-developed counties or into areas that have qualified with the state as Enterprise Zones. Businesses qualifying for the tax break will be allowed to deduct up to 5 percent of the cost of the plant each year for 20 years against their state income tax liability. ■

## Southeast Top Region for Plant Location Says Research Group

A June survey conducted by the Manufacturers Alliance/MAPI, an Arlington, Va.-based manufacturing research group, shows that the Southeastern United States is the favored location for new U.S. plants, with 50 percent of respondents favoring this region.

Within the geographic regions most of the expansions are going to medium-sized towns and small rural communities. The results of the study appeared in the August 13 issue of *Industry Week* magazine. ■