

Huntsville Earns Accolades

The May 2001 issue of *Expansion Management* lists Huntsville among its Five Star Communities—one of the tops in the nation to live and work. The study considered 50 different quality of life indicators such as the ability of families to meet their financial needs and desires; work force availability; adult educational levels; available colleges, universities and community colleges; and transportation infrastructure.

Huntsville also earned the designation of one of the top five “Hot High-Tech Markets to Watch,” in the July 2001 issue of *Site Selection*. Factors contributing to this designation include: Cummings Research Park, the second-largest research park in the country; pre-certified sites for semiconductor operations; and a large high-tech work force. ■

JVC Adds DVD Production, Jobs

JVC will invest \$12.5 million to expand production at its Tuscaloosa plant to include DVD manufacturing.

Currently, approximately 600 employees produce magnetic videotape and compact disc technology at two separate plants on its 100-acre campus. The expansion will add 50 new positions to the work force.

Construction is scheduled to begin later this month, with the expansion slated for completion in September 2002. JVC has been operating in Tuscaloosa County for nearly 15 years. ■

Auburn Drives Home Two German Auto Plants

Lightning struck twice for Auburn, with the announcement of two German auto suppliers that will invest \$30 million and create as many as 400 jobs.

The new projects were announced during a ceremony at the Mercedes-Benz museum in Stuttgart, Germany. Alabama Gov. Don Siegelman and other officials were in Stuttgart for the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce’s Automotive Symposium following a trip to the Paris Air Show.

Stahlschmidt & Maiworm will invest \$28 million for its aluminum wheel manufacturing plant at Auburn Technology Park North. The company will employ 350.

Hoerbiger Hydraulik will invest \$2 million to locate adjacent to Hoerbiger Drivotech in Auburn Technology Park South. The company will manufacture hydraulic actuating mechanisms for the BMW Z3 roadster convertible tops. It will initially employ 15, with that number possibly increasing to 50. ■

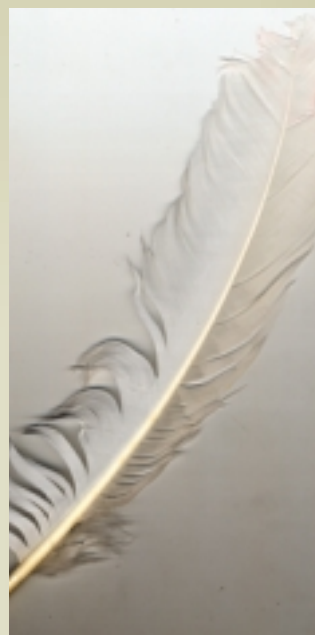
Honda Training Center Opens

The \$10 million Talladega County Industrial Development Center officially opened in late April. The 62,500 square-foot center will be used primarily to train Honda Manufacturing of Alabama employees.

“We are very excited to have this training center available to use,” said Mikio Yoshimi, HMA president and CEO. “Automation or equipment can’t guarantee quality, only people can.”

The center includes an auditorium, small and large conference rooms, seven classrooms, office space, six laboratories and an open shop work simulation area. More than 180 courses are taught at the facility, ranking from mechanics and engineering, to leadership and diversity.

The first batch of Honda hires have already logged more than 20,000 hours of training in the facility since it opened in November. About 300 process associates and equipment service associates are now employed by Honda. Eventually, the plant will employ 1,500. Operations at the plant to produce trial vehicles are scheduled to begin this summer. ■



Angel Club Formed in Birmingham

A retired computer executive is in the final stages of formalizing Angel Capital Group LLC as Birmingham’s first club for angel investors.

“Our principal objective is Alabama economic development,” said founder Lex Grainger. “Our second objective is to bring some kind of organization to the angel investing process, because right now a lot of new companies have no idea how to go find angels and how to get money from them.”

The ACG’s mission will be to provide funds to early-stage medical and infotech companies that meet Securities and Exchange Commission guidelines and have a high chance of success. ■

Huntsville Contractor Takes Top SBA Award

A contractor from Huntsville, Ala., has been named as the National Small Business Person of the Year.

In a White House ceremony, the U.S. Small Business Administration named Thornton Stanley, president of Stanley Construction Co., the winner of the 38th annual entrepreneurial award.

Stanley was selected from a group of 53 state Small Business Persons of the Year representing the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam. His company is a leader in excavation and paving and is among the top 20 subcontractors in Alabama and the top 100 contractors in the United States.

Stanley began Stanley Construction Co. in the spare bedroom of his home in Huntsville in 1961. The company was incorporated in 1973 and since has grown to a \$6 million business with more than 55 employees. It handles all aspects of horizontal construction including rock blasting, clearing and grubbing, earthwork, the installation of storm sewers, and the pouring of concrete and asphalt.

Stanley attributes his success to his hands-on approach, visiting each construction site daily. A strong believer in family, Stanley has made sure that his children learn the workings of the family business. Believing competent people are the key to success, Stanley places great value on his employees, focusing recruitment on people who enjoy the work the company has to offer and want to grow with it.

“Thornton Stanley is a true example of the American dream achieved through hard work and determination,” said John Whitmore, acting administrator of the SBA. “Both business acumen and commitment to employees have been key to the success and longevity of his company. This is what the SBA is all about—helping to build well-rounded businesses that stay in business.”

“I’ve never looked at myself as a minority,” Stanley said. “I’ve stayed in the mainstream. I do quality work and meet my schedules. I play it straight from the hip and never seek out the set-aside programs.”

Stanley believes one of his company’s competitive advantages is flexibility. “We can mobilize rapidly due to the niche market in which we operate.” ■



Stanley received the SBA Award from President Bush.

Improved Alabama Sites & Buildings Database Launched

Looking for a site? Tired of muddling through searches that take forever, only to result in incomplete data and fuzzy photographs? The Economic Development Partnership of Alabama’s new Sites & Buildings database, the only comprehensive site database for the state, is up and running. Our new system is fast, reliable and current.

Users can conduct searches for sites, buildings, or communities, all with detailed forms that allow searches to be as narrow or as broad as needed. The site also features a new graphic search mode that allows users to search using an Alabama map.

We offer full-size property photographs accompanied by detailed spec sheets specially formatted for readability and for printing. Searches are integrated, linking available sites and buildings to their communities, and accompanying data and web sites. The site features “common sense” navigation, taking the guesswork out of searches.

Try it out for yourself. Visit our web site at edpa.org, then click on “Available Properties” or “Community Profiles.” Then, let us know what you think: info@edpa.org. ■

Brownfields Bill Signed

The Alabama Voluntary Cleanup Act (the Brownfields Bill) has been signed into law. The new law encourages the reuse and re-development of older industrial business sites by exempting new property owners from liability for past environmental damage. The state Department of Environmental Management will oversee the act’s implementation. ■