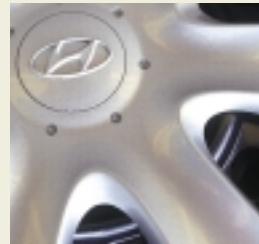


Advances

Hyundai suppliers continue to announce projects in Alabama

Even though the \$1 billion Hyundai plant is still under construction, Hyundai continues to bring good fortune to Alabama with a host of supplier announcements. So far, project announcements by Hyundai suppliers will create 3,300 jobs with an investment figure of \$517 million. Most recently, Venture Industries, Hysco America, T&WA and Teksid have joined the growing list.



In June, Tire Wheel Assembly Inc., a minority-owned auto wheel maker based in Louisville, Ky., announced it will build an \$11 million plant in the Montgomery area to supply tires and wheels to the manufacturer. The plant initially will employ 36 people.

A week later, Venture Alabama broke ground in Prattville for its 670,000-square-foot, \$100 million automotive parts plant that will create plastics for instrument panel clusters, bumper assemblies, interior and exterior trim and body panels. It is the largest Hyundai tier-one supplier to announce in the state. The plant, which will create 600 jobs, is scheduled to open in September 2004.



Huntsville's Big Spring Park

Huntsville named No. 4 on list of America's best places to live, work

Huntsville appeared as No. 4 in *Employment Review* magazine's annual "America's Best Places to Live and Work" edition. The ranking was based on housing costs, taxes, unemployment rate, education, health care, arts, recreation, and projected job growth through 2008. Stated in the article: "The city's diversity, warm climate and economic strengths are great reasons to make the move to Huntsville." ■

Labor and quality of life bring auto supplier to Huntsville

According to Matcor Automotive President and CEO Art Artuso, the automotive supplier chose Huntsville for its second U.S. location because it offered the best labor pool and a high standard of living. The Canadian-based company will build a \$25 million, 120,000-square-foot manufacturing plant near the Huntsville International Airport. Matsu Alabama Inc. will specialize in metal stampings and welded assemblies for automotive OEMs in the Southeast and tier-one suppliers. It will employ over 100 people. ■

Alabama cities tops for European firms

A nationwide survey of 331 metropolitan areas by *Expansion Management* magazine has four Alabama cities among the top 50 in the nation for European investment. Birmingham ranked fourth in the nation with \$53.6 million in capital investment. Tuscaloosa, which ranked second in the last survey, ranked at No. 39 this year, just ahead of Auburn-Opelika (42) and Talladega County (47). This puts all four metro areas in the top 15 percent in the nation. To be included, a European-based company must have made an expansion with a minimum \$1 million investment and created at least 10 jobs. ■

Group formed to support aerospace growth

Alabama aerospace companies have a new voice with the formation of the Alabama Aerospace Industry Association, which was created earlier this year. The mission of the AAIA is to promote the growth and continuous improvement of the aerospace industry in Alabama. Founding members and their Alabama locations are: The Boeing Co., Huntsville and Decatur; DynCorp, Fort Rucker; Kelly Aerospace, Montgomery; Pemco Aeroplex, Birmingham; SAIC, Huntsville; ST Mobile Aerospace, Mobile; Teledyne Brown Engineering, Huntsville; and economic development allies, the Alabama Technology Network and the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama. ■

Alabama cities make "Best Performing" list

Birmingham, Huntsville, Montgomery and Mobile are all among the Milken Institute Best Performing Cities index. The index measures job creation, wages and economic growth. Cities on the list this year had a high presence of retail, government and health-care industries.

Birmingham climbed the ranks 34 spots from last year, to No. 95. Huntsville fell close behind at No. 117. Montgomery ranked 124 and Mobile 156. Five Alabama cities appeared in the list of 96 smaller metro areas: Dothan, No. 32; Decatur at 66, Florence at 67, Tuscaloosa at 75 and Anniston at 89. ■



Alabama School of Fine Arts still one of America's best high schools

The Alabama School of Fine Arts is no stranger to *Newsweek* magazine's Top 10 list of "America's Best High Schools." Named the fourth-best public high school in America, the Birmingham school has appeared in the top five every year since 2000. The ranking examines the ratio of students taking advanced placement tests and reflects the challenge set forth by the school as well as the students' drive to meet the challenge. The Alabama School of Fine Arts has about 350 students enrolled in grades seven through 12, who specialize in creative writing; dance; mathematics and science; music; theatre arts; or visual arts. Tuition is free, but students must audition to be admitted.

Other Alabama schools on the list include: Mountain Brook High School in Birmingham at 124; Auburn High School in Auburn at 224; and Grissom High School in Huntsville at 640. ■

Mercedes Celebrates Ten in Alabama

Ten years ago the most coveted prize in economic development in North America was a Daimler-Benz automotive assembly plant that would be responsible for the first Mercedes passenger vehicle ever built outside of Germany. On September 30, 1993, Daimler-Benz (now DaimlerChrysler) ended months of speculation by announcing that it would locate its much sought after new manufacturing facility in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

The decision left many scratching their heads and wondering why the luxury automaker would choose a state with no real history of automotive production for such an ambitious and important project. More than a few suggested that perhaps Mercedes knew a lot more about building cars than choosing plant locations.

By the late 1990s, however, no one was second-guessing the decision. Mercedes-Benz U.S. International was not merely successful; it far exceeded its goals for the project. The M-Class sport utility vehicle was Truck of the Year in 1998 — one of 40-plus industry awards it would receive — and surpassed all of the company's original sales projections.

All along, Mercedes has maintained that Alabama has been integral to its success. "Our success would not have been possible without the great partnership we formed with the state of Alabama and without the strong work force that we have found here," said Juergen Hubbert, DaimlerChrysler board member responsible for the passenger car division. "Alabama has become an important home for Mercedes-Benz."

In late September, Mercedes-Benz U.S. International, along with its Alabama friends, will mark ten years of success in Alabama with a celebration, "Ten Years in Alabama, We're Still Making History." The milestone comes as Mercedes nears completion of a \$600 million expansion (the largest in the history of DaimlerChrysler), that will double production and employment at the plant. ■

