



The February 2008 Open for Business report highlights projects and related announcements that will assist with the creation of new jobs and the preservation of a significant number of existing jobs.

GCS announces 75 new openings in Huntington branch

Global Contact Services (GCS) has created 75 new full-time positions at its Huntington Contact Center. These new jobs are the result of increased business from existing clients. The new jobs are for customer management representatives and insurance agents. Currently GCS employs 135 full-time associates at its Huntington branch and 1,500 in 11 locations in West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, Texas, Florida and Ohio.

Door and window manufacturer SAMCO opens in Berkeley County

SAMCO (Shenandoah Atlantic Millwork Company) has opened its manufacturing facility in Martinsburg. SAMCO produces exterior and interior doors, vinyl and composite windows and millwork features for residential and commercial structures. Currently SAMCO is staffed by four partners and four employees. Plans call for the company to employ as many as 80 by the end of 2008.

Bayer CropScience adds five jobs at Institute site

Bayer CropScience in Institute is adding five new chemical operator positions, the first staff expansion for the company in three years. The new openings are the result of an approximate 20 percent increase in production over 2006 levels. At the Institute site, Bayer CropScience manufacturing units produce the active ingredients used in many crop protection products. These products are used on crops such as cotton, corn, fruit and potatoes as well as in many specialty agricultural markets worldwide. The Bayer CropScience Manufacturing Industrial Park is a full-service facility that provides infrastructure, shared services and other advantages to several tenants.

Jefferson County's Plethora Technology receives patent approval

Software product company Plethora Technology has received a notice of allowance from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office for a patent covering the company's "SecureChannel" technology. The technology is used to establish and manage secure communications from remote locations. SecureChannel is the technological foundation of the company's "In-a-Flash" service that makes the user's PC, files, servers, colleagues and applications all available via a USB flash key. In-a-Flash is a remote PC connection service with guaranteed two-factor authentication and government-approved encryption for security. Plethora is based near Charles Town in Jefferson County.

2007 records lowest unemployment rate in state history

The state's average unemployment rate last year was 4.6 percent, the lowest unemployment average in the state's history. The number of West Virginians working last year averaged 778,269 – the highest number during a year ever recorded.

Study shows lowest average housing costs in West Virginia

West Virginia has the lowest average housing costs in the country, according to the Coldwell Banker Home Price Comparison Index for 2007. The annual index surveys prices of similar homes in 324 real-estate markets. West Virginia's 2007 average price was \$168,764, only 40 percent of the national average price of \$422,343. Comparisons are based on average home values for select 2,200 square foot single-family dwellings with four bedrooms, two and one-half baths, a family room (or equivalent) and a two-car garage. Surveyed homes and neighborhoods are typical for corporate middle-management transferees.

West Virginia supporters exhibit in InformexUSA chemical industry show

The West Virginia Development Office (WVDO) exhibited at the 2008 InformexUSA show in New Orleans from Jan. 30 through Feb. 1. Participating with WVDO were The Chemical Alliance Zone, Charleston Area Alliance and the Mid-Atlantic Technology, Research and Innovation Center (MATRIC). InformexUSA attracts a broad cross-section of chemical industry companies, suppliers and associates.

West Virginia Small Business Development Center helps 135 clients in December

The West Virginia Small Business Development Center (SDBC) provided 234 hours of counseling and training to 135 clients last month. SDBC staff trained 25 people at five events in December and trained 238 people this fiscal year. Three loans totaling \$407,500 were approved in December. Fifteen loans totaling \$2,232,675 have been approved fiscal year-to-date. The "Business Ask Me! Line" received 63 calls in December. In this fiscal year beginning Oct. 1, 2007, the SDBC has provided 1,245 hours of counseling and training to 617 clients.

Study shows more people moving into West Virginia

In 2007, United Van Lines moved 11.4 percent more households into West Virginia than out. The annual study conducted by the nation's largest household goods mover shows 44.3 percent left the state, and 55.7 percent moved in. That is the highest inbound percentage recorded for West Virginia since 1993. The study records more households moving out than in West Virginia's border states, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland.

West Virginia timber industry sustains economic strength

West Virginia's timber industry is worth about \$4 billion annually to the economy — and it's sustainable, said West Virginia State Forester Randy Dye. Tree growth continues to exceed harvest levels. The industry provides 30,000 jobs and pays about \$45.5 million in state taxes. The state is exploring potential new uses of wood, including bio-mass energy.

WVEDA approves loans to three companies

The West Virginia Economic Development Authority gave final approval to three loans during its January meeting:

- Bio-Chem Testing Inc., \$130,500, to purchase and install environmental sampling and testing equipment in Teays, Putnam County. A full-service independent laboratory, Bio-Chem samples and analyzes water, wastewater, soil and hazardous waste for both the public and private sectors.
- Fairman Building Components, \$689,000, to finance the purchase of a 10-acre site and a 32,000-square-foot building in the Gilmer County Industrial Park in Sand Fork. The start-up company manufactures and distributes wall panels, floor panels, roof trusses, garage and window headers and pole barn packages.
- Star Technologies, \$70,200, to purchase and install equipment. Star manufactures precision clamps, brackets and metal stampings. The company operates in Huntington, Cabell County.

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