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## **Governor Releases June 'Open for Business' Report**

**CHARLESTON, W.Va.** - The June 2007 report highlights projects and related announcements that will help create new jobs and preserve existing jobs in the Mountain State.

### **State unemployment rate drops to record low for April**

West Virginia's unemployment rate dropped to 4.6 percent in April, the lowest April rate on record, WORKFORCE West Virginia reported. Jefferson County, with a jobless rate of 3.4 percent, and Monongalia County, with an unemployment rate of 2.8 percent, were considered "much better than average." The total number of unemployed state residents fell 2,700 to 37,000. Total unemployment was down 1,600 over the year. Total nonfarm payroll employment added 5,700 jobs, with gains of 3,100 in the goods-producing sector and 2,600 in the service-providing sector.

### **New stamping company invests in modern technology, creates jobs**

Gov. Joe Manchin announced that a new automotive stamping company is gearing up to produce as many as 550 manufacturing jobs at South Charleston's stamping plant, which was idled last year when Union Stamping and Assembly closed. The governor was joined by Charleston Stamping & Manufacturing Inc. president and CEO John T. Wise, Park Corp. Chairman Ray Park and elected officials from Kanawha County in making the announcement. Located in the 80-acre industrial park owned by Park Corp., the refurbished plant is expected to be ready for production by early 2008.

Charleston Stamping will invest more than \$35 million to refurbish the plant with new automation equipment, Wise said. Automation will enable the plant to double its yield, achieving a performance level demanded in today's competitive global markets. The modernization is expected to allow the company to create 79 jobs in its first year, 140 jobs in its second year, and as many as 550 jobs in its fourth or fifth year.

### **Huntington contact center exceeds hiring expectations**

PRC, one of the nation's leading providers of outsourced customer management, is ahead of its projections for the number of employees at its Huntington, Cabell County, contact center, said Melanie Pastore, manager of talent acquisition for PRC. When the company announced last December it would start hiring for its Huntington center in January, it predicted it would reach as many as 700 by June. As of May 31, the company employed 662 in Huntington and Pastore said it would hire an additional 225 in June, bringing its total to nearly 900.

PRC manages customer relationships for some of the world's most brand-focused companies through its global network of centers. The company employs over 14,000 worldwide and its Huntington employees handle inbound customer calls. Company officials in December said PRC has a tremendous reputation for supporting its customers with the best team possible, and that's why they chose Huntington. They said West Virginia is known for the quality of its workforce and their unwavering loyalty.

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### **Lockheed Martin opens Biometrics Center in Marion County**

Lockheed Martin opened the Biometric Experimentation and Advanced Concepts (BEACON) center in White Hall, Marion County. The 6,000-square-foot facility will allow the corporation, its customers, academics and other industry partners to showcase their biometrics work and collaborate on the technology. The center houses six high-tech computer pods and an auditorium.

Lockheed Martin has several centers around the country. The company chose West Virginia because of its close relationship with the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services Division in Clarksburg, proximity to West Virginia University and WVU's Center for Identification Technology Research (CITeR).

### **Marshall University scientists start new firm with biotech technology**

Two scientists with Huntington's Marshall University have created a breakthrough technology and the new biotech company Progenesis Technologies LLC to license it. Professors Richard Niles and Honwei Yu invented a way to use bacteria to create alginate, an acid normally harvested from seaweed. Alginate is used in commercial products such as cosmetics, beer and over-the-counter drugs.

### **High technology industries pour \$5.2 billion into state**

High technology industries in north-central West Virginia contribute \$5.2 billion to the state's economy, according to a recent economic impact study. Anderson Economic Group of Michigan conducted the study. West Virginia's technology industry is "diverse, well-rooted and a significant source of employment and income." More than half of the jobs are in the state's "High Technology Corridor" along Interstate 79, including Harrison, Marion and Monongalia counties.

The study was commissioned by the West Virginia High Technology Consortium Foundation, a collaborative partner with the West Virginia Small Business Development Center.

### **Graduates receive first certificates in West Virginia's new skill credentials initiative**

Now West Virginia job seekers can document their skills with nationally recognized WorkKeys Career Readiness Certificates. The certificates are part of a new WORKFORCE West Virginia initiative to help match jobs with qualified job seekers and to assure prospective employers that the state has a ready work force, said Ron Radcliff, executive director of WORKFORCE West Virginia.

The WorkKeys program assesses abilities in applied math, locating information and reading for information. Individuals who are assessed at certain levels qualify for a gold or silver certificate.

WORKFORCE West Virginia is issuing the state's first certificates to qualified graduates of West Virginia's career and technical education schools and community colleges. The graduates were assessed as part of the school curriculum. WorkKeys assessments are also given at WORKFORCE West Virginia Career Centers.

### **Morgantown company chosen for World's Best Technology Showcase**

EyeMarker Systems Inc. was chosen to present its Ocular Scanning Instrument (OSI) at the World's Best Technologies Showcase in Arlington, Texas, recently. The OSI non-invasively detects internal injuries, systemic diseases and exposure to toxins. EyeMarker was one of only 100 firms invited to participate in the annual event showcasing undiscovered technologies from around the globe. Morgantown-based EyeMarker employs six people and plans to add two new jobs within six months.

### **Five West Virginia companies on Mexico trade mission**

Five West Virginia companies will embark on a trade mission to Monterrey, Mexico, June 24 - 27. Monterrey, a city of approximately 3.8 million people, was named by Fortune magazine as the best city in Latin America in which to do business. Mexican imports from the U.S totaled \$130 billion in 2006. West Virginia's exports to Mexico have more than tripled in the past five years.

### **Raleigh County Airport Industrial Park opens west side**

The new 300-acre Raleigh County Airport Industrial Park west side is now officially open. U.S. Sen. Jay Rockefeller, chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Aviation, got the FAA's share of the land released to the Raleigh County Commission in 2002. The 214-acre east side of the industrial park hosts about 30 businesses that employ more than 900 people.

### **Global Contact Services hiring 60 in Huntington**

Global Contact Services is hiring 60 new full-time positions at its Huntington contact center. The openings for teleservices representatives and insurance agents are the result of a new program between GCS and two insurance marketing agencies working for a large bank. The identity of the insurance companies and bank cannot be released due to confidentiality agreements, according to recruiting coordinator Carrie Lawrence. The 60 people hired at the Huntington branch will sell accidental death insurance plans. The Huntington branch currently employs 180 full-time associates.

### **Small Business Development Center clients celebrate openings, expansions**

S&S Custom 4x4 celebrated its grand opening in St. Albans. The company welds and installs custom-made accessories on 4x4 trucks.

Rt. 60 Music Company announced plans to expand. The five-year-old company is building a new 10,000-square-foot warehouse, showroom and music classroom in Barboursville. Rt. 60 Music sells musical instruments and provides music lessons.

### **Two West Virginia teachers among national Math and Science Teaching winners**

Two West Virginia teachers count among the winners of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching. The Presidential Awards are among the nation's highest honor for teaching math or science in kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The recently announced 2006 winners include Cathy Walker, mathematics, John Adams Middle School, Charleston; and MaryLu Hutchins, science, Steenrod Elementary School, Wheeling.

### **Cass Railroad State Park cited among “most scenic” by Frommer’s Travel**

The May issue of Arthur Frommer’s Budget Travel magazine has cited Cass Scenic Railroad State Park in Pocahontas County as among America’s most scenic train rides. Cass Scenic Railroad State Park is home to the world’s largest roster of authentic, geared steam locomotives.

### **Charleston among Kiplinger’s “Best Cities for Every Stage of Life”**

A low cost of living and a growing creative class were factors in Charleston becoming one of the “Best Cities for Every Stage of Life” in the June issue of Kiplinger’s Personal Finance magazine. In the empty nesters (married with no children or single, ages 45-64) category, Charleston ranked along with San Francisco; Seattle; Madison, Wis.; and Boulder, Colo. The rankings are based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Council for Community and Economic Research, as well as research from Richard Florida, a Carnegie Mellon professor and author of “The Rise of the Creative Class.”

### **Expansion Management cites West Virginia, Morgantown, as top spots**

In its May/June 2007 issue, Expansion Management magazine rates Morgantown as a five-star quality of life area. Five-star is the magazine’s top rating. In the same issue, Expansion Management names West Virginia among the top 10 states for business attraction and recruitment.

### **DEP loan aids Summersville water system upgrade**

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Clean Water State Revolving Fund is providing financial assistance to Summersville in Nicholas County to expand its wastewater treatment system. DEP is lending the city \$2 million for the project. An additional \$8.6 million is coming from the state Infrastructure and Jobs Development Council. Summersville plans to replace aging equipment for the system that services about 1,540 customers in Nicholas County. It is expected to be finished in early 2009.

### **WVEDA approves funds for three firms**

The West Virginia Economic Development Authority approved three loans during its May meeting.

- New company JetLink USA received approval on a \$1,215,000 loan. The funds will finance a 23,600-square-foot aircraft hanger on a 12.5-acre site at the Eastern West Virginia Regional Airport, Martinsburg, Berkeley County. The expansion is expected to add 47 jobs in three years.
- Downard Hydraulics was approved for \$800,000 to expand its manufacturing facility in Princeton Industrial Park in Mercer County. The company, which now employs 80 people, is expected to expand to 113 within three years.
- Enviro Tech received approval on \$749,000 to purchase equipment and a 42,000-square foot-building on more than six acres in Williamstown, Wood County. The loan is expected to retain 44 jobs currently at risk and expand to 150 employees within three years.