



The September 2007 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.

Chesapeake Energy begins construction on regional headquarters in Charleston

Chesapeake Energy Corp. recently broke ground in Charleston for its regional headquarters. An investment of approximately \$25 million, the new headquarters is expected to open in 2009. Mike John, Chesapeake's vice president of operations - Eastern Division, said, "I believe the unveiling of the plans for our new regional headquarters is a tribute to Chesapeake's employees in West Virginia and throughout the Appalachian Basin. You find natural gas with talent, technology, and perseverance. There is no question the quality of workers in West Virginia and across Appalachia played a big part in the decision by Chesapeake to locate its Eastern Division headquarters right here in Charleston."

AT&T to hire 200 for new 'troubleshooter' call center in Wheeling

AT&T West Virginia announced plans to open an in-bound call center in Wheeling. The company expects to hire 200 to staff the new facility in the new Highlands Development complex. The call center will provide troubleshooting assistance to wireless customers across the country. Hiring is scheduled to begin in Wheeling in the second or third quarter of 2008. The Ohio County Development Authority has agreed to construct a new building called the Lifestyle Center and will lease 45,000 square feet on the second floor to AT&T. Total investment for the project is approximately \$8 million.

InfoCision plans to hire 100 telecommuters in Wetzel County

Infocision plans to hire 100 telecommuters to work from their homes in Wetzel County, W.Va. Full and part time positions are available, said Infocision spokesman Matthew Feltrup. InfoCision provides call center services for nonprofit organizations and Fortune 1000 companies. It has 12 operations in Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania, including call centers in Huntington and Clarksburg.

Inc. magazine's Top Companies List includes West Virginia firms

Inc. magazine's list of fastest growing companies includes two West Virginia businesses among its top 500. Ranked 249, Vested Health in Charleston provides consumer-directed health plans for employers. Listed at 477, Augusta Systems in Morgantown makes software for managing computer networks.

"We're proud Augusta Systems and Vested Health are among this prestigious list," said Gov. Joe Manchin. "This is well-deserved recognition for these innovative companies. As more and more executives recognize the positive changes we're making to our business climate and the advantages West Virginia offers, including a strategic and convenient location and a high quality of life that's affordable, I think we'll see more companies on that list in future years."

Other West Virginia firms included in the magazine's expanded list of 5,000 fastest growing businesses are Advanced Technical Solutions, Scott Depot; Huffner Contracting, Wheeling; American Public education, Charles Town; L. J. Hughes & Sons, Summersville; KeyLogic Systems, Morgantown; and Schonstedt Instrument Co., Kearneysville.

Verizon announces plans to expand state's access to high-speed Internet services

Verizon West Virginia recently announced plans to increase high-speed Internet availability in the state's rural areas. Under an agreement with Verizon, nonprofit organization Connected Nation will map the state's broadband availability and help develop a comprehensive approach to expanding high-speed Internet services in unserved areas of the state. Verizon West Virginia also reported it had expanded the number of sites it will equip for high-speed Internet service this year. These sites will serve more than 100 rural communities in Verizon's West Virginia service area. The announcements complement the governor's goal of extending broadband availability to all West Virginians by 2010.

Mountain Vending launches new bottled water division

Mountain Vending Inc. in Oak Hill has opened a new division to distribute bottled water. Mountaineer Pride Natural Spring Water delivers water to offices and residences in Cabell, Fayette, Greenbrier, Kanawha, Mercer and Wood counties. The company has created four new jobs so far, said marketing manager Larry Hawkins, and expects to add more as the business grows. Parent company Mountain Vending, founded in 1967, offers full vending services and office coffee service. The company currently employs 32.

M-Rock Stone Manufacturing in Monroe County Lands Lowe's Contract

M-Rock Stone Manufacturing in Peterstown recently signed a contract to sell its manufactured stone veneer products in 500 Lowe's stores in 11 states. Architects, builders and homeowners use M-Rock's manufactured stone veneer products. The company's product line includes river stone, field stone, dry stack, castle stone, ledge stone, cobble stone and Greenbrier cobble. M-Rock has produced more than a million square feet of stone for both interior and exterior use. The company currently employs nearly 20 people, but owner Matt Mann expects the workforce to grow considerably with the expansion. M-Rock is a client of the West Virginia Small Business Development Center.

Philippi-Based Company Contracted to Develop Miner Tracking System

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has awarded a contract to Extreme Endeavors to develop a phase one prototype miner tracking system. Recent state and federal legislation requires that mines be outfitted with miner tracking technology. The company was selected by NIOSH based on their experience working in austere environments, such as Antarctica, and on past performance in developing wearable electronics for first responders.

A client of West Virginia Small Business Development Center, Extreme Endeavors previously designed a similar monitoring system for Greer Lime Surface mining in Germany Valley, W.Va. Extreme Endeavors' research on the effect of the underground environment on state-of-the-art technology will allow them to design better electronics.

Alliant Techsystems receives \$8 million contract to rocket motors

Alliant Techsystems (ATK) has received an \$8 million modification to the existing production contract to manufacture solid propellant rocket motors for the Sparrow medium range air-to-air missile system. All production will occur at ATK's Rocket Center manufacturing center in Mineral County. The contract was awarded to ATK by the Naval Air Systems Command in Maryland to supply rocket motors for Foreign Military Sales.

Unemployment numbers remain low

The state's unemployment figures continue at record low levels. WORKFORCE West Virginia reported unemployment at 4.6 percent, the lowest rate on record for July. In Jefferson County, the unemployment rate was 3.5 percent in July. Neighboring Berkeley County reported 4.1 percent, with Morgan County at 4.8 percent. WORKFORCE West Virginia projects healthy employment numbers in the Eastern Panhandle and other growth regions in the state.

Governor leading fall trade mission to China

This fall, Gov. Joe Manchin will head a trade mission to China. The excursion will include visits to Shanghai, Beijing and Taiyuan, the capital of Shanxi Province. The Beijing stop coincides with the opening of the China Coal and Mining Exhibition, in which at least 10 West Virginia companies will be participating. A delegation from the major coal-producing province of Shanxi included West Virginia in its tour of the United States earlier this year.

From 2000 to 2006, West Virginia exports to China have surged upward by 425 percent, according to a study conducted by the U.S.-China Business Council, a trade group composed of U.S. companies doing business in China. The study reports the top export category from West Virginia was chemicals, followed by wood products, transportation equipment and metal manufacturing.

National Geographic lists Fayetteville among top adventure towns

Fayetteville has been designated by National Geographic Adventure magazine as one of America's "Top 50 Adventure Towns." The publication is scheduled for release in September, said Bill Lanham, Fayetteville town superintendent. According to Lanham, the article cites Fayetteville attractions such as the New River Gorge and Bridge Day, the state's largest single-day festival. Each year on the third Saturday in October, crowds gather to watch jumpers legally parachute from the New River Gorge Bridge. Fayetteville also is at the center of acclaimed New River Gorge National River activities including whitewater rafting, rock-climbing, mountain biking and fishing.

U.S. News and World Report lists West Virginia colleges among best

U.S. News and World Report's annual ranking of colleges includes Davis & Elkins College, West Virginia Wesleyan College, Alderson-Broaddus college and Wheeling Jesuit University. In "Best Universities — Master's Category," Wheeling Jesuit ranks 18th, climbing up three spots from last year's ranking. The national magazine names Davis & Elkins as 17th among baccalaureate colleges in the southern region of the United States. West Virginia Wesleyan ranks as one of the top three schools in the state in student retention and graduation rates. Alderson-Broaddus in Philippi holds the 18th spot on the magazine's list of "Great Schools, Great Prices."

WVEDA approves funds for Summit Point training center

During its August meeting, the West Virginia Economic Development Authority gave final approval to the following loan:

- Summit Point Automotive Research Center (SPARC), \$2.6 million, to finance a 277-acre site in Summit Point, Jefferson County, for the formation of a training and research campus. SPARC is the holding company for Summit Point Roadway Associates, which conducts specialty driver training, accident avoidance training and anti-terrorist procedures. SPARC intends to create a training park to lease to security firms on a 277-acre site contiguous to its existing facility. The facility consists of three road racing circuits, off-road and unimproved road circuits, five firing ranges, three hostage rescue training areas, a hand-to-hand training area and numerous classrooms.

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