



REGIONAL WRAP

DECEMBER 2009

Regional Wrap is a periodic electronic brief for investors of the North Louisiana Economic Partnership (NLEP) and other interested parties.

Happy holidays everyone. As the holidays arrive, we have a good bit to look back on from the past two to three months. Generally, our region and state have had a year of relative success. Expansion and announcements continue, even with other news of closures and layoffs. While unemployment rates spiked a bit part way into the year, they seem to be dropping again somewhat. In most of the region, rates are starting to get close to levels seen during 'regular times' just a few years ago. None of this should lull us into false optimism or lack of action. Many of our friends, family and neighbors are still impacted by the downturn. The past year reinforces the need for sustained and proactive economic development marketing. Thanks to our many investors for their generous support that allows that to happen.

Before kids' Christmas vacations and our time away begins, here are a few brief updates.

NLEP JOINT EFFORTS PROGRESSING WELL

The fall season was a busy one for the two boards, your staff and the Planning Council, the committee created from the joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The Planning Council, which includes ten members drawn from each board, is tasked with working through the various components necessary to finalize the merger of the North Louisiana Economic Development Corporation (NLEDC) and the Northwest Louisiana Economic Development Foundation (NLEDF) during 2010.

Two key tasks were initiated this fall. First was the formation of the Governance Fine-Tuning Task Force, a first step in moving toward a complete merger. The second was development of a joint budget for 2010.

The Governance Fine-Tuning Task Force was asked by Co-Chairs **Charles Coyle** and **Billy Cox** to "generate an action report consisting of detailed, practical recommendations for strengthening the Partnership Board's governing role, structure and process." The report, presented to the Planning Council on December 8th, was positively received. Leadership also shared it with both boards at their December board meetings. The



Members of Governance Task Force, Consultant Doug Eadie and NLEP's Planning Council meet in Ruston on Dec. 8th to hear results of Action Report process.

action report will positively impact all aspects of governance and board involvement going forward. Investors will hear more details about the report's recommendations in the weeks ahead. Special thanks to the Governance Task Force and its FL-based board governance consultant, Doug Eadie, for their great work over nearly four months. The task force members include Co-Chairs **Kyle McDonald** and **John Mark Wilhite**, **Don Essmeier**, **Jim Hagan**, **Kerry Hill**, **Drake Mills**, **Carolyn Moore**, **Bruce Roberts**, **David Smith**, and **Isaac White**.

On the recommendation of the Planning Council, both boards also approved the 2010 NLEP operating budget at the December board meetings. The \$1.65 million budget leverages the combined resources of the two current partner organizations to promote northern Louisiana as a competitive place for capital investment and jobs.

NLEP's PROSPECT "PIPELINE" SNAPSHOT (AS OF DECEMBER)

Reached new record level of projects in pipeline this month

Number of Active Projects	58
Capital Investment Potential	\$1.9 - \$2.6 Billion
Employment Potential	11,800 – 15,400

RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT EVENTS: CENTURYLINK AND DR. REDDY'S LABORATORIES (read more at www.nlep.org, see latest news)

In November and December, two of our region's most prominent national and international companies announced expansions. Governor Jindal, his team at Louisiana Economic Development and local business/elected leaders gathered on November 18th and again on December 7th to celebrate these positive decisions by existing employers.

CenturyLink, the growing telecom giant founded and still based in Monroe, plans to add 350 more jobs at its headquarters over the next four years. The company had an eventful year including its significant move to acquire Kansas-based EMBARQ this past summer. The company will be the third Fortune 500 headquarters in our state and is the 4th largest local exchange telephone company with a presence in 33 states.

Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, a sizeable maker of generic pharmaceuticals and one of India's more prominent and well-regarded corporations, announced that it would bring additional products to its manufacturing operation in Shreveport. The 73 new jobs come with the retention of 160 other positions at the facility. The company is optimistic that its Louisiana operation will play an increasingly important role and cited its current employees as a big factor in the decision to stay and grow in northern Louisiana.

These two successful companies also share another common trait. Both are active investors and supporters of the NLEP and understand the benefits of working to build a stronger and more prosperous economy. Thanks to both companies for their commitment to northern Louisiana.

NEON'S ALUMNI OUTREACH INITIATIVE

Families often gather together over holidays such as Thanksgiving. The NorthLA Employment Opportunities Network (NEON), which is the NLEP's workforce marketing program, created an opportunity to connect with those who might be home in the region over the holidays. The effort included working with five of the region's colleges to send messages about the region and an invitation to come out on Friday evening of Thanksgiving weekend to catch up with old friends and the region. Centenary College, Louisiana State University Shreveport, Louisiana Tech University, Northwestern State University and University of Louisiana Monroe worked with NEON

to help reach alumni through their respective electronic communications. While many alumni likely received the communications, NEON's target was those currently living outside the region.

The message was simple. Northern Louisiana is changing in positive ways. If you are home for the holidays, catch up on the region's progress. If you also are looking for work or want to consider coming back, now might be a great time to reconnect. NEON created special content on its web site, www.workthisway.org for the initiative and hosted Friday evening happy hour events in Monroe, Natchitoches and Shreveport-Bossier. Initial feedback and reaction was positive. The events look like they could grow into a valuable tool going forward.

NEON also received recent recognition from Colorado-based Atlas Advertising for its innovative use of social media in engaging contacts and spreading the word about the region. Sign up for NEON's monthly newsletter or join its Facebook or LinkedIn groups online.

KUDOS

Northern Louisiana -- Region of Champions? No one has called us this yet (as far as I know), but I sort of like it.

What a wonderful end to a great season of football to have four of the five state championship teams come from right here in northern Louisiana. Congratulations to the deserving winners. Keep up the great work and thank you for being great ambassadors for our region.

Haynesville High School Golden Tornados – Evangel Christian Academy Eagles – Neville High School Tigers – West Monroe High School Rebels

Welcome New Investors

We appreciate your enthusiasm and commitment to the regional effort.

McDonald Memorial Baptist Church of Jonesboro, LA (NLEDC investor)



NLEP Co-Chair Billy Cox, Board Member Don Essmeier and President Kurt Foreman visit with Ronnie Sanders (middle), Pastor of McDonald Memorial, to thank the congregation for its generous investment. The church considered how they might serve their members, friends and neighbors in these challenging economic times. They decided it was appropriate to support job creation efforts in the region. The NLEP's leadership thanks Brother Ronnie, member Dusty Hampton and the entire congregation of McDonald Memorial for their investment in the future success of Jackson Parish and northern Louisiana.

Help us by continuing to spread the good news about northern Louisiana. Together we can make the region a more prosperous and successful area.

And here's to living in the "happiest state in the nation" (see link below to recent study ranking Louisiana tops).

http://news.yahoo.com/s/livescience/20091217/sc_livescience/happieststatesrevealedbynewresearch

Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for 2010,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kurt Foreman". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kurt Foreman
President

Feel free to pass this along to others who may be interested in economic development activity in North Louisiana. To be added to the list for future briefs, please email Le'Sann Smith at lsmith@nlep.org. Thanks for your interest and support of the region. If you wish to be removed from receiving future updates, please reply to this email and put "unsubscribe" in the subject line.