



Message from Kurt Foreman, NLEP President

Retention. Expansion. The two are frequently overlooked or underappreciated as components of a community's or region's economic development strategy. However, NLEP and its many area partners spend a great deal of time engaging and supporting companies that are already invested in our communities and region. Taking a page from businesses, communities and regions should balance their efforts between seeking new customers and retaining current customers. Historically for the NLEP staff, more than 50% of our typical workload involves supporting existing employers. (See **Expand**, Page 3)



November/December 2010 Newsletter

- Visit www.nlep.org
- Visit the NLEP Media Center on our website for videos

Regional Leaders Take New York City



NLEP and a delegation of local leaders market North Louisiana to top executives, site selection consultants and business media in New York City during a business development and public relations blitz, Nov. 16th-18th. The 3-day trip was organized by the Louisiana Committee of 100 (C100), a nonprofit organization supported by business leaders from across

Louisiana dedicated to the state's long-term economic growth. The North Louisiana delegation included: C100 Chairman Randy Ewing of Jackson Parish, a founding member and investor of NLEP; Ross Barrett of Shreveport/Bossier, (See **NYC**, Page 4)

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NLEP Moves Closer to Merger



NLEP moves into the final stage of merger after its investors voted overwhelmingly to support the consolidation of the North Louisiana Economic Development Corporation (NLEDC) and the Northwest Louisiana Economic Development Foundation (NLEDF).

A special investor meeting was held in Ruston on November 9, 2010 to count votes and proxies cast by investors from both organizations. This is the last legal step before the two Boards sign the merger papers on December 15th, with the merger taking effect on January 1st of 2011. Two special media events will celebrate the merger on December 17th in Shreveport and Monroe. (See **Merger**, Page 4)

Signs of Growth: Communities on the Move



It only took **four** state representatives, **four** governors, **six** mayors, 40 years of hard work and \$6.4 million to complete the Homer Truck Bypass (La. 3244). But the historic event finally culminated with a ribbon cutting ceremony, held October 28, 2010.

State and local officials and approximately 100 citizens attended the ceremony, which was held at the intersection of La. 2 and the new bypass. The project, which was completely state-funded, was first proposed in the early 1980s. Funding was secured in 2007. A groundbreaking ceremony was held October 17, 2008; and construction began in June of this year. The bypass is currently open to traffic.

With four roads (US 79, La. 2, La. 9 and La. 146) converging in the downtown Homer Square area, a high volume of 18-wheelers, transporting everything from logs to oversize loads through small streets, created safety hazards. That's why a truck bypass was proposed.

The bypass is expected to relieve traffic congestion and increase safety in the Homer area, where thousands of large trucks currently navigate around small downtown streets each year. The latest traffic counts show that West Main Street (U.S. 79) in Homer carries about 8,500 vehicles a day, many of which are 18-wheelers. DOTD estimates that an additional 30 to 50 tractor-trailers with oversized or overweight permits pass the downtown square every day. The Homer Bypass begins at Highways 9 and 79 (south) and ends just west of Nicky's Restaurant on Highway 2.

After four decades of tireless work, supporters were able to cut the ribbon on the Homer Truck Bypass. Claiborne Chamber of Commerce President J.T. Taylor welcomed everyone to the event.

"A long awaited day has arrived for the citizens of Claiborne Parish. We are excited to join Representative Rick Gallot, friends and neighbors on this monumental day in the economic future of Claiborne Parish. Our thanks go out to Governor Jindal, Representative Rick Gallot, John Sanders, DOTD and others that stood by our side and represented us so well on this truck bypass project," said Taylor.

Among those who attended the event were State Representative Rick Gallot; Senator Mike Walsworth; Roy Quezaire, DOTD; John Sanders, DOTD District 4 Engineer; Haynesville Mayor Sherman Brown; Haynesville Chief of Police Anthony Smith; Sheriff Ken Bailey; Tax Assessor Bob Robinson; CCOC President Nicole Ware; Chamber Director John Watson; former juror Gene Coleman; former representative Loy Weaver; Claiborne Parish Police Jurors Jerry Adkins, Mark Furlow, Roy Lewis, Roy Mardis, Bob McDaniel, Lavelle Penix, Joe Sturges; Secretary Dwayne Woodard; former Homer Mayors, Joe Michael, David Aubrey and Huey Dean; Homer Councilwoman Patricia Jenkins; and Homer Mayor Alecia Smith.

State Representative Rick Gallot is credited for much of the success in funding the bypass. Governor Jindal once said the very first day he spoke to Congress, Gallot asked him about the Homer Bypass on the microphone in front of the entire House.

"There were even some humorous threats of not reelecting me if the project wasn't finished during my term," laughed Gallot. "My colleagues accused me of having tunnel vision, because I always pushed them to approve the Homer Bypass. It helped that J.T. Taylor kept making the Governor park and walk across the Homer square every time he visited, so he would have to dodge 18-wheelers and of course his calling me several times a day for the past seven years didn't hurt." ☺

Arcadia Mayor Eugene Smith and local leaders broke ground Monday, November 22, 2010 on a much anticipated 8,000 square foot retail store on the town's main drag. Construction on the Family Dollar store will be completed in the spring.

This is just one of the many projects on tap for the Bienville Parish town. A Holiday Inn Express, a new Louisiana Land Bank, which will anchor a new building complex, a new community center and renovations to the Bienville Parish Courthouse all spell growth for the town and the parish. As Mayor Smith likes to say, "Come grow with Arcadia."



KNOW & TELL

Congratulations to PPM Consultants, Inc. on its recent expansions. The award-winning environmental services company opened a new Shreveport location at the Chase Bank building, 400 Texas Street, Suite 1000. PPM also opened a Dallas area office this spring. The Monroe-based company was founded in 1994 by principals, Todd Perry, Michael McCown and Keith Pyron. Since then, PPM has grown to 11 locations nationally and was recently named one of the country's top environmental firms by *Engineering News Record*.

PPM is an investor company with NLEP, and principal Todd Perry was instrumental in helping to form NLEP. ☉

The State of Louisiana broke into the top ten for Site Selection magazine's national 2010 Best Business Climate ranking. The State jumped from 25th place in 2009 to ninth place this year.

"The state and North Louisiana have a lot positives. I'm glad the rest of the world is recognizing that fact," said Kyle McDonald, NLEP's Board co-Chair.

"The Site Selection ranking is a good barometer how the state and North Louisiana are perceived as a desirable business locations," said Joe Holyfield, NLEP's Board co-Chair. ☉



Volunteer Speakers Needed! NLEP's External Relations Committee set up a Speaker's Bureau to spread the message of regionalism to all our communities.

NLEP Secretary Drake Mills, President/CEO of Community Trust Bank (pictured here) spoke in front of the Ruston Kiwanis Club. NLEP board member Reggie Roe, a DeSoto Parish Police Juror, spoke to the Mansfield Lions Club. Thanks for doing a great job, guys!

We need volunteers to speak about NLEP to civic groups. You will be given a PowerPoint presentation about NLEP, push cards and technical assistance. Email Christine at crambo@nlep.org or call 318-677-2531 to volunteer as a speaker or if you know of a speaking opportunity. ☉

NLEP's Tax & Use Seminars, presented by Didier Consultants attracted much interest. The two seminars held at Louisiana Delta Community College in Monroe and at Bossier Parish Community College averaged more than 30 attendees. The November seminars discussed ways businesses can reduce their tax liability, including proactively utilizing federal, state and local incentives. ☉

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Most existing companies may not realize that many of the incentives or programs may also be available to them. When new companies come to town, it generates lots of attention. But economic developers know that more than 70% of jobs usually come from employers already in a region.

That's why we have an ongoing program with the State of Louisiana and our local partners to call on key employers to learn about their needs, issues and opportunities. The program uses a nationally proven process called Synchronist. That's why many of the projects in our prospect pipeline involve supporting existing employers that are looking at growing, adding or perhaps improving their competitiveness. Often existing employers are less interested in attention, so area residents aren't as aware of their growth.

Sometimes, helping an existing employer takes on an urgency because of an accident or mishap. Such is the case with our current work supporting Southern Plug and the local economic development agency, Morehouse Economic Development Corporation. Sadly, a fire devastated the company's plant near Mer Rouge. But together with the State of Louisiana, Morehouse Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), NELEA and others, NLEP is supporting local partners in finding solutions to help the company move forward and stay in the community.

Other times, positive news such as an acquisition or merger can set into action regional and local support of a company's growth. That is the case with the joint efforts to support CenturyLink and its continued evolution into a global telecommunications leader. Together with the City of Monroe, the Monroe Chamber of Commerce and many other partners, NLEP will be looking for ways to enhance the company's continued growth in Monroe over time.

In many cases, supporting our existing employers offers more potential impact than recruiting new businesses. If you think about it, when someone buys your "product" for the fifth, tenth or 18th time, that says a lot more about the "product." But both retaining existing companies and attracting new ones are important to the health of a community or a region.

As we head into holiday season, take a moment to think about the many wonderful opportunities and blessings we have here in North Louisiana. We are one of the nation's most cost competitive regions with a bright future ahead of us. That future includes both successful and growing current employers, mixed liberally with an ongoing dose of companies that will locate here over the coming years to purchase our "product."

Thanks to you and your teams for your support of the NLEP and for the many things you do to make North Louisiana a great place to live, work and play. ☉

(NYC, Continued from page 1)

Partner with Louisiana Ventures LP and Barrett Vernon Montgomery, NLEP board member & C100 member; Shreveport Mayor Cedric Glover; Jay Guillot of Ruston, Hunt, Guillot & Associates and NLEP investor; Kurt Foreman, NLEP President, representing 14 parishes in North Louisiana; and NLEP partners- CLECO, Atmos Energy, Entergy, and the Port of Shreveport Bossier.

Participants broke into smaller groups and fanned out across NYC to visit about eight site selection firms, three international organizations and nine U.S. corporations, such as Wrights Investors' Service, Morgan Stanley and Moody's. C100 Chair Randy Ewing believes the trip allowed them to network and educate people about the state and North Louisiana.

"We met with top representatives from Goldman Sachs, J.P. Morgan and Forbes and discussed global, national and state economic outlook. We also met with business prospects from the United Kingdom and the Mexico Trade Commission. We were honored with a reception by Bloomberg, and we even had a chance to ring the bell at the closing of the New Stock Exchange Thursday," said Ewing.

Delegates visited two commodities and stock exchanges, NYSE and NYMEX, and were briefed by the Federal Reserve. NLEP President Kurt Foreman also made a presentation during a breakfast with site selection consultants, who influence the location decisions of companies.

"The site selectors I talked to were very impressed to learn about the progress our state has made and the opportunities available in North Louisiana. I think people are pleased to hear that our state and region are progressing well and poised for success going forward," said Foreman.

Jay Guillot from Ruston believes the trip has been an eye opening experience.

"It made me realize the great progress Louisiana has made in just the last several years. The trip also helped the Louisiana delegation gain a better understanding of what to expect in the economy moving forward, especially in the oil/gas and petrochemical sectors," said Guillot.

As a partner in a venture capital fund, Ross Barrett is involved with economic development on many levels, from funding new business ventures through Louisiana Ventures, LP to working on the NLEP Board of Directors and volunteering on the Committee of 100.

"It's critically important to develop deep relationships with the East Coast, in particular the New York capital markets. It is easier to tell the story of Louisiana's successes to people you have a long standing business and/or professional relationships with," said Barrett.

(Merger, Continued from page 1)

Of the 37 votes cast, NLEDC investors voted unanimously to support the merger (20 were needed for quorum, 2/3 of those in attendance had to vote in favor). Of the 41 votes cast by NLEDF investors, 40 voted in favor of the merger (34 votes were needed for quorum and 2/3 of those in attendance had to vote in favor).

"The overwhelming support for the merger tells me that the business and elected leadership of North Louisiana wants to work together for the greater good. By collaborating, our communities can leverage more resources to create more jobs and economic growth for our region," said Joe Holyfield, Board Chair of the North Louisiana Economic Development Corporation.

Kyle McDonald, the Board Chair for the Northwest Louisiana Economic Development Foundation, believes the merger will create a stronger, more robust organization.

"The larger North Louisiana Economic Partnership will have more resources to work with to sell the 14 parishes of North Louisiana to the rest of the world. Since NLEP works by a formal set of protocols that ensures equal access to information and leads, smaller towns and rural communities have the same opportunity as larger cities to win projects," said McDonald.

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