

AROUND THE COUNTY

By Noel LaBine, Wright County Economic Development Partnership

There have been a variety of positive developments in Wright County in the last few weeks.

The Highway 12 project through Delano has finally been completed and has been available for your driving pleasure for about two weeks now. The completion of the St. Michael one-way pair through the older part of St. Michael should happen this month.

The City of Rockford has their retail report completed, which provides data to show support for a 15,000 to 20,000 square foot grocery store there. All of the data will be available on a CD for \$1,000, but the summary is that there is a need for both a grocery and various other retail providers.

We continued to visit with area cities this last month with visits to Cokato and St. Michael. These groups brainstormed about possible ways to get more businesses into their communities.

There are some interesting success stories in the county. For example, at Sil-Pro in Delano, 6 of the last 8 months they have made all time record sales, and it looks like October may break the latest record. Their employee count is now well over 100; about 110 or so. Moreover Sil-Pro has recently given out profit sharing bonus payments; kudos to Sil-Pro. They are currently installing a 12 foot by 15 foot self-contained chemical storage unit and expanding their parking lot.

However, for the most part there still is a need to do things to get the economy going. Everyone has been predicting the return of first-time home buyers tax credit, and at this time it has been reported that the tax credit has been extended to July 2010. It certainly is needed, since a majority of the home sales have been in that category with federal guarantees.

I've been finding some innovative technology entrepreneurs and introducing them in Wright County. This recession, like the ones before it, has spawned more interest in the use of technology. So far I have found a manufacturer and distributor of water proofing polymer material that is LEED certified, a developer of inventory analysis software that is compatible with QuickBooks, and a developer of a new way to do advertising on the internet. All of these companies would satisfy a need in the market that is worth millions of dollars. If they would establish themselves in Wright County, they would help support local businesses and spawn more innovative entrepreneurs. That is one of the opportunities that I see where we can prepare for the future.

And there is a lot of hope for the future around Wright County.