

## **AROUND THE COUNTY**

**By Noel LaBine, Wright County Economic Development Partnership**

This time of year many columnists will take time to either reflect on what has happened in the last year or to make predictions about what will happen in the coming year. I want to follow that tradition, also, by recounting some of the positive developments from 2009 and projecting the positive developments for 2010.

The year started out with T.O. Plastics completing the build-out of their new facility in the Duke Realty property off of Hwy 101 in Otsego. The Otsego facility will be primarily used for creating packaging products for the medical device industry. There will be two clean rooms in that facility. The primary space is a 100,000 level rated clean room that will be fairly large because it will house packaging equipment. The second clean room is a 10,000 level rated clean room, with gowning room, utilized to package customer product. The total facility will be 60,000 square feet and they expect to hire an additional 20 people to staff that operation.

In April we closed a deal with Cinch Systems, Inc., a builder of high-tech physical security systems for the US Government. They signed a lease for a site in St. Michael to facilitate the expansion of their company. They are a start-up company with a patent on their newly developed encryption system that allows multiple vendors' systems to be integrated. Current customers include the US State Department and the US Navy, and they continue to receive orders for their products. They had 4 employees in April and as of the end of the year they had 14 employees. They are on track to have about 20 employees by their anniversary in April 2010.

In May Dahlheimer Distributing of Monticello acquired Grosslein Beverages of Ramsey and became Dahlheimer Beverage and doubled the size of their operation, which is located in the new City of Monticello Industrial Park.

Also, in May the Wright County Economic Development Partnership Board of Directors agreed to cooperate with the St. Cloud Partnership to apply for Federal Regional Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) approval for Region 7W. When this application is approved it could have significant impact on our region. Among other things it will help communities plan for and address barriers to economic development, including transportation, childcare, affordable housing and sustainable energy.

In June a new pedestrian amenity was added to the heart of the downtown Buffalo retail area. A latest state-of-the-art downtown information kiosk with changeable information panels controlled from City hall was unveiled at the corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Division Street. This pedestrian enhancement device will strengthen the visual energy and information content for downtown foot traffic.

In July Buffie Chiropractic held a ground breaking ceremony for their new 3,000 s.f. building in downtown Rockford. The location is on Bridge Street across the street from City hall in a Northwest direction. The new building has been designed with historic

elements so it will blend in with the historic buildings in the downtown district. Jack Svedlund was the builder and the building was completed on December 29<sup>th</sup>.

In October the City of Delano announced that Highway 12 has reopened to traffic! This marked the completion of two years of detours around and through the Delano community. The City welcomes back the over 20,000 cars per day which travel through the community. The new corridor through the City has been greatly improved and reflects all that Delano has to offer.

In November the partnership held the first ever County-wide EDA gathering at the City of Hanover. Also, in November the area farmers were able to make major progress in getting off an above average corn and soybean harvest.

In December a groundbreaking was held in Montrose for a new education campus. This new campus will hold the early childhood family learning center, the early childhood special education, a family literacy program, a head start program, and hopefully a day care center. The community education director, Kim, said this would be .... “a place for families to come and grow together.”

I predict that 2010 will produce continued progress on many business expansions and community improvement projects. Wright County is and will continue to be a great place to do business.