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Toyota's Here!

On February 27, Governor Haley Barbour and senior Toyota officials announced that Toyota would build its eighth North American vehicle assembly plant and fifteenth manufacturing facility at the Wellspring site in southeastern Union County. The plant, scheduled to begin production in 2010 or late 2009, will produce 150,000 of the popular Highlander SUVs annually. It represents an investment of \$1.3 billion and will employ 2,000.

Governor Barbour was joined by Seiichi Sudo, President and COO of Toyota Motor Engineering and Manufacturing North America; senior Toyota officials Jim Wiseman, Gary Convis, Ray Tanguay; Senator Trent Lott; Representative Roger Wicker; Lieutenant Governor Amy Tuck; and House Speaker Billy McCoy in Tupelo and by Senator Thad Cochran and Jim Press, Toyota Motors North America President by satellite from Washington, D.C.

During the announcement ceremony, Toyota officials repeatedly referred to the high quality of the workforce in Northeast Mississippi and its work ethic. The teamwork demonstrated by the Pontotoc-Union-Lee (PUL) Alliance and the "can do" attitude exhibited by State and local officials were also commended.

Governor Barbour pointed out that the incentive package for Toyota was less than the one Mississippi provided for Nissan seven years ago. As a part of the Toyota project, the University of Mississippi will begin a Japanese Saturday school and will implement an Automotive Engineering program.

Toyota will set aside a portion of its 1,700-acre site as a nature preserve. The company also announced a donation of \$50 million to the schools of Pontotoc, Union, and Lee Counties. The money will be distributed over 10 years once production begins.

On Friday, March 2, the Legislature passed a bond package including \$293.9 million for infrastructure and training for Toyota and \$30 million for infrastructure and training for Tier 1 suppliers.

To meet Toyota's tight schedule, work began almost immediately. Hill Brothers Construction of Falkner won the bid for clearing and grubbing about 450 acres of the site. This work was accomplished well ahead of the scheduled completion date of May 1.

On April 18, a formal groundbreaking ceremony with about 600 guests present was held at the site. Toyota Motor Corporation President Katsuaki Watanabe; Jim Press, President of Toyota Motors North America; and Ray Tanguay, Executive Vice-President of Toyota Motor Engineering and Manufacturing North America took part in the program along with Governor Haley Barbour. Mr. Watanabe noted that The Hospitality State was appropriate for Mississippi. Local elected officials from the PUL Alliance joined Toyota executives and Governor Barbour in the formal ground breaking.



Gov. Barbour talks about how pleased he is over Toyota's decision to situate its plant at the Wellspring site.



Toyota will begin moving dirt in May, will pour concrete in September, and begin erecting steel in December. Work is underway to provide the necessary infrastructure to the Toyota plant. The City of New Albany has taken bids on a new electrical substation to serve the plant. Four UCDA member businesses are working on the design of infrastructure improvements. Precision Engineering is working on a water tank; Cook Coggin Engineers are working on water and sewer lines; Engineering Solutions, Inc. is working on water and sewer and working with Neel-Schaffer on the railroad spur.

Governor Barbour summed up the crowd's feelings at the ground breaking by stating, "This is the number one economic development project in the United States this year."



Validation that dreams really do come true.



Getting ready to officially turn the first shovels full of dirt.



UCDA Executive Director Glenn Duckworth and Alderman Dan Skinner celebrate Toyota's announcement, February 27. *Photo compliments of Jean Ashcraft, New Albany News-Exchange.*

Glenn Duckworth receives a plaque of appreciation from Toyota representative Carol Sampson.



Fast Facts

- After the Toyota ground-breaking ceremony on April 18, a PUL Alliance Appreciation Reception was held in Tupelo. PUL Alliance members and partners were presented plaques in recognition of their service on the Wellspring Project that led to the Toyota announcement.
- For the second year in a row, a Vision 2020 Leadership Team from Morrilton, Arkansas visited New Albany on March 23. The group met with County and City officials, UCDA and Main Street staff; toured the UCDA office and Welcome Center; toured Kevin Charles Furniture; drove by the Toyota site; visited the Union County Heritage Museum; and took a walking tour of downtown.
- UCDA recently received a TVA Technology Grant to purchase a new computer, printer/scanner, and Adobe Creative Suite software. UCDA is appreciative of the TVA Technology Grant and of the matching funds provided by the Union County Board of Supervisors and the City of New Albany.

From the Executive Director



Former President Harry Truman once said, “You can always amend a big plan, but you can never expand a little one. I don’t believe in little plans. I believe in plans big enough to meet a situation which we can’t possibly foresee now.” In a UCDA Committee meeting several years ago, local attorney and former UCDA Board Member Bill Rutledge expressed similar sentiments and brought matters to a hometown level by saying, “New Albany has never dreamed big enough or aimed high enough.”

By anyone’s standards, the Wellspring Project certainly qualifies as a “big” plan that aimed high. Just think about the audacity of three small counties in rural Northeast Mississippi thinking they could land an automobile assembly plant! This idea brought criticism, and in some cases outright ridicule, even from our own Mississippi media. People outside the state certainly gave the project little chance for success. When Nissan announced it was locating in Mississippi in 2000, many people were amazed but regarded the location as a one-time fluke that would not happen again. Governor Barbour’s recent announcement that Toyota had chosen the Wellspring site for its latest plant and the subsequent groundbreaking vindicates those who believed in and supported the “big” Wellspring plan.

How did it happen? From the beginning, the project was a team effort. The three counties are the official members of the Pontotoc-Union-Lee (PUL) Alliance but each county’s major municipalities and economic development organizations as well as Three Rivers Planning and Development District are members in fact. Three Rivers and the economic development organizations (Community Development Foundation, Pontotoc County Chamber of Commerce, and Union County Development Association) acted as staff for the PUL Alliance. As a regional entity with long established relationships with all three counties, Three Rivers was the overall coordinator; none of the other agencies could have fulfilled this role. Due to the extensive resources and experience of the Community Development Foundation, that agency was designated as the marketing lead for the project. UCDA played a major role in the preliminary planning, reviewing and commenting on reports from engineers and site location consultants. Throughout the process, UCDA provided funds along with the other project partners to match a state grant and for marketing efforts. UCDA also assisted with some land negotiations, gathered information for the Megasite certification process and for prospect submittals, and provided whatever support was required.

Numerous outside organizations were also involved. Early in the process, TVA provided technical assistance in evaluating possible sites that eventually led to the selection of the Blue Springs site. A grant from the Mississippi Development Authority in 2003 provided funds to engage engineers and site location consultants in developing preliminary plans for an automotive plant layout on the chosen site. TVA’s Certified Megasite Certification Program provided a very detailed roadmap to readying the site for an actual automotive manufacturer. Senators Thad Cochran and Trent Lott along with Representative Roger Wicker assisted in obtaining Interstate designation for Highway 78 as well as other aspects of the project. Governor Barbour was a key salesman for the Wellspring site. The University of Mississippi committed to

implement an Automotive Engineering program and establish a Japanese Saturday school. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad and the Norfolk Southern Railroad entered into a haulage rights agreement providing rail access from coast to coast. Northeast Mississippi Community College, Itawamba Community College, and East Mississippi Community College formed the Mississippi Corridor Consortium to enhance training capabilities for Toyota and its suppliers as well as other area industries. Area legislators supported the project with the entire Mississippi Legislature passing the incentive package within hours.

How did it happen? By numerous parties laying individual agendas aside and working together for a common goal. The fact that Wellspring was a true teamwork project was not lost on Toyota, a company renowned for teamwork. The Toyota location should also be a lesson to the community of the importance of teamwork and mutual respect as we work to take advantage of the opportunities presented by Union County's newest industry.

Learning About Toyota, Japanese Culture

With the announcement of Toyota's location at the Wellspring site in southeastern Union County, there has been a rush for economic developers, elected officials, business people, and the general public to learn more about Toyota, its corporate culture, and Japanese business practices.

On March 29, Mark Williams made a presentation at the TVA Center in Tupelo on Successfully Locating Automotive Suppliers. Mr. Williams is a site location consultant specializing in automotive suppliers and who has a large Japanese clientele. He emphasized the need for available sites that are ready for development and the importance of accurate information, confidentiality, and complete honesty and integrity.

On April 12, Matthew and Chi Little, a husband and wife team from Mississippi State University, presented a program on Japanese business etiquette. Mrs. Little is a native of Japan. This discussion compared the western and Japanese styles of communication noting that westerners' conversation is often rapid back and forth, comparable to a tennis match while the Japanese style is more like a bowling match with each person waiting their turn. It was also noted that Americans tend to state a point immediately whereas the Japanese tend to lay the groundwork and build a foundation before making a point in conversation. Speaking loudly is considered rude and threatening by the Japanese; pointing is also considered rude. The Japanese decision making process usually takes longer than American because it is very collaborative but implementation will be much faster because once a decision is made, everyone is on board.

UCDA is working with Northeast Mississippi Community College and Mississippi State University to plan a workshop on Japanese business etiquette in Union County.

Stratford Historic Marker Placed



Glenn Duckworth of the Union County Development Association, stands with Caye Upholstery Plant Engineer Jerry Edwards and Plant Manager Lynn Montgomery by the recently erected historic marker.

An official state historic marker honoring Morris Futorian's location of his Stratford Company at New Albany in 1948 was placed in front of the plant recently by the Mississippi Department of Transportation. The plant pioneered the assembly line production method in the furniture industry that transformed the economy of Northeast Mississippi and led to Northeast Mississippi becoming the Upholstered Furniture Capital of the World. The original plant is now occupied by Caye Upholstery.

UCDA Executive Director Glenn Duckworth stated, "At a time when we are celebrating the location of the new Toyota plant, it is entirely appropriate to look back and honor Morris Futorian and his Stratford plant for beginning the furniture industry here. While we look forward to the changes that Toyota will bring to our area, we must not lose sight of the contributions the furniture industry has made to our economy since 1948, and its ongoing contributions."

The marker was funded by a Tourism Grant from the City of New Albany with the content approved by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.



UCDA Receives UNITE Grants

UCDA is the recipient of two grants recently awarded by the Union County/New Albany Initiative to Excel (UNITE), the community's foundation. One grant for \$500 will be utilized to correct exterior lighting problems at the UCDA office/Welcome Center (former Post Office). The spotlights and historic lampposts have not functioned since UCDA occupied the building. Making these lights operative will make the historic Mississippi Landmark building more attractive at night and will create a better impression for both local residents and visitors alike.

A second grant of \$1,000 is for the purpose of purchasing Tallahatchie RiverFest T-shirts. Each year the festival gives away a large number of T-shirts to sponsors, headline entertainers, key volunteers, and jail trustees with others given away in publicity events. Additional ones are sold at cost to performers and other volunteers and discounts are given to City and County workers. The UNITE funds will be used to offset these costs, thus freeing up funds for other festival activities to make the festival stronger and more attractive to community visitors. UNITE's contribution will be recognized by a listing on the RiverFest T-shirt and by other means.

Community

Tallahatchie RiverFest Named in Top 20 in the Southeast



Once again, the Tallahatchie RiverFest has been chosen as one of the Southeast Tourism Society's Top 20 Events for the month of September 2007!

"We are extremely excited to have been chosen once again for this prestigious honor as part of the Top 20," said Glenn Duckworth, Executive Director of Union County Development Association. "It's such an honor considering they picked us out of all the tourism events within 11 states!"

Not only is this a great award, but it also gets the RiverFest in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution's* travel section on a regular quarterly basis, and has also been featured on the New Orleans-based radio show "Travel Talk Radio"! The Top 20 is also published in over 400 newspapers, magazines, radio, and television stations. AAA's and others receive the Top 20 as well, so this in itself is so great in getting advertising from a reputable source.

Angela Russell, Tourism/Community Development Specialist for Union County/New Albany, said, "This is my first year with UCDA and the Tallahatchie RiverFest and I'm thrilled that we were chosen! We'll definitely work to make this year's festival an even bigger success than last year!"

The Top 20 Events are also listed on the Southeast Tourism Society's web site www.southeasttourism.org and their consumer web site www.escapetotheseast.com, which happens to be consistently among the most visited pages on the STS sites.

"This is a tremendous way for us to get the RiverFest name out to even more people and attract even larger crowds, considering that each year the Entertainment Headliners just keep getting better and better," Duckworth said.

"We do a lot of advertising ourselves but this is such a great way to inform other surrounding states in the Southeast of our continuously growing festival, which hosted 10,000-12,000 people last year," Russell said. "It truly is a blessing that we have this type of award to prove that our festival is constantly growing and getting better with each passing year!"

"We love the fact that we were chosen again because it helps so much in bringing out not only our own residents," said Duckworth, "but also residents of other cities and states making our projected crowd for this year's RiverFest to be even larger than last year!"

Founded in 1983, the Southeast Tourism Society is dedicated to the promotion and development of tourism for its member states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

For more information on the Top 20 Events program, please visit one of their websites listed previously and support our Tallahatchie RiverFest! After the festival, there will be pictures posted on these sites showing exactly why we have been chosen yet again!

Cleanest Campus Award Goes to Ingomar

This year's Cleanest Campus Award, presented by Keep New Albany/Union County Beautiful, was presented to Ingomar, K-12. After thoroughly examining the campuses and the work that the students put into beautifying their school, Vickie Duke and Angela Russell, Co- Coordinators, decided this year's trophy should go to Ingomar.

"It was a tough decision because most of the schools truly put in a lot of work to make their students realize that keeping a clean campus is so important," Russell said. "This is the time to teach students about not littering and keeping a clean environment so that everyone can enjoy the benefits!"

"This was the first year for both of us to judge the Cleanest Campus and it truly was a hard decision to make!" stated Duke. "We enjoyed every minute of it and it was so nice to see the projects that the students at Ingomar had done. It's amazing what a little bit of time and hard work can bring out in the students. Not only did they work together, they made a beautiful outdoor area for everyone to enjoy!"



Northeast Expansion Underway

Changes have become apparent recently at the Northeast at New Albany facility as demolition of the former Mattie Thompson Elementary School main building and gymnasium are underway. Once demolition of these two buildings is complete, a new building will be erected. This new building will house four classrooms, a science lab, a computer lab, and office space. The new facility is scheduled for occupancy in January 2008. The building is designed so that it can be expanded in the future as the need arises.

Since its initial location in New Albany in 2003, classroom space and the lack of laboratory facilities have been limiting factors in course offerings at the New Albany facility. In February, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) made a site visit and granted accreditation to the New Albany site. With this accreditation, Northeast is authorized to offer any program in New Albany that is offered on the main campus making it possible for students to complete a full degree program entirely in New Albany. The new building will provide the physical facilities to take advantage of this new authorization. Long-range plans include health related programs and eventually a nursing program.

UCDA has been a long-time supporter and advocate for the Northeast at New Albany facility. UCDA assisted Northeast with its initial location in New Albany in 2003 and worked with Northeast officials in identifying funding sources for this expansion.

Russell named Tourism/Community Development Specialist

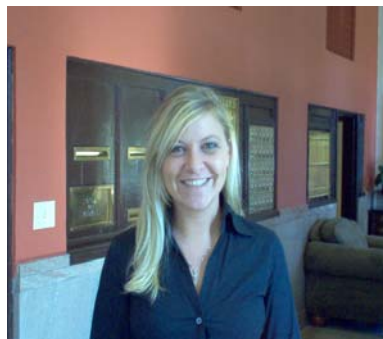
New Albany and Union County are proud to name Angela Russell of Corinth as the new Tourism/Community Development Specialist for UCDA.

Russell graduated from the University of Mississippi with a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism with an emphasis in Public Relations, Marketing, and English.

"I am thrilled to have the opportunity to work with such wonderful people and be involved with Union County," Russell said. "Everyone I have had the pleasure of meeting thus far has been extremely nice and genuinely glad to have me here. It truly is "The Fair and Friendly City"!"

Some of the projects Russell will be responsible for at UCDA include organizing the Tallahatchie RiverFest, developing and promoting tourism for Union County, the annual Membership Drive, and developing various publications such as the newsletter and other brochures and news articles. She serves as Co-Coordinator of the Keep New Albany/Union County Beautiful program and as a member of the City Beautification Committee.

"We are excited to welcome Angela to our community and business. We expect her to be an asset to UCDA and Union County," said UCDA Executive Director Glenn Duckworth.



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For all the latest news and events, be sure to visit UCDA online at www.ucda-newalbany.com and the City of New Albany online at www.visitnewalbany.com!

BEST PLACES TO LIVE IN RURAL America

Union County Ranked in Best Places to Live

Union County has been named to the Top 60 Best Places to Live in the Southeast by *Progressive Farmer* magazine. Union County was rated No. 41 of all rural counties in the Southeast by the magazine. Only one other Mississippi county was rated in the Top 60 – Rankin County.

In compiling this list, *Progressive Farmer* considered factors such as economics, education, crime rates, health-care, environment, entertainment, and climate. The entire list with information on individual counties as well as lists for other regions of the nation can be accessed at www.pfbestplaces.com.



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You can register online @ www.ucda-newalbany.com or call the UCDA office (534-4354) with your email address