



PHOTO BY CHARLES HODGES

# SELLING HER CITY

By Michael Candelaria

SAIC'S BEVERLY J. KITAOKA

» With more than 28 years of experience in the research, development and management of commercial and Department of Defense software-intensive solutions, Bev Kitaoka is obviously a high-tech leader.

As a senior vice president with Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC), Kitaoka manages the Training and Simulations Solutions Business Unit for the largest employee-owned research and engineering firm in the nation. Her unit is headquartered in Orlando, with a three-story, 85,000-square-foot building that houses 350 employees at the Central Florida Research Park.

Keenly interested in economic development, Kitaoka is also a community leader. She is passionate about touting the virtues of her home city and the Florida High Tech Corridor.

Why Metro Orlando? Kitaoka offers numerous reasons for her enthusiasm, plus provides insight into SAIC's role in this thriving high tech community.

**T Texture:** What is a typical SAIC project that concisely explains what

**the company does here in Orlando?**

**bk Bev Kitaoka:** No one project can tell the whole story, but let me describe our key programs. We're working with the Army to develop One SAF — that's One Semi Automated Force. It's a program that's going to satisfy the needs of trainers, as well as people who buy weapons and vehicles, and analysts who study things like how the Army should be organized. We're also working with Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines in Miami, improving their IT practice, so they can do what they do best, which is running a cruise line. Locally, we are working with The North Highland Company to help Florida Hospital assess and advance its software development processes. We're also developing the integrated criminal history system for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

The common theme is this: we

develop first-rate software-intensive systems. We have disciplined program management processes, and we do a lot of systems-level integration.

**T Why such a large presence for SAIC in Metro Orlando?**

**bk** The large presence is due to having our main customers here, from the Department of Defense. We have the Army, with more than a \$1 billion budget; plus the Navy, the Air Force and the Marines. They're all co-located here at Central Florida Research Park. When the Navy moved to the Research Park, we followed (in 1986) as a support contractor. I moved here in 1990 and converted SAIC from support to actually doing systems development.

**T Would you describe this region as a high tech hotspot?**

**bk** Absolutely. There's great collaboration between business and a university [University of Central Florida] that supports the high tech domain, all the way to having master's and PhD programs in modeling and simulation. These academic offerings have even helped attract international companies,

such as INDRA, to the region. We host a big conference here every year, called the Interservice Industry Training, Simulation and Education Conference (I/ITSEC). It's the largest annual event of its kind in the world, bringing around 15,000 people a year to Orlando every December. In addition to U.S. delegates, we had representatives from approximately 50 countries in attendance last December.

Because we have so many different military services here, they are working to provide joint solutions. They share their technologies among each other. You combine that with the private industry that's developed around it and the academia all along this high tech corridor. We create a very competitive labor market with good living costs, beautiful climate, tax advantages and a great airport. When you sum it all up, I think you see why it's such a great place to be.

And, it's not just government busi-

ness and simulation and training that makes Orlando a technology hot spot. There are other industries, as well.

**T You mentioned the labor market. How does Orlando's labor pool rate?**

**bk** Let me put it in these terms: I've never had a problem hiring the quality skill level that I need here. I think most people who come to our office and see the research and development that we're doing, the innovative technology that we're creating, and the way we look at solving some of our customers' really difficult problems, are impressed. We're recognized for those abilities. I think that sets us [Metro Orlando] apart from other locations trying to replicate the same thing.

**T You talk about the current situation. Does the region have high tech growth potential in the future?**

**bk** There is a lot of potential. It's incumbent upon us to appreciate and under-

stand what we have here, and to get that message out. There is tremendous value and leverage here.

**T What about SAIC's future in Orlando — do you see a continuation of growth?**

**bk** We have bought enough land to build a second building, and we're definitely looking at expanding in the near future.

**T If a company were looking to relocate or expand into Metro Orlando, what would you say to those corporate decision makers?**

**bk** I would say it's a great environment with diversity, access to culture and academia. It's also a great place to raise kids. I've raised my kids here. They can be outside all the time. There are sports year-round and good schools. In addition to that, there's a wide variety of high tech activity here. It's a good place to call home. **x**

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