

News to

NOTE

By Jennifer Wakefield

HERE'S A GLIMPSE INSIDE THE LATEST HAPPENINGS IN METRO ORLANDO'S THRIVING BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

»» While there has been an overall slowdown of the economy across the country, the Metro Orlando region hasn't felt the effects in terms of new business prospects. In fact, the local Economic Development Commission has received more interest this year than in 2007. This is partly because of the fact that Metro Orlando maintains a more diverse economy than most people realize, as well as a result of major moves within the business community.

MAJOR MOVES

AirTran Airways announced that it will expand its corporate headquarters in Metro Orlando, its home since 1998. The company plans to add 121 new jobs to its existing workforce. Similarly, **Busch Entertainment Corporation** — the parent company of SeaWorld® Orlando, Discovery Cove®, Aquatica™ -SeaWorld's WaterPark and several other parks nationwide — is relocating its headquarters here from St. Louis.

Two international companies recently established U.S. operations in Metro Orlando: Aromatech Flavorings, Inc., which develops and markets flavors for the food industry; and Trihedral Engineering, a developer and integrator of computer software for monitoring and control.

EMERGING MEDICAL CITY

News about the region's evolving "medical city" is spreading quickly. There are a host of new development projects sprouting up around Orlando's Lake Nona, the future home of The

Burnham Institute for Medical Research, University of Central Florida College of Medicine, University of Florida Research Facility and proposed Veterans Affairs Hospital and Nemours Childrens' Clinic.

Adding to the buzz, in recent weeks: **Florida Hospital** announced plans to create the Global Robotics Institute (GRI) — a robotic surgery training site for physicians from around the world — as part of the Nicholson Center for Surgical Advancement; **M.D. Anderson Cancer Center's** Orlando Cancer Research Institute (CRI) unveiled plans to co-locate with the UCF College of Medicine. This will provide on-site training opportunities for medical school students; and, the **U.S. Army's** local simulation and training command unit (PEO STRI) announced plans to establish a federally funded Center of Excellence in the area. This will allow army scientists to work with the med school to develop advanced training systems in healthcare.

To find out more, plan to attend Orlando's first Medical Technology, Training and Treatment Conference

(MT3) from June 1-3 at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort. Visit www.mt3.bz for more information.



NEWS FROM THE REEL WORLD

Metro Orlando's film industry has buzzed with back-to-back activity for the last 18 months.

With the opening of **House of Moves**, downtown Orlando is now home to the only professional motion capture studio on the east coast. News of this state-of-the-art facility; presence in Florida is generating widespread interest among the film and video game producers throughout the U.S.

Orlando has traditionally been a hot market for television commercials due to our variety of scenery and ability to stand-in for any location on the globe, as well as our year-round greenery. While that segment of the industry remains strong, the region has also served as the location for several recent independent and feature films.

Films wrapping up this spring include *Bait Shop*, a feature-length movie shot on location in Central Florida's Kissimmee and Osceola County. Starring Bill Engvall of *Blue Collar Comedy* fame, with a special appearance from Billy Ray Cyrus, the film tells the story of the owner of a small town bait shop who

signs up for a fishing tournament in hopes of using the prize money to save his store from foreclosure.

Due out in spring 2008, *Never Back Down* by Summit Entertainment actually features Orlando as the location in the storyline. It's about a new-to-town teenager who quickly learns that he has to find a way to stand up to the school bully, an expert in mixed martial arts. World-class actor Djimon Hounsou plays Jake's mentor and owner of the 365 Combat Club, which is actually Best Shot Studios in Sanford, Florida (see Special FX, page 26).

MFV Productions, in association with Universal Pictures, shot *Beethoven: The Reel Story* almost entirely at Universal Studios Orlando. The feature film follows the making of the original Beethoven movie.

New reality TV series, "Bridal Boot Camp" was shot in Lake County. The series, which will air on CMT (Country Music Television network) in summer 2008, follows ten brides as they compete to get in shape for their big day. Ultimately, the winner not only ends up looking fabulous for her special moment, but also has the wedding of her dreams ... on the house.



ORLANDO: AN ENTREPRENEURIAL HOTBED

Recent start-up companies taking advantage of the region's growing reputation for innovation and resources available to entrepreneurs include **Planar Energy Devices**, which is developing commercial applications for advanced micro-batteries that can be used in the fields of medicine, alternate energy and consumer electronics. **Green Skies, Inc.** is an aviation consulting company that helps airlines, airports and aviation-related firms become more environmentally friendly. **Petra Solar** is working with UCF to develop solar energy products, and **Welnia** offers comprehensive software platforms for disease management and wellness.

These start-ups couldn't get off the ground without funding ... which typically comes from venture capital firms or groups known as "angel investors." In Orlando, there are a growing number of resources and organizations available to young businesses. In mid-May, the Florida Venture Forum will present the Florida Early Stage Capital Conference in Orlando for companies looking for funding.

Several technology incubators are also based here. The UCF Technology Incubator has been rated the best in the nation, and in the past year the university has helped establish two new incubator locations — the Orlando Business Development Center located near downtown Orlando, and a Seminole County Incubator site in Winter Springs. 

METRO ORLANDO GOES GREEN

It seems like everyone's going green lately, and Metro Orlando is no exception.

As home to the UCF Florida Solar Energy Center, Central Florida is no stranger to solar power. But now the **Orange County Convention Center**, one of the largest convention centers in the world, has announced that it will cover its roof with solar panels and turn Florida's sunshine into energy. This project will be the largest solar project in the Southeast and is a part of Orange County Mayor Rich Crotty's push for Orange County to "go green." (For more information see page 17) In other local environmental news, three national conferences on the use of alternate fuels were recently held in

Metro Orlando — the National Biodiesel Conference & Expo, the National Ethanol Conference and the Waste to Fuels Conference.

