

Celebrations

Katahdin Cedar Log Homes has received the prestigious award "Builder Friendly" status from Building Systems Magazine. The Builder Friendly designation indicates that the Oakfield firm offers a number of support services to their clients – design services, log grading, a construction manual and construction training. "The standards for the designation were rigorous, but we've worked hard and were able to meet them," said Barry Ivey, the company's vice president.

MMG, 2007 Best Place to Work in Maine At a ceremony held Oct. 2 at the Augusta Civic Center, MMG was named one of the 2007 Best Places to Work in Maine. "We feel great about coming in number-one," said Larry Shaw, president and chief executive officer of MMG. "It's an affirmation that the approach we're doing – providing an environment that the employees enjoy – is working. The employees enjoy both the opportunity for professional development, and the fact that the company is concerned about them personally. We take a lot of pride in being employee friendly."

continued p. 2

Stewart Response Group Expands in Aroostook County

It has been close to a year since Stewart Response Group set up a virtual call center in southern Aroostook County. Two months later, the company secured the 20 people it initially expected to hire during the start-up phase of the operation. Since then, the company has expanded rapidly and now has 75 agents scattered throughout southern Aroostook. And, once again, they are looking to expand.

"We've had a presence in the Houlton area for over a year now, and it has just been amazing," Dan Connor, vice president of sales and marketing for the company, said Monday evening. "The people we have been able to recruit have been wonderful. They are reliable, dedicated and professional."

Stewart Response Group is a center for incoming and outgoing calls that specializes in direct marketing. The firm recruits, contracts and certifies sales agents who work from home and become part of SRG's virtual sales team.

At this point, said Connor, the company is looking to boost its employment roster. "We want to move pretty fast," he said. "By the end of this year we think we can keep 200 people busy. We'd like to be at 200 agents total." Emily Putnam, who serves as call center director, estimated that 40 percent of its employees are in the greater Aroostook County area.

"We've had great luck with finding employees in Maine in general, but we've had very good



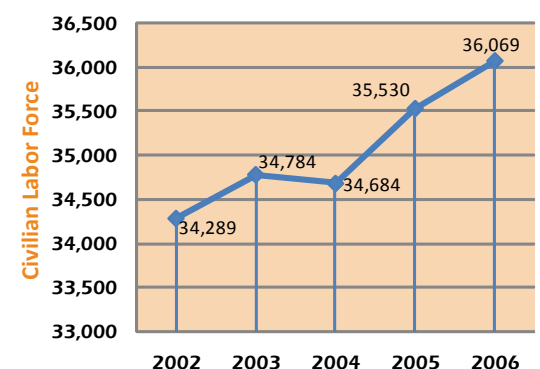
luck in The County," she said. "We came to the Houlton area because of the good work ethic there, and we knew we could help people who are looking for work because they can work anywhere. They don't need to come to an office every day. They can have flexible schedules, which makes this a good opportunity for people who need to work around commitments such as school or child care."

Putnam credited several County entities, including the Southern Aroostook Development Corp. and Pioneer Wireless, with being key in helping the company with the expansion process.

"Stewart Response Group is offering an innovative approach to employment that is needed by many in northern Maine. It is not surprising that SRG finds its agents supportive and their work ethics superb, a trait that is well known in Aroostook workers. We appreciate SRG filling this important employment need."
- Jon A. McLaughlin,
Executive Director, SADC

For more information, go to www.stewartresponsegroup.com.

Aroostook County Civilian Labor Force 2002-2006



Source: Maine Department of Labor

Synergy Solutions

Fort Kent Synergy Solutions has experienced exciting growth since the opening of its doors on March 28, 2007. The Company now employs more than 100 people, providing full time employment to 83% of the employees for the company. "The opportunity of being able to offer inbound and outbound calling has been the "shot in the arm" we needed to attract qualified applicants," said Karen Deprey, Center Manager. "We are excited to be here as a vital part of the Fort Kent economy and look forward to adding more employees to our team."

Maine Quality Centers

Program offers free training to new and expanding businesses.



Employers in Aroostook County save on expansion and training costs, and employees receive free specialized training that can lead to quality, full-time jobs with Maine companies on the move.

The Maine Quality Centers, in alliance with Northern Maine Community College (NMCC), provides training to employees of new and expanding businesses in northern Maine. The program provides 100% state-financed education and training in support of job creation, as well as customized recruitment and guaranteed fast-track training designed to employer specifications.

Recently, Pattison Sign Group was one of two companies in Aroostook County to receive

state funding to provide their employees with education and training at NMCC in Presque Isle. "Our objective is to offer customized training to our new employees, helping them to work safely, acquire new skills and increase competency levels," Hermel Landry, director of the human resources department for Pattison Sign Group stated.

NMCC president Timothy Crowley noted the recent training initiative with Pattison Sign Group, made possible by Maine Quality Centers, represented a "critical component of NMCC's overall efforts to meet the workforce and economic development needs of northern Maine."

Workforce Analysis

Generations at Work

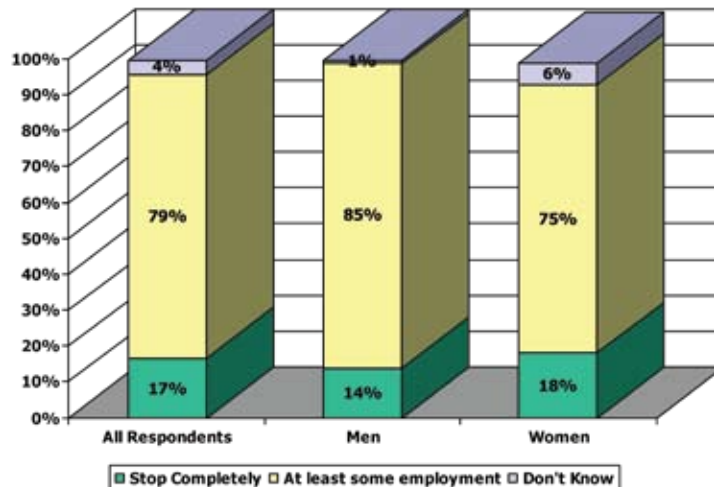
For years, northern Maine has been known for its work ethic. Highly productive, low absenteeism and low turnover have been trademarks for the region's labor force. It was these attributes that were cited in DFAS Limestone's decision to double the size of its labor force, Louisiana Pacific's decision to invest another \$110 million into their facility and Huber Engineered Woods decision to invest another \$40 million. Other stories abound in the region that demonstrates what a significant asset our labor force is for business.

To better understand the quality of our labor force, the County of Aroostook, through its Local Workforce Investment Board, partnered with the Northern Maine Development Commission and the Maine Department of Labor to conduct an in-depth analysis of the region's labor force that would guide both employers and employees in making critical employment deci-

sions. Research and analysis for the report were performed by the University of Southern Maine Center for Business and Economic Research during the spring of 2007 with special attention to the aging worker, retirement expectations, and the implications for maintaining a robust labor force. The report also explores the characteristics of the Aroostook workforce both from the employer and employee perspective.

Results from the study indicate that "Aroostook employees are ready to continue to make contributions as part of the workforce past "normal" retirement age, and Aroostook employers are, for the most part, getting ready to take advantage of that willingness."

The study will help in marketing Aroostook County for new investment and jobs, and in shaping the direction of workforce training efforts. Contact APP to learn more about the reports findings and/or request a copy.



Nearly 80% of respondents indicate they will probably seek some kind of employment after working rather than stopping work completely. Men, however, are much more likely than women to indicate a preference to continue some kind of work. Women are also slightly more likely to not know what they will do.

Spotlight on NMFC

Northern Maine Finance Corporation

In 2005, recognizing that northern Maine's economic development portfolio lacked a means to provide "angel investor" financing and low interest loans and equity investments for the purpose of retaining and attracting new business, the Northern Maine Finance Corporation (NMFC) was created. According to Robert P. Clark, President of NMFC, the NMFC allows us to become very proactive in the business development process in a way that the typical economic development funding sources are not capable." We understand that retaining and attracting new business is very competitive and a different approach is needed if we're to be successful in northern Maine. The NMFC provides us with that opportunity." NMFC was established to make equity investment in companies and purchase facilities in order to generate economic activity in the region. NMFC was also incorporated to access capital for



businesses located outside the Empowerment Zone, recognizing that these businesses cannot access the incentives afforded to Zone businesses.

One such example is the Aroostook Investment Exchange (AIX), a forum provided by NMFC, connects providers of risk capital with qualified entrepreneurs seeking capital. NMFC has also purchased facilities with the intent of attracting new business to the region. It was this proactive capability that made it possible for both Connect North America and Synergy Solutions to locate in northern Maine this past year. As a result, approximately 400 new jobs were created and vacant buildings are now occupied.

For more information about the NMFC, contact Mr. Duane Walton at dwalton@nmfc.org or 498-8736.

Newest Investors

Northern Maine Medical Center (NMMC) recently became an APP investor pledging \$10,000 in support of APP's mission to attract additional jobs and investment in the County. "We understand the Partnership's mission and are impressed with what we have seen so far," said Martin Bernstein, President. "The economic vitality of northern Maine is important to not only the region but also to our business. The success of APP has the potential to positively impact our medical center and so it makes sense for us to be actively involved with the Partnership. We view our commitment as a strategic investment and look forward to a long and productive relationship."

Message from the President

*M*omentum Aroostook...more than just a name. I found it quite interesting when the recently organized young professional group in the County decided upon a name to identify themselves. After much thought and deliberations, the group selected "*Momentum Aroostook*." *Momentum Aroostook*, an initiative supported by Leaders Encouraging Aroostook Development (LEAD), focuses on providing opportunities for young and middle age adults to network, socialize and otherwise become active in the future development of the County.

Momentum Aroostook also reflects the proactive approach to economic development in the County. Through the efforts of the entire APP team, projects are moving forward in the County. In recent weeks, our workforce took front and center stage with the release of the report "A Profile of the Workforce in Aroostook County 2007." Commissioned by NMDC and the Local Workforce Investment Board, the report identified the demographic challenge in maintaining an adequate workforce to assure economic growth. Secondly, through the

efforts of our entire Congressional delegation, legislation has been introduced to create the Northern Border Regional Commission. This Commission would bring investment, leadership, and focus to regional economic development efforts in the Northeast, including Aroostook County. The Commission would be charged with investing \$40 million per year — rising to \$60 million per year by 2012. Thirdly, the private sector also continued to create economic momentum as a number of our existing businesses indicated their intention to expand and create additional job opportunities, including Stewart Response Group, Pattison Signs, Burrelle's, Evergreen Trading and Creative Apparel among others. The growth of our existing industry base coupled with the APP team's efforts to attract additional investment provides reason to be optimistic about the region's economic future.

Momentum Aroostook reflects The County's can-do spirit and drive to make things happen. Let's keep the momentum going in 2008.
Happy Holidays.



Walt Elish

The NorState Federal Credit Union became APP's newest investor pledging \$1,000 in support of the organization's mission. "The Credit Union's Board of Directors is pleased to support APP's important work," said Dave Rossignol, President & CEO. "We receive funding requests on a regular basis but felt that supporting APP's mission is an investment in the County's and our future." Founded in 1941, NorState is headquartered in Madawaska and currently operates five branches in northern Aroostook County.

APP Progress To Date

Projected New Jobs
1,000 +/-
Jobs Retained
663
Total Investment
\$115 million +/-

Investor Profile – United Insurance Group (UIG)

The United
Insurance



Group is one of the largest independent insurance agencies in Maine with locations from Falmouth to Fort Kent. The company specializes in providing professional and private insurance to individuals from all walks of life with clients ranging from lobstermen to bankers.

The agency was founded in August

1976 as a holding company when two independent Maine insurance companies (HO Perry in Fort Fairfield and Bradish/Young in Falmouth) joined forces to provide clients the benefit of having multiple locations while still providing community oriented service.

Over the years, UIG has had a number of insurance companies join their ranks and they currently have 14 locations across the state, six of which are located in Aroostook County. The company currently employs 125 people at their various locations.

UIG CEO and Treasurer Chris Condon stated that the company is “pleased to support the APP; believing very much in reinvesting in the communities with which we live and work. As a service organization, we clearly recognize that a healthy economy is beneficial to everyone in the County. We are committed to Aroostook County and impressed with the performance of our agencies there. The employees at these agencies are our competitive advantage. They are knowledgeable, trained and customer focused. The Aroostook County work ethic is renowned to business owners across the State.”

Investor Profile – The Aroostook Medical Center (TAMC)

The Aroostook Medical Center (TAMC), the region’s largest health-care organization, provides access to many specialty services not found elsewhere in Aroostook County, including cancer care, heart care, and kidney dialysis services. TAMC also provides primary care services in several communities in the region. The hospital’s mission is to “restore, maintain, and improve the health of our friends and neighbors in a compassionate and professional environment.”

A non-profit organization founded in 1912, TAMC traces its roots back to



Presque Isle General Hospital, a facility that was designed to accommodate only 18 to 20 patients. In the late 1950s, A.R. Gould Memorial Hospital was built to address the community’s need for a modern hospital. The hospital joined Community General Hospital in Fort Fairfield and Aroostook Health Center in Mars Hill in the early 1980s to form The Aroostook Medical Center. TAMC now has approximately 20 health care clinics, 177 licensed beds, 68 active physicians, and over 1,100 employees.

TAMC plays an active role in the com-

munity by participating in local events and trade shows. The organization also hosts an annual health fair and the Survivor Aroostook Health Career Exploration Camp which introduces local youth to medical careers.

For Aroostook County residents, TAMC continues to be the place where residents can access the care they need to maintain an optimum level of health. Joy Barresi Saucier, Vice President of Public Relations, stated that the organization’s goal is “to offer county residents access to convenient medical services with caring and compassion, as close to home as possible.”

*To receive this newsletter electronically,
please send your email address to
Progress@APPme.org*