

## Highlights of Economic and Business Growth in the Tampa Bay Region

TAMPA BAY, Fla., April 17, 2008/PRNewswire/ -- News briefs concerning the economic and business growth in the Tampa Bay Region from the Tampa Bay Partnership:

### **Tampa Bay Ranks #2 Nationwide For Lowest Business Costs**

The Tampa Bay region ranked number two for having the lowest overall business costs among the top 25 major U.S. cities, according to the 2008 KPMG Competitive Alternatives Business Cost Index. Tampa Bay tied with Dallas-Fort Worth in the ranking with a score of 97.3 on a scale where 100 is the U.S. average. The KPMG study measures the combined impact of 27 cost components that are most likely to vary by location. These include tax, labor and facility costs. The basis for comparison is the after-tax cost of startup and operations over 10 years. Additionally, the Tampa Bay region ranked #1 for lowest business costs among the top 25 U.S. cities for Shared Services, a key industry cluster for the region with over 40 shared services operations employing over 40,000 workers. Organizations with large shared services operations in the Tampa Bay region include Coca-Cola Enterprises, Lockheed Martin, PricewaterhouseCoopers, JPMorgan Treasury Technologies, among others. (Contact: Larry Henson, 813-878-2208, [lhenson@tampabay.org](mailto:lhenson@tampabay.org))

### **High-End Eyeglass Maker Neostyle Locates U.S. Sales, Distribution in Tampa Bay**

Neostyle, one of the world's best known high-end eyeglass frame designer/manufacturers, has moved its U.S. distribution headquarters to downtown Bradenton where the company is launching direct-to-market distribution for the first time in more than 30 years. The eyeglass designer responsible for Elvis Presley's iconic gold sunglasses, whose frames are worn by Oprah Winfrey, the Queen of England and Elizabeth Taylor, previously used a distributor in California for its U.S. operation. Neostyle, a 48-year-old German company that is known for hand crafted designs and precision manufacturing, had worldwide sales of \$40 million in 2007. (Contact Bob Lawson, 941-538-6953, [lawson@neostyle.de](mailto:lawson@neostyle.de))

### **U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Dedicates New Building in Tampa Bay**

USGS – St. Petersburg recently celebrated the dedication of its newest building. The 11,400 square-foot building, which features six state-of-the-art labs, a dive locker, and 12 offices, is the third within the USGS campus and is the latest addition to the C.W. Bill Young Marine Science Complex located along the waterfront in downtown St. Petersburg. The C.W. Bill Young Marine Science Complex consists of the University of South Florida College of Marine Science and its Center for Ocean Technology, the USGS Florida Integrated Science Center, the Fish and Wildlife Research Institute of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Tampa Bay Estuary Program, the Southwest Regional Office of the National Marine Fisheries Service, Florida Sea Grant, Eckerd College, and the Florida Institute of Oceanography. (Jack Kindinger, 727-803-8747 ext. 3018, [jkindinger@usgs.gov](mailto:jkindinger@usgs.gov))

### **American Tire Distributors Signs Largest Tampa Bay Area Lease**

American Tire Distributors, the largest distributor of tires and tire products in North America, is tripling its warehouse space in the Tampa Bay area. The Huntersville, N.C.-based company signed a 10-year lease for roughly 147,000 square feet in East Tampa. It's the biggest local lease deal so far this year and valued at more than \$17 million. The center will serve as the distribution hub for deliveries to retailers throughout Central Florida. (Contact: American Tire Distributors, 704.992.2000, <http://atd-us.com>)

### **Tampa Bay Schools to Launch EXCEerator Program**

Next fall, the Hillsborough County Public Schools system will be the first school district in the nation to use the EXCEerator program in all middle and high schools in the district. The College Board, the organization best known for the SAT college-entrance exam, received grant funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to create the EXCEerator program, a comprehensive school improvement program launched in selected school districts in 2006 aimed at improving graduation rates and preparing students for college success by making courses more rigorous. Middle-of-the-road students, particularly those who would be the first in their family to attend college, will find support in everything from note-taking skills to applying to universities. English and math teachers will be trained to use the College Board's curriculum, which includes a heavy emphasis on group work, to push their students to higher levels of thinking. (Contact: Steve Hegarty, 813-272-4060, [Stephen.hegarty@sdhc.k12.fl.us](mailto:Stephen.hegarty@sdhc.k12.fl.us))

### **Child Awareness USA Moves to Tampa Bay: Relocation Assistance Seals the Deal.**

When Child Awareness USA, LLC decided to relocate operations from Manchester, England to a U.S. location, Pinellas County was the company's top choice. Child Awareness USA's main aim is to educate children on the effects of drug and alcohol abuse, by using books as a teaching tool in schools and colleges across the U.S. The company has eight full-time employees and plans to add another 20 high-wage positions over the next two years. According to company officials, the determining factor in the site selection decision was the relocation assistance provided by Pinellas County Economic Development (PCED). (Contact: Amanda Artingstall, 727-507-8800, [www.childawarenessusa.org](http://www.childawarenessusa.org))

### **Tampa Bay Keeps on Racing!**

Honda Grand Prix of St. Petersburg will continue its popular street race event for another five years with the recently announced extension of the racing agreement between the City of St. Petersburg, Indy Racing League, American Le Mans Series, Andretti Green Promotions, Honda and Acura. With this announcement, the Grand Prix's circuit will run through 2013. Since the inaugural event in 2005, the Grand Prix has continued to grow. The 2007 race drew an estimated 125,000 fans. The 2008 race featured two international races, televised on ABC and ESPN, airing in 200 countries worldwide. The popular street race runs on a 1.8 mile, 14-turn race circuit that winds along the picturesque waterfront of downtown St. Petersburg earning it positive comparisons to Monte Carlo. (Contact: Tim Ramsberger, 727-824-7223, [tramsberger@gpstpete.com](mailto:tramsberger@gpstpete.com))

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