

## **Highlights of Economic and Business Growth in the Tampa Bay Region (Shorts)**

TAMPA BAY, Fla., March 9, 2004/PRNewswire/ -- Here are some shorts concerning the economic and business growth in the Tampa Bay Region from the Tampa Bay Partnership:

### **University Breaks Ground on New Research Park Facilities**

The University of South Florida broke ground recently on two new buildings in its Research Park for bioengineering, life sciences research and entrepreneurship. The new buildings, linked by an atrium, will house research and lab programs, including the Center for Biological Defense, along with offices for start-up businesses through the Tampa Bay Technology Incubator program. The two buildings have a price tag of \$40 million and should be ready for business at the start of 2005. For more information and contacts, visit <http://isis.fastmail.usf.edu/researchpark/contacts.html>.

### **Santech, Inc. Scores a Big League Win with Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex.**

The Clearwater-based manufacturer of stadium scoreboards has secured a contract to provide 12 scoreboards to Disney's Wide World of Sports in Orlando. Naum Kunis, CEO, explains the secret of his growing company's success, "Our motto is 'Don't compromise, when you can customize.' The ability to create an affordable custom solution to meet Disney's requirements allowed us to become the preferred supplier for this project." Learn more about Santech, Inc., at [www.scoreboards.net](http://www.scoreboards.net), or contact Nicholas Vouris at 727-571-4105 or [nick@scoreboards.net](mailto:nick@scoreboards.net).

### **St. Petersburg Named "Most Livable Community"**

St. Petersburg has been named one of the decade's "Most Livable Communities" by the Partners for Livable Communities, a national nonprofit organization that recognizes cities that are innovative in bringing vitality, growth and improved quality of life to their communities. Citing its legacy of excellent urban planning, its beautiful natural environment and its energetic civic involvement, the organization recognized St. Petersburg as "a dynamic metropolitan area with significant job growth and a high-tech workforce. Fueled by a red-hot arts scene as well as careful city planning and investment, St. Petersburg's transformation from a seasonal tourist and retirement destination to a leader in the economic growth of the St. Petersburg/Tampa region is a testament to the quality and attractiveness of the community." The award will be presented at the National Press Club on Tuesday, April 20, 2004. Contact: Ann Wykell, City of St. Petersburg, 727-551-3250 or visit [www.mostlivable.org](http://www.mostlivable.org).

## **Tampa Among the Least-Expensive Cities for Business**

The Tampa Bay area ranked the second-least expensive place to do business among major cities in the continental United States, according to a study conducted by KPMG LLP, an audit, tax and advisory firm. KPMG's 2004 Competitive Alternatives study, which measured the combined impact of 27 location-sensitive business-operating costs, such as labor, taxes and utility costs, is used by corporations and other businesses for selecting locations for new or expansion operations. Tampa Bay was selected from among cities with populations exceeding 1.5 million. The full report is available at <http://www.competitivealternatives.com/>

## **Fibertech Announces New Specialty Glass Factory, Plans to Hire Up to 400**

Fibertech, Inc., a Salt Lake City-based investment group, has purchased the former Owens-Brockway factory in Lakeland and plans to manufacture specialty glass products there, employing between 300 and 400 workers at full production capacity. Construction will begin in the second quarter this year and production will start in the first quarter of 2005. Fibertech Inc. is led by The Radman Group of Companies in Utah, an international family-led business that specializes in fiber technology in the glass industry. Contact: [www.wfengineering.com](http://www.wfengineering.com).

## **Wireless Camera Surveillance System Wins Two National Product of the Year Awards**

Beacon Products, Inc., a Manatee County, Florida-based manufacturer, recently won two national Product of the Year awards for its wireless camera surveillance system (WCSS) which can be disguised as an outdoor light fixture. *Buildings* magazine, a national publication for owners and operators of commercial buildings, selected WCSS as one of the Top 100 Building Products of the Year for 2003. WCSS was also selected by *Electrical Construction & Maintenance* magazine, a national publication for electrical contractors and distributors, as the Product of the Year for 2004 in the security and safety category. WCSS is discreetly contained within outdoor ambient area fixtures, allowing surveillance cameras to be hidden in even the most upscale of outdoor public or private environments. Learn more about Beacon Products at [www.beaconproducts.com](http://www.beaconproducts.com) or contact: Michael Imparto, President, 941-755-6694.

## **National Financial Services Co. Selects St. Petersburg for New Headquarters**

American Collegiate Financial Services (ACFS), a national financial services company, announced the selection of St. Petersburg for its new corporate headquarters expansion. ACFS will create 300 full-time jobs with an average annual wage of \$50,000. The firm invested more than \$1 million in renovations, technology and equipment in its new site in downtown St. Petersburg. American Collegiate Financial Services provides financial solutions for federal student loan consolidation and debt management. Contact: Nicole Knight, director of marketing, (727) 280-0375, ext. 1023 or [nknight@acfsloans.com](mailto:nknight@acfsloans.com).

## **Verizon to Open 24-Hour Call Center in Lakeland**

Verizon announced plans to open a call center at its downtown Lakeland offices and add 250 jobs. The 24-hour call center will provide operator and 411-type services for national customers. The call center is part of an overall project of hiring 1,000 new operators in eight locations nationally. Contact: Bob Elek, Verizon, 813-483-2541 or [robert.elek@verizon.com](mailto:robert.elek@verizon.com).

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