



Circleville Herald

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February 21, 2007

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New Orleans marks 2nd Mardi Gras since Katrina

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Thousands of hurricane-weary residents joined with rowdy visitors for Fat Tuesday, taking a break from rebuilding New Orleans to put on wild costumes and celebrate the second Mardi Gras since Hurricane Katrina.

John Ferguson, who is still rebuilding his house almost 18 months after the storm, said of the celebration: "We never needed it more."

"I work all day at my job; then I work all night and all weekend on my house," Ferguson said. "I just want to eat, drink and have fun today."

Many spectators spent the day along the parade routes or in the French Quarter, where the first Mardi Gras parade of the day was staged by the 1,250-member Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, a predominantly black group that wears grass skirts and black face makeup in parody of stereotypes from the early 1900s, when it was founded.

"I'm hyped up," said Ike Williams, a 42-year-old Atlanta contractor who is black, marching in his first parade as a member of Zulu's Walking Warriors. "I couldn't sleep last night. This is the center of the universe right now."

Earlier in the day, Mayor Ray Nagin rode a horse down St. Charles Avenue.

"We're going to make it happen," Nagin told the crowd at Gallier Hall, which served as city hall for more than a century. "We're going to rebuild this city regardless."

Nagin urged tourists to spend money. "We need the tax revenue bad," he said.

Thousands packed the 12 blocks of Bourbon Street, and more flowed into the French Quarter as the parades wound down with the setting sun.

The crowds appeared larger than last year, when an estimated 700,000 people were in the city for the final weekend and Mardi Gras. The city's 30,000 hotel rooms were 95 percent occupied, according to Fred Sawyers, president of the Greater New Orleans Hotel & Lodging Association.

County's economic outlook: signs of progress

By WAYLON STRICKLAND
HERALD STAFF WRITER

The economic picture for Pickaway County has recently been bleak, but progress is being made and fortunes may be turning.

The Pickaway Progress Partnership (P3) held its first annual economic outlook luncheon Tuesday afternoon, in association with the Pickaway County Chamber of Commerce.

John Miles, President of the Ohio branch of Florida Production Engineering (FPE), Ormond Beach, Fla., announced a \$4.5 million expansion at the FPE Circleville facility.

"Production at the Circleville plant has increased by 60 percent since 2001," Miles said.

The 38,000 square foot expansion at the Orr Road location is expected to be completed in June. Equipment additions and upgrades are also included in the expansion plans.

"We are investing \$2 million in the building expansion, and an additional \$2.5 million is being invested to add and upgrade production equipment," said Miles.

The expansion will create room for additional equipment to increase production and add additional shipping docks and warehouse space. It will also create 15 full-time and 18 part-time jobs.

FPE, a subsidiary of Ernie Green Industries Inc., Dayton, manufactures injection molded plastics such as wheel covers and trim for the automobile industry.

"The economic outlook for

2007 is good, and I'm working on several projects in 2007 to improve the county," said P3 Economic Development Director Nate Green.



GREEN

Green Investment Group Inc., which purchased the old Smurfit site in January with hopes of attracting a biodiesel plant to the location, plans to start demolition on the property on March 1, according to Green. He said construction on the plant, which would bring 30 to 35 jobs, is expected to start in the summer.

Green also said work on the Norfolk Southern rail intermodal near Rickenbacker

Airport is on schedule to be completed in February, 2008.

"The Rickenbacker intermodal is creating a buzz in the warehouse and logistics community. It will spark activity in the area," said Green.

Sandy Rudawsky, Corporate Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Berger Health System, gave an update on the state of healthcare in Pickaway County.

According to Rudawsky, Berger has invested \$15 million at the Circleville site in the last five years. She also said there will be no further expansion at the Circleville site.

"Our future expansion will be in the north. Berger North is a vital part of Pickaway County," Rudawsky said. "But regardless of what we do in the north, we will keep a hospital

in Circleville," she added.

Tom Williamson, President and CEO of Solid Rock Builders and Developers Inc., presented information on the housing and light commercial construction industries in the county.

There is an excess inventory of homes in the county, according to Williamson. He stated new building permits dropped by 25 percent in 2006, and said, according to figures obtained by Solid Rock, the average home price in Pickaway County is \$150,300.

"Overall, in the housing and light construction market in Pickaway County, the outlook is positive. With the development around Rickenbacker Airport, including the rail intermodal, there will be a demand for 13,000 new homes in that area over the next 20 years," Williamson said.



Robert Mochernuk/For Circleville Herald

GM steals Detroit Auto Show

By BILL BROWNING
FOR THE HERALD

I will start my article this year with a complaint. The Car of the Year and the Truck of the Year both came from General Motors, the Saturn Aura and the Chevrolet Silverado.

But the headlines in the Detroit paper the next day were for something that Toyota had done.

That is a slap in the face to GM and the American automobile industry as a whole.

People say that the Hondas and Toyotas are built in the U.S., but the profits still go

back to Japan. The young people of today weren't around during World War II, and right after.

We rebuilt Japan's industry and now they are killing ours, with our own money.

We do make good automobiles and the proof of that is the same workers are making the American is my opinion and observations and has nothing to do with the opinions of this newspaper.

Anyway, the Ford Interceptor four door sedan is gorgeous and should be the replacement for the Crown Victoria.

Ford still has the best pickup on the market and the soon-to-be renamed Five Hundred is a nice car. It will be called the new Taurus when it is restyled for 2008.

General Motors didn't only have the two vehicles that won the yearly awards. They also introduced the 2008 Cadillac CTS that is a nice improvement over the current CTS.

Chevy had the new Camaro convertible which drew rave reviews from the media people. The Camaro will be introduced sometime in 2008 as a 2009 model.

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Merck suspends lobbying for cervical cancer vaccine mandate

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — Merck & Co., bowing to pressure from parents and medical groups, is immediately suspending its lobbying campaign to persuade state legislatures to mandate that adolescent girls get the company's new vaccine against cervical cancer as a requirement for school attendance.

The drug maker, which announced the change Tuesday, had been criticized for quietly funding the campaign, via a third party, to require 11- and 12-year-old girls get the three-dose vaccine in order to attend school.

Some had objected because the vaccine protects against a sexually transmitted disease, human papilloma virus, which causes cervical cancer. Vaccines mandated for school attendance usually are for diseases easily spread through casual contact, such as measles and mumps.

"Our goal is about cervical cancer prevention and we want to reach as many females as possible with Gardasil," Dr. Richard M. Haupt, Merck's medical director for vaccines, told The

Associated Press.

"We're concerned that our role in supporting school requirements is a distraction from that goal, and as such have suspended our lobbying efforts," Haupt said, adding the company will continue providing information about the vaccine if requested by government officials.

Whitehouse Station-based Merck launched Gardasil, the first vaccine to prevent cervical cancer, in June. It protects against the two virus strains that cause 70 percent of cervical cancer and two strains that cause most genital warts.

Sales totaled \$235 million through the end of 2006, according to Merck.

Last month, the AP reported that Merck was channeling money for its state-mandate campaign through Women in Government, an advocacy group made up of female state legislators across the country.

Conservative groups opposed the campaign, saying it would encourage premarital sex, and parents' rights groups said it interfered with their control over their children.

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Jerry Peters**
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9 states sue Bush administration over mercury emissions

By JOHN FLESHER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. (AP) — Michigan and eight other states sued the Bush administration Tuesday, saying the White House failed to adequately regulate emissions of mercury and other pollutants at cement plants.

The states contend a rule issued by the Environmental Protection Agency in December does not comply with the federal Clean Air Act.

Mercury comes from raw materials used to make cement — such as limestone, clay, sand and iron ore — and from fuels such as coal, which fires the kilns where the ingredients are baked at high

temperatures.

In December, the EPA announced new limits on mercury and hydrocarbon emissions from cement kilns built after Dec. 2, 2005.

But for kilns built earlier, the agency imposes lesser requirements such as operating kilns properly to ensure complete combustion and removing kiln dust when it can no longer be recycled.

Critics say the Clean Air Act requires the EPA to limit mercury from all kilns, not just new ones.

"I think they should have explored some of the options a bit more in detail than they did," said Vince Hellwig, air quality chief with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.

The lawsuit was filed

in the U.S. Court of Appeals in the District of Columbia, where several environmental groups filed a separate action last week. The other eight states are Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

EPA spokesman John Millett said the matter was under review and declined to comment further.

The agency says it has reduced mercury air emissions by 45 percent since 1990. It estimates the nation's 118 cement plants give off a combined 12,000 pounds of mercury a year, although some state regulators say the actual amount is higher.