

# Developments

Helping Employers Retain & Create Quality Jobs Rockford, Illinois USA

## Fortune 247 Expands in Machesney Park

Lights! Camera! Action! When Cirque du Soleil's 30-ton stages tilt and rotate precisely to the beat of pulsating music, it happens in part because of hydraulic accumulators made by Parker Hannifin in Machesney Park.

Due to robust business conditions in the entertainment, construction, agriculture, industrial and other industries, the Fortune 247 company is investing in a **\$4 million expansion** of their facility at 10711 North Second Street. Winnebago County gave a \$6,700 property-tax abatement in support of this project and the company's future growth. *"We think it's important to support companies that are already here,"* said Sue Mroz, director of economic development for the county.

The expansion will add 30,000 square feet of manufacturing and office space to the existing 55,000 square foot plant that was built in 1990 as Greer Hydraulics. Parker Hannifin acquired the business in 1996. There are 145 employees at the manufacturing site and the company plans to add 37 more by 2012. The accumulators manufactured at the site are devices that store energy for hydraulic systems.



Mark Gagnon, general manager of Parker Hydraulics Accumulator Division, in front of the \$4 million expansion of their Machesney Park plant designed by McClellan Blakemore Architects of Rockford.

### Pleased with Local Workforce

Mark Gagnon, general manager of Parker's Hydraulics Accumulator Division that has plants in the United Kingdom, Brazil, China and California plus its local facility, is very pleased with the Rockford area. *"I find the local workforce to be very strong. In addition, we have an active recruiting program at colleges and universities to ensure we are properly staffed with product and manufacturing engineers,"* he said.

### Strong Local Supply Chain

Gagnon finds the local supply chain to be of high quality. *"We don't have to manufacture everything in our plant, so from an inventory standpoint that's good. There are good suppliers in this area who can deliver just-in-time to us. Parker is very advanced in lean manufacturing, so suppliers that can manage inventory are important to us,"* he added.

### Growth

*"The Hydraulics Accumulator Division has doubled in size over the past four years, growing close to 20% each year,"* said Gagnon. *"We fully expect this pace to continue because of our innovative product development and aggressive targeting toward growth industries globally. In addition to this expansion, we plan to hire more engineering and production personnel and invest in state-of-the-art capital equipment to expand our capabilities."* The addition will allow the company to further penetrate markets such as power generation, active suspension systems and alternative energy solutions as well as significant growth in the division's international business.

## A Good Call

When Carter & Burgess, a national site-selection consultant, recommended that the Rockford area recruit **higher-end call center work**, they must have been thinking about Servicom and Quancor, two call centers that have grown steadily.

*The target-industry study conducted in June of 2007 found that:*

- Rockford could be the low-cost Midwest location for call centers
- Our labor availability is "above average" to "very good"
- Our labor quality is "good"

### 50% Growth Expected at Servicom

Servicom, formerly known as Ron Weber & Associates, is located at 9942 North Alpine

in Machesney Park, in the Willow Creek Industrial Park just north of the Route 173. The business has been there for 11 years and has a staff of 300. The vast majority are full-time employees with benefits. The company does create part-time jobs for students to accommodate their class schedules.

### Good Pay Checks

The pay scale ranges from \$8 to \$10.75 per hour, with 60 bilingual employees (English and Spanish) earning \$10.75. With the bonus programs that are available to most employees, employees can double their pay.



Kendall Williams, Servicom's facility director, and Kate McMahon, human resources manager.

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### Value-Added Means Higher Profit

Kendall Williams, director of the Servicom facility, attributes the company's success to organic growth. *"Most of the clients that we support continue to give us more work. This is a strong testimony to the added value that we offer our clients. Because our parent company, JNET Communications, offers a wide variety of connectivity services such as high-speed data installation, we're able to offer comprehensive, end-to-end customer relationship management solutions to our client base. This gives us a strategic advantage in the marketplace,"* he said.

Servicom is enjoying strong growth and expects to see 50% growth in the next 12 months. Williams plans to have 450 employees next year. Their national customers include a tax-preparation service, cable provider, motor club, international telecommunications company, and more.

Kate McMahon, human resources manager, says the caliber of their workforce is "excellent." She also credits their partners such as the **Workforce Connection, Rockford Business College and Rock Valley College** as great resources. "They help us get the right candidate pool," she said. "We have an advantage over our competitors because we attract Hispanic employees; we are an employer of choice," she added.

### Quancor Relocated to Rockford

When Marie and Steve Korn bought their Chicago call center business in 1996, they knew they needed to be in a more affordable labor market. "Rockford had that, a wealth of labor, a pool of exceptional call center people," said Steve, co-owner of Quancor.

They moved the company to Rockford in 2004. They occupy a 7800 sq. ft. facility at 4751 Harrison Road with 70 employees. Most are full time with full benefits, making \$8.50 to \$10 an hour plus lucrative bonus plans.

### Strong Growth Predicted

Business is strong and Quancor expects to double in size in the next five years. They cite their excellent service, strategic partners and a full range of products such as inbound and outbound teleservices, fulfillment, and more, plus steady demand for their services.

### Motivated Employees

One factor that sets Quancor apart is their partnership with two local social service organizations that have provided them with a strong pool of dedicated employees with low turnover, The Salvation Army and Reformers Unanimous.

Both agencies periodically refer people who have graduated from their rehab programs. *"These people want to work. All they want is for companies to give them a chance. The relationship has been really good because we're getting that highly motivated individual who's going*

*to work for you, no matter what,"* explained Marie. One Salvation Army referral has become a team leader. "We get to see and share in their success as they advance. That's very rewarding for us," she added.



Marie and Steve Korn, owners of Quancor.

### Consider Sweden

The RAEDC will make its third consecutive trade mission to Sweden this year, Sept. 13-19, with the centerpiece again to be Entrepreneurial Days (E-Days).

E-Days, the premier trade conference for Swedish and American businesses, will be held in Stockholm this year, Sept. 14-16. Many illustrious speakers have been invited and customized business-matchmaking meetings will be scheduled ahead of time. Visit <http://sacc-edays.org/stockholm/> for more information.

If you've been thinking about expanding your business globally, this trade mission could be an excellent option for you. Travel with business professionals who have been to Sweden and know the ropes.

The RAEDC staff is available to assist you. Contact Mark Podemski, [mpodemski@rockfordil.com](mailto:mpodemski@rockfordil.com), 815.987.8118, extension 124.

The primary role of the Rockford Area Economic Development Council is enhance wealth creation in the Rockford Region by marketing the area and helping employers retain and create quality jobs. The RAEDC works closely with many partners to serve as a one-stop resource for clients, to improve the competitiveness of the region and to engage the community in the work of economic development.

For more information on RAEDC programs or services, please call 815.987.8118, e-mail [information@rockfordil.com](mailto:information@rockfordil.com) or visit [www.rockfordil.com](http://www.rockfordil.com).

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