

# Former Siemens Managers To Open Molded Plastics Plant In Leland Park

BY SUSAN USHER

Two former managers of the closed Siemens Energy & Automation Inc. plant in Wilmington plan to open a small, new integrated molded plastics manufacturing firm in Leland Industrial Park.

Announcement of the new business venture was made Tuesday evening by Thomas Monks, executive director of the Brunswick County Economic Development Commission, in the first of a series of up to eight new business announcements Monks anticipates this summer.

Owned by Randolph J. Moore and George W. Millington, Premier Molded Plastics Inc. (PMPCo.) plans to hire 15 employees during its first year of operation and expects to eventually expand to a workforce of 42. Eight former Siemens employees will make up the "core" of the initial hires, said Monks, "and beyond that it's wide open."

Should the balance of the jobs be filled by individuals from outside the county, he said the plant opening is still "good news" because it means added tax base for Brunswick County.

The company will manufacture small plastic components such as thermostats for targeted markets that include the automotive, electrical distribution, electrical aftermarket, appliances and power tool industries.

PMPCo. is being formed to meet the need "for high quality, competitively priced plastics components," according to a company statement. "Through years of experience in the plastics industry, the owners of PMPCo. have recognized the need for quality plastic components, especially thermostats, and plan to develop a niche in this area of plastics molding."

Siemens manufactured a variety of plastic components, with circuit breakers a principal product of its Wilmington site, which at one time had between 150 and 200 employees.

PMPCo. becomes the eighth tenant in Leland Industrial Park, moving into the 12,600-square-foot building and three-acre tract previously leased by Lifescapes Inc. Lifescapes, which made casual furniture from PVC pipe, closed in 1991 after defaulting on several loans.

Monks said availability of the existing building will allow PMP Co. to begin operations "immediately." The new tenants are already moving in equipment and beginning renovations that include upgrades of the facility's plumbing and electricity and addition of a loading dock.

It also plans to double the size of the facility, with building owner I.L. Smith Construction Co. of Wilmington handling construction of the new space. The park is located off U.S. 74-76 in northwest Brunswick County.

"They will have a capital investment approaching \$1 million when it's all over with," said Monks, referring to both the start-up and expansion.

Tuesday night Brunswick County Commissioners authorized the EDC to serve as the "pass-through" agent for a \$50,000 loan from the Industrial Building Renovation Fund operated by the N.C. Department of Commerce. The low-interest (3 percent) loan will match a \$50,000, 8-percent interest rate loan from BB&T of Wilmington, for a blended interest rate of 5.5 percent. Should PMPCo. default, neither the EDC nor Brunswick County would have any liability, said Monks, though his office would be expected to make "a good faith effort" to collect money still owed the state.

The low-interest renovation fund matching loans are available only as an incentive to create jobs in North Carolina's 50 most economically distressed counties. Monks also expects PMPCo. to take advantage of state Jobs Tax Credits also available only in economically distressed counties. The company can qualify for a state tax credit of \$2,800 per new manufacturing job created above a threshold of nine over a four-year period.

Monks said the EDC has been working with PMCo. principals since March, around the time Moore and Millington learned of Siemens' intent to close its Wilmington plant.

The N.C. Employment Security Commission will fill all positions at the new plant, said Monks, and all inquiries should be directed to the ESC office. In Brunswick County, the ESC office is in Shallotte.

Wages and fringe benefits are expected to be competitive with that of other Leland Industrial Park tenants—starting pay of \$5.50 to \$6 an hour increasing after six months to a year for assembly workers, and higher wages for skilled personnel. "We're finding that new employees are as or more interested in good fringe benefits," Monks said, such as medical and dental insurance.

Brunswick County has only 43 manufacturers, with 14 of those locating here in the last three years despite the nation's weak economy.

Monks said he anticipates up to eight additional new business announcements including several later this month.

He had predicted an upswing in business development activity this year, regardless of the outcome of the November presidential election, and that has been the case as of late February and March. "Most weeks I have two or three clients in my office."

"It's sort of like rain," he said of the cyclical nature of his business. "It's either feast or famine. You may go for a long while with activity and no announcements and then have a lot of announcements."



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

## Like This, Daddy!

Two-year-old Elisa Costner of Bessemer City shows her father the proper technique for mixing up a bowl of sand and water. The two agreed that the surf line was the coolest spot to be on Holden Beach Sunday afternoon.

# DOT Studies Local 3-Lane Projects

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should be finished before October 1997.

A one-month delay in getting a full set of planning documents pushed the start of right-of-way acquisition appraisals from September to October, into a new fiscal year.

DOT is studying the feasibility of two projects. The first is widening N.C. 904 to three lanes from north of N.C. 179 (Seaside) to Georgetown Road and then 24 feet with 2-foot paved shoulders from Georgetown Road to U.S. 17 at Grissetown. The second is a Carolina Bays Parkway from the South Carolina state line to U.S. 17 by way of Hickman's Crossroads, in coordination with a proposed South Carolina project to relieve traffic congestion around Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Another change in the TIP is a

two-year delay in competition of the U.S. 17 bypass of Wilmington, called the Northern Outer Loop, between I-40 and U.S. 17 in northeastern Brunswick County. Eventually the four-lane divided highway will route traffic around Wilmington to a point on U.S. 17 possibly around Bishop.

Problems with wetlands and landfills along the proposed route are contributing to the delay, with construction not expected to begin until late 1998 or early 1999. However, the plan adds \$20 million to complete the project's funding, an estimated \$159.2 million.

Under the proposed TIP, construction of a new two-lane bridge to Oak Island would begin late in early 1998, with partial right of way and construction funding provided by other parties. The project had been delayed in the current plans because

of right-of-way acquisition questions. Williamson is one of three developers with property along the planned route who had been expected to work with the DOT in providing right of way.

The TIP also: ■identifies the rehabilitation of pavement on U.S. 17 north of N.C. 87 to U.S. 74-76 at Leland as a "future need"; and

■schedules replacement of these bridges: N.C. 130, S.R. 1300 and S.R. 1321 over Wet Ash Swamp, N.C. 130 over the Waccamaw River and Friar Swamp, on N.C. 133 over Town Creek and Allen Creek, N.C. 211 over Royal Oak Swamp, N.C. 904 over the Waccamaw River and Scipio Swamp, S.R. 1105 over Davis Creek, S.R. 1340 over Juniper Creek, S.R. 1401 over Pinch Gut Creek, and S.R. 1435 over Sturgeon Creek.

# 'Friendly' Lawsuit To Settle Dilemma On Hospital Lease

(Continued From Page 1-A)

the suit. They also authorized Chairman Larry Andrews and Vice Chairman David Pridgen to seek the services of Southport attorney Henry Foy, on Ramos' recommendation, since the authority and HealthTrust Inc. must have separate legal representation as opposing parties.

The original lease was drafted by the firm of Lewis & Ramos, of which Ramos is a partner, with the intent that the hospital's 10-year lease would become a 40-year lease at the first opportunity.

While former Brunswick County Attorney David Clegg disagreed, it was Lewis & Ramos' belief, then and now, that the lease was extended automatically on June 29, 1984, after a 1983 law ended and before its replacement became law. The replacement did not get enacted until the next business day, its adoption delayed by Sen. R.C. Soles Jr.'s (D-Columbus County) unsuccessful effort to amend it to exclude Brunswick County.

However, there are other interpretations of what happened during that interim.

In a Feb. 9, 1993, letter, the authority's current attorney, David Nash of Wilmington, counseled that

during that interlude between bills the authority lost its ability to enter into any lease, said Earl Tamar, chief executive officer of the hospital. Nash based that opinion on the fact that local governments, and their appointed hospital authorities, have only the rights specifically granted to them by the General Assembly and therefore, during that interlude, no law was in effect that granted the authority the right to enter into any lease.

The authority first decided to seek a declaratory judgment action in 1985 to resolve the issues of the length of the lease and the status of general obligations Brunswick County issued for construction of the hospital and asked the county to join it as a co-plaintiff. The matter was dropped when Brunswick County declined.

If the lease ends next May, then the authority must, in the near future, follow a procedure spelled out in the 1984 law. The law requires the authority to solicit proposals from at least five companies, obtain information on charges, services and indigent care at similar facilities owned or operated by the proposed lessee or buyer, and hold a public hearing on the proposals that have been made.

The authority would not be oblig-

ed to accept the lowest bid. However, before it adopts a resolution approving lease or sale of the facility, the authority must first find that the agreement would be "in the public interest," after considering whether the lease or sale will meet the health-related needs of medically underserved groups, such as low-income persons, racial and ethnic minorities and handicapped persons. A copy of the proposed contract must be made available to the public in advance of its approval.

Generally, the new law also requires the leasing company to continue providing the same or similar clinical services provided prior to the lease; assure provision of care, at a predetermined level related to need, to local residents who can't afford to pay; not enact admission policies that have the effect of denying essential medical services or treatment solely because of a patient's immediate inability to pay; and accept Medicaid/Medicare patients.

The company must also place in escrow enough money or direct obligations to retire any outstanding general obligation bonds the hospital might have. In 1984 the county had \$1.9 million in hospital-related general obligation bonds still outstanding.

# July 22 Hearing Set On Bypass Interchange

Shallotte area residents will have an opportunity to comment at a July 22 public hearing on plans for an interchange to be built at the intersection of N.C. 130 West and the U.S. 17 bypass of Shallotte.

The hearing will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Shallotte Town Hall council chambers, said W.A. Garrett Jr., hearing officer with the N.C. Department of Transportation.

The \$3.5 million project is being built in response to public concern about the safety of the intersection, which serves West Brunswick High School traffic. It was the scene of a double fatality in November 1991.

In other safety measures, the state Department of Transportation also installed strobe lights, "signal ahead" signs and rumble strips, and increased the red light interval

*The hearing will be held at 7:30 p.m. in the Shallotte Town Hall council chambers.*

for U.S. 17 traffic.

The proposed interchange design consists of two ramps and two loops.

A map of the location and design and copies of the environmental assessment were expected to be available by today for public review at the DOT maintenance office on Mulberry Street (S.R. 1348) near Shallotte. The packet

had not arrived as of Tuesday.

At the hearing DOT officials will explain the proposed design, right of way requirements and procedures, relocation advisory assistance and the state-federal relationship for the project.

Individuals will be allowed to present statements, questions or comments or to submit material pertaining to the proposed design at the hearing. Information will also be accepted for 10 days following the hearing by Garrett at P.O. Box 25201, Raleigh, N.C. 27611.

According to Garrett the DOT will provide reasonable accommodations, aids and services for any qualified disabled person interested in attending the hearing.

To request assistance, those individuals should contact Garrett at least seven days in advance of the hearing at 1-919-250-4092.

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# Holiday Crowds Pack Beaches, Roads, Businesses

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was a good day," said Carson Durham of Carson's Cards and Gifts in Shallotte. "We've had some tourists coming through, even though most of our business is still local. People have been saying they didn't want to leave the air conditioning."

Twin Lakes Seafood at Sunset Beach has seen many tourist seasons come and go, and this Fourth of July weekend was "fantastic," according

to Clarice Holden. "The people are here, no doubt. The season got off to a slow start, but it's booming now."

Why might that be? It depends on who you ask.

Sloane credits the growth of the South Brunswick Islands golf industry with packing the beaches' rental units. "The golfers come here in the spring and fall and when they see how nice the beaches are, they come back in the summer and bring their

families."

He also says advertising by the county and South Brunswick Islands Chamber of Commerce helps.

For Bass, an exceptional fishing season has made all the difference between a good season and a great one. "First there were the most whiting I've ever seen," he said. "Then there the summer spot season has been good, which is unusual—I don't know whether it's spring spots

or fall spots they're catching out there now."

Bass, who serves on the Holden Beach Board of Commissioners, jokes that he can tell business is brisk through one foolproof indicator:

"I'm not hearing any gripes."

# Brace For More Hot Weather, Little Rain

No major change in the weather is expected during the coming week for the South Brunswick Islands area, which means more high temperatures ahead but not much rainfall.

Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said he expects temperatures to range from the lower 70s at night into the lower 90s during the daytime, with approximately a half-inch of rain.

For the period of June 29 through July 5, he recorded a high of 95 degrees that occurred on both July 4 and 5, and a low of 69 degrees that occurred July 1.

A average daytime high of 92 degrees combined with an average nightly low of 75 degrees for a daily

*"I don't expect any general rainstorms. None are due unless something develops unexpectedly."*

—Jackson Canady

average temperature of 83 degrees, which is about three degrees above average for this time of year.

He recorded no rainfall at his Shallotte Point residence, but said some areas had seen isolated showers and thunderstorms.

That pattern will continue, he

said. "I don't expect any general rainstorms," he said. "None are due unless something develops unexpectedly."

High temperatures and high humidity have combined to create a heat index with an apparent temperature "pushing 110" this week, said Canady. The index indicates the combined effect of heat and air moisture on human comfort, with an apparent temperature of 79 the lowest that typically causes most persons to feel uncomfortable.

"The kind of heat we're having is not only uncomfortable but can be dangerous," said Canady. "Hopefully most people are taking heat into account when making their plans."

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