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VOICE OF MANUFACTURING GETS STRONGER: Regional Manufacturing Association Created on the Space Coast

EDC's Industry Council joins forces with centralized network to enhance legislative presence

Brevard County, Florida (March 31, 2016) – The region with the highest concentration of manufacturing to private employment in Florida is about to become even stronger. (1)

The Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast (EDC) unveiled a new advocacy group at a special event held yesterday that will help to open communications at the state and federal legislative level for local industry issues. The new **Regional Manufacturing Association of Florida's Space Coast (MASC)** will now serve as the succinct voice for Brevard County's robust and diverse manufacturing base.

The group will operate under four guiding principles:

- **Promote** regional manufacturing companies, products and careers
- **Advocate** for critical issues impacting the manufacturing sector
- **Connect** manufacturers to resources and opportunities
- **Educate** manufacturers, their incumbent workers and the talent of the future

MASC was created and will be steered by the **EDC's Industry Council**, a group of industry professionals that have focused on manufacturing advocacy for the past fifteen years. While the council has served as the unofficial voice of manufacturing during this time, MASC will enable members to contribute and engage at a higher level.

MASC is an approved manufacturing association under the Manufacturing Association of Florida (MAF), a group organized to improve the business climate for manufacturers in the state. The state group counts on a network of 14 affiliated statewide manufacturing associations, which now includes the Space Coast, to elevate local manufacturing issues and data.

"Becoming a part of the statewide association allows us to further the work of the Industry Council and broaden the voice for manufacturers outside of Brevard County," **said Lynda Weatherman, president and chief executive officer of the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast.** "This new alliance means our regional manufacturing and high tech base will be able to leverage federal and state manufacturing support mechanisms and funding which could spur opportunities for expansion."

For the past decade, prior to this announcement, the Industry Council's ongoing grassroots efforts have had no formal representation among state manufacturing groups outside of Brevard County.

“Our community has a major concentration of manufacturing, yet we haven’t had proper representation at the state association level in quite some time,” said **Mike Ennis, a manufacturing engineer at Harris Corporation who jointly chairs the EDC’s Industry Council and newly formed MASC.** “We recognized that we would all benefit from plugging into a formal network of statewide manufacturers associations. This association will provide the next level of advocacy that our regional manufacturers need and deserve.”

The EDC’s Industry Council has tackled a number of important issues facing the manufacturing industry in recent years. In addition to an eight-month effort to formalize MASC, the Council has found success with its Talent Asset Pipeline (TAP) initiative. The TAP program encourages appropriately skilled workers to enter careers in manufacturing. It begins with a Certified Production Technical (CPT) entry level certification and leads to a series of stackable industry credentials.

The EDC has facilitated this effort by partnering with community groups to sponsor participants and by linking existing industry with trainees to encourage program success. To date, dozens of graduates are now CPT certified and are employed within Brevard County’s manufacturing industry.

The industry-led Washington D.C.-based group responsible for overseeing the CPT training program sees the formation of a new alliance as an important step in advancing future regional programs.

“If there’s one community that understands the magnitude of what’s at stake from a lack of alignment between the needs of manufacturers and a shortage of students with the right credentials, it’s the Space Coast,” said **Leo Reddy, chair and chief executive officer of the nationwide Manufacturing Skill Standards Council (MSSC).** “The EDC has taken this matter head on, and within the last year, has made immense progress in highlighting manufacturing certification and careers as viable options. With the creation of MASC, the community can continue to focus on this critically important issue, now with an audience able to influence state and federal policies.”

Additionally, **Congressman Bill Posey** gave his support to this effort, “I commend the EDC and the business community volunteers of the EDC Industry Council for identifying this opportunity and taking action to create MASC, a resource which will enhance the competitive business environment for manufacturers in our region.”

The group was formed under the EDC’s 501c6 status and the EDC Industry Council serves as the MASC Advisory Board. The Advisory Board will be responsible for working alongside EDC staff to establish strategic priorities, broaden membership and execute tactical plans.

“Elevating the representation of our manufacturing industry is pivotal and the Industry Council has taken a major step toward doing so,” said **Julie Song, an original founding member of MASC and president of the FL Business & Manufacturing Solutions, Inc.** “While we are excited about bringing the industry based needs of this community to a higher level, we will continue to count on support from the local manufacturing businesses to gain a greater understanding of local issues and to increase opportunities in this important sector.”

MASC was built by Space Coast manufacturers, for Space Coast manufacturers. A minimum of 80% of the membership base must operate in a manufacturing NAICS code or be a manufacturing partner representing academia or workforce development. The remaining 20% of membership will be comprised of investors in the EDC.

The MASC Advisory Board and Founding Manufacturing Members are:

- Susan Badgio, MACK Technologies*
- Ken Brace, Rapid Prototyping Services*
- Dale Coxwell, Coastal Steel, Inc.
- Carol Craig, Craig Technologies
- Bill Davis, IM Solutions, Inc.
- Michael Ennis, Harris Government Communications Systems
- Bart Gaetjens, Florida Power & Light Company
- Rick D. Horner, Lockheed Martin
- Phil Krull, Embraer Executive Aircraft, Inc.
- Mike King, Rockwell Collins
- Amar Patel, Brevard Achievement Center
- Jennifer Prendergast, PIRTEK Space Coast
- Forrest Smalley, Florida City Gas
- Julie K. Song, DRB Packaging*

**Denotes Manufacturing Founding Members*

The local association is also looking for non-manufacturing Associate Members to join MASC. The MASC Advisory Board understands the benefit of having an array of business perspectives driving MASC priorities forward. Founding Associate Members include: Berman Hopkins Wright & LaHam – Phil Hayes, Carr, Riggs and Ingram CPAs and Advisors – Debbie Goode, FL Business & Manufacturing Solutions – Julie K. Song, Florida Institute of Technology CAMID – Dr. Michael Grieves and Robert Salonen and Wells Fargo – Cynthia Broome and Mica Layne.

The group is now open to new members that meet the above criteria. To become a voice of manufacturing on the Space Coast, contact the EDC to learn more.

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(1) Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

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About the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast

The Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast (EDC) is dedicated to attracting new business and investment and expanding existing industry throughout the Space Coast, influencing change on government laws and regulations affecting economic development, promoting the Space Coast to encourage new investment, supporting efforts of Space Coast military installations, and relaying new programs and procedures to assist manufacturing and high tech companies. The EDC is a private, not-for-profit coalition whose stakeholders are business leaders committed to the economic growth and stability of Florida's Space Coast. Visit www.SpaceCoastEDC.org.