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Economic Reporter

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PRODUCED BY THE CITY OF MESA OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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Algal Biofuels Consortium in Mesa Wins \$6 Million Federal Research Grant

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announced June 28, 2010, the investment of up to \$24 million for three research groups including one from Mesa, Arizona, to tackle key hurdles in the commercialization of algae-based biofuels. The selections will support the development of a clean, sustainable transportation sector—a goal of the Department’s continued effort to spur the creation of the domestic bio-industry while creating jobs.



Photo Credit: Dave Tevis

Mesa’s own Sustainable Algal Biofuels Consortium, led by Arizona State University, will focus on testing the acceptability of algal biofuels as replacements for petroleum-based fuels. Tasks include investigating biochemical conversion of algae to fuels and products, and analyzing physical chemistry properties of algal fuels and fuel intermediates. (DOE share: up to \$6 million)

Together, the consortia represents a diversified portfolio that will help accelerate algal biofuels development with the objective of significantly increasing production of affordable, high-quality algal biofuels that are environmentally and economically sustainable. Projects are expected to continue for a period of three years.

The two other groups are Consortium for Algal Biofuels Commercialization, led by the University of California, San Diego, (DOE funding: up to \$9 million) and Cellana, LLC Consortium (Kailua-Kona, Hawaii) led by Cellana, LLC (DOE funding: up to \$9 million). For more information, and to review the National Algal Biofuels Technology Roadmap, visit the U.S. DOE website: <http://www.energy.gov/news/9167.htm>.

Light Rail Update

After several months of public participation and community discussion, the Mesa City Council helped to further define



the Central Mesa light rail extension with approval of four station locations and a Main Street traffic configuration plan at their City Council meeting in June, 2010.

Recommended station locations on Main St.:

- East of Alma School Road
- East of Country Club Drive
- East of Center Street
- East of Mesa Drive

These locations were identified for their proximity to activity centers and bus connections, least impact to adjacent property and curbs, economic development potential and convenient pedestrian access.

The recommended Main Street traffic configuration from Sycamore to Country Club Drive will remain as two lanes of traffic in each direction however, on-street parking will be removed to reduce impacts to adjacent property and sidewalks.

The recommended Main Street traffic configuration from Country Club to Mesa Drive (Downtown Mesa) will remain at two lanes of traffic in each direction. On street parking and existing signalized pedestrian crossings will be maintained where possible. All intersections along the alignment will have separate left turn lanes with dedicated left turn arrows. The above recommendations will be forwarded to METRO’s Board of Directors for their review this summer. The project is still on track to be operational in 2016.

Economic Development Advisory Board

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STAFF

William Jabjiniak, Economic Development Department Director

The Economic Development Advisory Board meets the first Tuesday of every month at 7:30 am in the Lower Level Council Chambers (57 East First Street). All meetings are open to the public.



The Quick Job *with Bill Jabjiniak*

Retaining Talent in Mesa

Economic development means more than bricks and mortar: the practice also involves retaining people, especially people who are highly-educated and possess special talents or skills, employed in high-wage jobs.

Located in 10 buildings on 6.5 acres, adjacent to Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport and Arizona State University Polytechnic campus, the Air Force Research Lab (AFRL) employs 200 high-salaried researchers, scientists and engineers, with specialties in a variety of areas including advanced technologies, cognitive psychology, experimental psychology and operations research. This type of workforce is a critical component for maintaining the region's reputation as a leader in aerospace and defense, an asset we cannot afford to lose.

Lab to Close in 2011

In 2005, as part of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process, the Air Force announced that it was closing its Mesa research lab and moving operations to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. The AFRL is scheduled to begin vacating the premises in early 2011 with complete exit by September 2011.

The City of Mesa is taking action to retain the employees in the region and maximize the potential redevelopment opportunities that now exist. In May 2010, Mesa City Council was approved by the U.S. Office of Economic Adjustment as the Local Redevelopment Authority (LRA) to create a plan for the disposition of the federal surplus property (Mesa AFRL). By establishing an LRA, the City of Mesa will take the lead in preparing a redevelopment plan which outlines the City's vision, goals, and objectives for reuse of the site.

This is an excellent and rare opportunity for collaboration between industry, academia, public and private sector players in aerospace, defense, technology, IT and more. The process encourages stakeholders to identify potential uses that maximize the real estate asset, retain the brain power in the community and create additional high-wage jobs. Forming an LRA is one of many initiatives Mesa has implemented to strengthen and grow Arizona's aerospace sector.

Next Steps

The LRA is required to solicit interest from parties that may want to reuse the property including homeless providers, public and non-profit organizations eligible for surplus Federal property. After the redevelopment plan is approved by the LRA, it is submitted to the Air Force for approval and a determination of who takes over the property. Typically, the Air Force follows the recommendation of the LRA.

A workshop will be held July 13, 2010, at the AFRL to review the base redevelopment planning process, tour the installation, discuss any land use constraints known at that time and state the Notice of Interest process. For additional information, visit <http://www.mesaaz.gov/citymgmt/mesa-now/issues/afrl.aspx>.



A.T. Still University is Beneficiary of Audiology Foundation of America

After 21 years of work to transform audiology to a doctoring profession with a single, unifying designator, the Audiology Foundation of America (AFA) is declaring victory for the profession in upgrading to the Au.D. and closing its doors.

In its final act as a non-profit foundation, the AFA has assigned the remainder of its funds and assets, worth \$1.5 million, to the audiology program at A.T. Still University (ATSU) in order to launch the new AFA Institute.

The AFA Institute will allow the audiology program at ATSU to provide cutting-edge resources for its students and further enhance the audiology practice model.

“This grant to ATSU will be the AFA’s enduring legacy,” said AFA Chair Deborah Price, Au.D. “ATSU came to the AFA with a proposal that secures a win-win for the profession and the school. Graduates will be prepared to succeed in all aspects of audiology practice.” For more information, visit www.atsu.edu.



Survey Says Tourism Improved in Mesa, East Valley this March



The month of March was indeed good for tourism in Mesa. The Chicago Cubs led the Cactus League with a per game average of more than 10,892 fans; Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport hit an all time high for arrivals; and for the

first time in 15 months, the city’s occupancy levels showed an increase over the previous year’s timeframe.

Across the Greater Phoenix, the year-to-date figures show room revenue remained relatively flat over 2009 statistics during this same timeframe with Mesa/Chandler experiencing a 15.8% gain in hotel revenue for the first quarter of 2010.

The March results come on the heels of the Mesa Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) recently completing their year-long passenger survey at Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport. Commissioned by the CVB, the effort began in 2009 for the purpose of gathering information about individuals who utilize Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport and Allegiant Air.

Results of the passenger survey indicate that 26% of out-of-state visitors would not have visited Arizona if it were not for Allegiant’s service from their hometown. This represents an estimated \$37.5

million of new economic impact for the East Valley alone. In February and March 2010, results showed there was a 4% increase in passengers staying in the Southeast Valley and the average length of stay during that period increased by half a day over the same time last year. Trip spending also increased during that time over last year’s, which was up 10.5%. As passenger traffic continues to grow, the CVB extended funding through June 2010 to conduct additional research and allow for more year-over-year comparison of travel patterns. www.visitmesa.com

Arizona State Fire School Retention Effort

The Arizona State Fire Training Committee (ASFTC) will host the 37th Annual Arizona State Fire School at the Mesa Convention Center, Sept 8-12, 2010. Nearly 1,000 students attend this event, which offers approximately 30 different programs/workshops specifically targeted to the Arizona Fire Service. For many firefighters in Arizona, this is the only access they have to occupational-related training.

Mesa’s Office of Economic Development has been working in partnership with the Mesa Convention and Visitor Bureau, Downtown Mesa Association, Phoenix-Mesa Marriott, Mesa Fire Department, Mesa Arts Center, Mesa Parks and Recreation Department, and representatives of the Arizona State Fire School to ensure that the Arizona State Fire School Convention stays in Mesa. The economic impact of a convention this size, staying for four days is extremely positive, especially to the Downtown area.

For more information, visit http://www.azfiretraining.org/2010_School.php

City of Mesa Promotes Shea Joachim

Research Analyst Shea Joachim was recently promoted to Project Manager, Office of Economic Development, after serving as a Economic Development Specialist and Research Analyst for more than three years. Since coming to the City, Shea has been involved with almost every aspect of the department including business attraction and retention efforts, Community Development and Block Grants and Section 108 financing, impact analyses, tax incentive analyses, land-use decisions, strategic planning, development agreement negotiations and marketing efforts. Over the last nine months, Shea represented the Office of Economic Development in the Central Mesa Light Rail Extension project and multiple Downtown Mesa-related efforts.



Shea earned a B.S. in Economics with a minor in Philosophy from Pomona College in California. Prior to the City of Mesa, he worked in the financial industry and has a strong background in business and consumer lending.

City of Mesa Office of Economic Development

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DID YOU KNOW...
**The Downtown Mesa
Association moved to
100 N. Center Street
Mesa, AZ 85201**
**Phone numbers remain
unchanged.**

EVENTS



JULY

- 13 Air Force Research Lab
Workshop**
8 a.m. | Air Force Research Lab
6030 S. Kent Street
Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport
RSVP Required
Contact: Patrick Murphy at
480.644.3964 or Patrick.murphy@mesaaz.gov
- 20 Mesa Chamber, Taste of Mesa**
5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Brunswick Zone Mesa
1754 W. Southern Avenue
- 28 Mesa Chamber Women's
Business Council**
11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
The Citadel, 520 S. Higley Road

AUGUST

- 10 Grow Your Business**
11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
1730 S. Val Vista Drive

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Mesa Chamber of Commerce
Straw Poll**
5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
Phoenix/East Mesa Hilton
1011 W. Holmes
- 8-12 Arizona State Fire School &
Convention**
Mesa Convention Center
200 N. Centennial Way
- 24 Mesa Chamber Annual Golf
Tournament**
7 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Las Sendas Golf Club
7555 E. Eagle Crest Dr.

Announcements and Accolades



Boeing Adds the Hummingbird

Boeing recently added the A160T

Hummingbird Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) to its manufacturing production operations, generating new work for the Mesa plant.

“The A160T can deliver unmatched capabilities to the war fighter,” said Mesa site manager Tony Ham. “We’re proud that in Mesa, we’re applying our leadership in rotorcraft manufacturing to bring this great aircraft into production.”

Slightly smaller and lighter than the Apache helicopter, the A160T has retractable landing gear and can operate autonomously or by remote control for longer than 18 hours. The aircraft can carry payloads of 2,500 lbs. including cargo, equipment and sensors.

Hawker Beechcraft Expands



Completing its \$14 million Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport business jet service center, Hawker Beechcraft flexed its growing muscle by opening a 35,000-sf expansion, including a new 26,000-sf hangar and extensive parts, service, office and customer reception areas. In 2009, its first year in Mesa, the largely “under the radar” Hawker Beechcraft facility serviced more than 500 business jets. For more details, visit www.hawkerbeechcraft.com.

Falcon Field named 2010 Airport of the Year

The City of Mesa’s Falcon Field Airport was named “Arizona Airport of the Year” at the 2010 Arizona Airports Association Spring Conference in April in Sierra Vista. The Arizona Department of Transportation Multimodal Planning Division – Aeronautics Group

sponsors the annual award, which recognizes outstanding accomplishments and contributions made to Arizona aviation.

Visit Falcon Field at http://www.mesaaz.gov/falcon_field/ to learn more.

Allegiant Air offering 21st nonstop route

South Bend, Indiana is Allegiant Air’s 21st destination served from Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport. South Bend, located just outside of Chicago, is the third destination serving Greater Chicago area. Passenger load factors for Allegiant hover close to 90% and the airline expects to announce additional destinations to and from Mesa in the fall of 2010.

Advancing Education Grant Update

Communities Learning in Partnership (CLIP) is a grant opportunity funded through the Bill and Melina Gates Foundation with the goal to double the number of low-income young adults between the ages of 16-26 with a postsecondary credential or degree. At the request of the Gates Foundation, the City of Mesa, Mesa Community College and Mesa Public Schools submitted a comprehensive proposal as a formal partnership *Mesa CLIP*.

As the third largest city in the state of Arizona with 460,000 people, Mesa has 26,417 low-income, young adults between the ages of 16-26. Only 8% of this population (2,234) has completed a postsecondary degree or credentials. Through this project, *Mesa CLIP* is proposing to increase the number of postsecondary completers to 16% within the next 10 years. Mesa is one of seven cities in the United States invited to apply for this grant, while only four cities will each be awarded \$3 million over the next three years.

All proposals will be reviewed by the Gates Foundation and notifications will occur at the end of July. The *Mesa CLIP* is a significant component for “Building a Better Mesa,” supporting the goals of attracting additional higher education opportunities to Mesa and increasing Mesa’s qualified and educated workforce.