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A key leader in growing the Port of Davisville

December 13, 2012 - Rhode Island

Many things are contributing to our momentum at the Quonset Business Park. With 168 companies, 8,800 jobs, and the Port of Davisville now ranked as the 7th largest auto importer on the continent, it is a true Rhode Island success story. One of the key factors in Quonset's recent success is our team of dedicated, committed professionals. Without their efforts, none of this would be possible.

This month, I want to take an opportunity to introduce you to someone who has been instrumental in helping the Port of Davisville become one of the most successful auto-ports in North America, and positioning it for greater growth in the years ahead. His name is Evan Matthews, and since 2007, he has been the director at the Port of Davisville at Quonset Business Park.

Evan is a native Rhode Islander, who has fond memories of growing up in North Kingstown - of visiting his grandfather and looking out at Narragansett Bay, marveling at the size and majesty of a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier. So maybe it was inevitable that he would return some day to help shape the Port of Davisville as a key leader of economic growth for Rhode Island, and help it become an important link in the supply chain of goods and services in the Northeast.

A graduate of North Kingstown High School, Evan's roots here run deep. His grandfather worked at Quonset Naval Air Station and so the former Navy base has long been a special place for him. Even when his educational pursuits took him to the State of Washington, there was that sense he would return. In 2003, he did just that, joining Quonset Development Corporation as director of real estate development, a position he held before his current post.

As the port director, Evan is charged with a variety of activities. He is tasked with helping to coordinate the use of pier space for incoming and outgoing vessels, to ensuring that shippers calling at Davisville have a smooth experience. He is asked to help arrange special deliveries at the Port, such as this summer's America's Cup Series equipment, or the new wind turbine that was recently erected in North Kingstown. He also works with the U.S. Coast Guard and Department of Homeland Security to make sure the Port meets important safety and security requirements. Clearly, no one task is the same. Each task requires the skills of someone who can be extremely detail oriented, but also extremely flexible at the drop of a hat.

Evan is also shepherding the Port of Davisville into a truly exciting chapter in its history, displaying his determination to see the port expand and capitalize on new business opportunities. He recognizes that one of the most important elements for that expansion to happen is to invest in our infrastructure at the port, which is why his efforts to help secure the \$22.3 million in federal TIGER grants was so important. In doing so, we have solidified a foundation upon which existing businesses can grow and new businesses can prosper.

Evan clearly understands the possibilities of the mobile harbor crane purchased through the TIGER grant. It was his expertise and vision that helped us show our federal partners that the most versatile and flexible crane of its kind would be a critical piece of infrastructure to expand business at

Davisville. The crane positions us to become active in the short sea shipping industry, and gives us capabilities never seen before at our location.

We are extremely proud to be one of the largest auto ports in North America, and to be the North American load center for well known companies such as Volkswagen is an incredible accomplishment for us. But as Evan often says, we can also be so much more than just one of the leading auto-ports on the continent. Our size, flexibility and lack of a federal harbor maintenance tax give us a competitive advantage.

This December, Evan will once again head down to Washington, D.C. to meet with the Rhode Island congressional delegation and attend a major conference with other port directors from across the country. It's an important visit to discuss major issues in the shipping industry, talk about the Port of Davisville, and let potential customers know even more about us. During those meetings, Evan will also have the opportunity to explain how the Port of Davisville is thriving, and strategically positioned for more growth and more business in 2013. While he would never take the credit, we would not be in this position if it weren't for Evan's contributions and leadership. We are grateful to have him on our team.

Steven King, PE, is the managing director of the Quonset Development Corp., North Kingstown.

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