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Blackburn leads continued growth at Quonset's Port of Davisville - by Steven King

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Steven King,
Quonset Development Corp.

With over 200 companies and 11,000 jobs, Quonset is Rhode Island's leading engine of economic growth and job creation. Quonset's Port of Davisville is one of the top ten auto importers in North America. Just last year the Port handled over 222,000 new vehicle imports and 202 ship calls. November was a record breaking month with 21 vessels unloading over 26,800 vehicles at the port.

There's even more good news on the horizon for the Port of Davisville. This month, I'd like to introduce one of our team members who is directly responsible for the success of our port. Bob Blackburn is Quonset Development Corporation's (QDC) port director. He recently celebrated his first year with the QDC overseeing day-to-day operations and management of the Port of Davisville.

Prior to joining the team at Quonset, Bob worked at the Philadelphia Regional Port Authority for more than 23 years. Bob held several roles including serving as the authority's senior deputy executive director. Since joining the team at Quonset Bob has been instrumental in implementing Gov. Raimondo's Port Expansion Plan. The plan is a \$90 million rehabilitation and modernization of Pier 2, the workhorse of Quonset's Port of Davisville. Built in 1956 and designed to last 50 years, Pier 2 handles all of the heavy cargo, like wind turbine parts and electric transformers, that pass through the port. The proposal will extend the life of the structure until 2072 and add an additional berth designed to handle more ships. The overall project team is hard at work on the project design and the permitting process is underway. Construction should begin in the second quarter of this year.

The continued success of the port during constructions hinges on our ability to continue to conduct business while completing the Pier Improvement Project. Bob has been working hard to ensure that we maintain business continuity during the upcoming construction period. We must be able to discharge vessels on the East face before we can repair the South berth. We actively communicate with all stakeholders that safety and quality service are our highest priorities. Our constructive, long-term relationships with all port stakeholders including North American Distribution, Inc. (NORAD), Quonset's vehicle processor, have helped us achieve our goals

When Bob joined our team he let me know that his goal was to solidify our customer base and then diversify our portfolio to attract new cargos. Bob is actively representing Quonset and marketing our facilities and services to vehicle manufacturers and other Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM).

“We’ve got some great potential new clients in the pipeline, while at the same time maintaining our focus on our existing clients,” said Blackburn. “Working with our friends at NORAD we’ve met with several potential clients to discuss our facilities.”

Bob has been on the forefront of marketing the port for project cargo. I agree with Bob’s assessment that project cargo is a natural area for growth to diversify our Port business. Quonset’s 150 MT mobile harbor crane has already allowed us to support waterborne cargo for park tenants like Toray Plastics. Bob has been a great advocate for Park businesses and frequently offers his recommendations and expertise, regardless of whether they plan to use the port.

Outside of his work at the port, Bob has settled into life in Rhode Island and serves on the North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce. It’s been quite a change of pace for him relocating here from Philadelphia. Even though he’s a city guy, Bob has assured me that he loves being able to experience the beauty of Rhode Island.

There are so many opportunities on the horizon for the year ahead at Davisville. We are fortunate to have Bob join our team and look forward to working with him for years to come.

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