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Steven King - Quonset Business Park revs up job creation engine

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It's shaping up to be a blockbuster summer at the Quonset Business Park, as the state's emerging job creation engine continues to produce.

As it has in recent years, the automobile industry has fueled an acceleration of activity at Quonset's Port of Davisville, which is now North America's eighth largest automobile importer. That ranking has been boasted by the arrival of Porsche Cars of North America, which last fall moved its operations to Davisville from the Port of Baltimore. Every year, approximately 11,000 Porsches will arrive in R.I. before being shipped to dealers throughout the northeast.

In late May, the dramatic spike in automobile imports at Davisville was the impetus for a feature story on the NBC affiliate in Providence. NBC10's cameras rolled on a sea of brand new cars, while anchorman Gene Valicenti described the "well-choreographed ballet aimed at getting them off the ship and on their way to dealers." Valicenti pointed out that 1,000 cars per ship arrive into the port in a two-part process that starts at the pier and quickly moves over to nearby North Atlantic Distribution (NORAD). The Port of Davisville received some 134,575 autos by ship in 2010 -- over eight times more than the Port of Boston. Another 55,000 arrived by rail.

Automobiles are not the only business being revved up at Quonset - and it appears that state officials are taking notice. Just this spring, it was U.S. senator Jack Reed, congressman James Langevin and Lt. governor Elizabeth Roberts who visited the industrial park and cut a ribbon on the brand new TownePlace Suites by Marriott.

That visit was followed by another by governor Lincoln Chafee and Roberts, who toured Dominion Diagnostics, a nationally focused provider of clinical testing, medication monitoring, and medical support services. The company's successful business model is another example of R.I.'s potential to develop a thriving medical manufacturing and medical services job sector. At Dominion Diagnostics, highly specialized medical technicians employ a laboratory-based clinical diagnostic model that integrates the disciplines of pharmacology and diagnostic medicine to support hundreds of clients across a broad spectrum of medical specialties.

In addition to learning how Dominion is part of a growing advanced health services sector in R.I.'s economy, the tour provided Chafee and Roberts with new insights into how advanced medical technology can save precious dollars in our health care system - a key consideration as the state prepares to implement health care reform legislation.

Dry stack storage

After a long winter, Mill Creek Marine announced that its new dry stack storage facility and marina at Quonset was open for business, the first of its kind in Rhode Island. The one-stop service center is the area's only factory authorized service center for the six major outboards and inboards. From

repowering and fiberglass repairs to electronics and accessory installation, Mill Creek Marine offers a full scope of technical and mechanical services. Each client's boat is stored inside a fully enclosed, insulated, secure building. When a client wants to take their boat out, they simply call the marina. The boat will be in the water, ready to go when they arrive. Dry stack storage will cost less than a wet slip, because clients do not have to deal with end of season maintenance such as painting and shrink wrapping.

Helicopters and power lines

Quonset Business Park also played a pivotal role in a recent conference sponsored by the Power and Energy Society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and attended by 1,500 engineers and electric-utility executives from 36 countries. Hosted by National Grid and based in Providence, a major component of the conference brought the participants to the Business Park for demonstrations about working on live power lines and using helicopters for the installation of high-voltage power lines.

The Quonset Business Park is home to some 168 companies, employing 8,800 workers. Over the past five years, 2,700 new jobs have been created there.

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

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540