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By Steven King: Quonset moving into autumn with great momentum

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As New Englanders make their way through the Autumn months, there's more reason than ever to take note of the latest developments coming out of Quonset Business Park.

This month, federal, state, and local officials will gather to celebrate the homecoming of the Okeanos Explorer, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) newest research vessel. The Okeanos, a deep-sea exploration ship, will be berthed for the next decade at Pier One in the Port of Davisville adjacent to an 8,280 s/f energy-efficient building that houses the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations. That building will contain office space for the ship's support staff, as well as warehouse space.

The ship is 224 feet in length with a beam of 43 feet and a draft of 15 feet. It can embark a crew of 46, along with those assigned to mission support.

The arrival of the Okeanos is a vivid example of how U.S. senator Jack Reed's commitment to Rhode Island continues to pay dividends for the Quonset Point/Port of Davisville. Senator Reed, a member of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce Justice and Science, which oversees funding for NOAA, secured more than \$23 million in federal funding to make the Okeanos Explorer the first U.S. government ship dedicated solely to ocean exploration and bring her home to Rhode Island.

At the time of the announcement, senator Reed expressed the importance of the Okeanos arrival, "This research vessel will provide us with fascinating new information about our oceans and help keep Rhode Island on the cutting edge of ocean exploration and marine research."

Toray installs Rhode Island's largest solar power farm

Toray Plastics (America) president and chief executive officer Richard Schloesser would not be deterred by the clouds above, as he welcomed Gov. Lincoln Chafee and several other state dignitaries to Toray's Quonset Point facility on Sept. 29, to ceremoniously turn the switch on the largest solar power farm in the state.

"It is a beautiful day," said Schloesser. "We're generating electricity today - even on a cloudy day."

Indeed, the solar system highlights a concerted effort on the part of Toray to pursue avenues for renewable power generation. It consists of 1,650 panels with tracker systems that allow each set of panels to track the sun allowing for more kWh per panel. The system is expected to generate 625,000 kWh per year.

The project was made possible through grants approved by the Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and the Rhode Island Renewable Energy Fund. Schloesser said at the event, "[The farm] is a tribute to how government and business can work together toward a mutual goal."

Toray, the largest user of electric power in Rhode Island, has about 600 employees at its Quonset

Point facility. In August, the company announced an \$11.5 million expansion that will create 28 new jobs.

"Build and Fight in the Navy Seabees"

As the nation prepares to celebrate this year's Veterans Day (11/11/11), what better time of year than now to visit the Seabee Museum and Memorial Park at the Quonset Business Park? As many New Englanders know, the park and museum was created to honor the more than 325,000 men who served with the Seabees in World War II, fighting and building in more than 400 locations before the war's end. They knew more than 60 skilled trades and nearly 8,000 Civil Engineer Corps officers served with the Seabees.

This year, the Seabee Museum & Memorial Park will be holding a New England Regional Recruitment for Volunteers event on November 5th, the Saturday prior to Veterans Day. The event will be an opportunity for individuals to learn more about the museum and memorial. More importantly, however, it will offer an opportunity for people and students with an interest in art, carpentry, landscaping, accounting, history, and other interests to volunteer their time for the organization. In many cases, the time volunteered can qualify for academic credit or certification requirements that the volunteer is working towards.

At QDC, we recognize the Seabees as an integral part of the history and formation of our business park and our nation. As the country looks to celebrate this Veterans Day, we hope more New Englanders will continue to support them.

For more information about the event or their regular museum hours, call (401) 294-7233 or visit www.seabeesmuseum.com.

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

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