

MDA E-News November 10, 2009
Vitro America LLC Expanding Operations, MDA Approves Homebuyer Assistance Program Funding for Foreclosed Properties, MDA Tourism Division Director Announces Resignation, MEDC to Host Regional Workshop, MDA Film Office Director Serves as Panel Moderator

In this issue:

- [Vitro America LLC Expanding Operations at its Grenada Facility to Produce Safety Glass and Storefront Metal Systems; Project to Create 20 New Jobs over Next Three Years](#)
- [MDA Approves Homebuyer Assistance Program Funding for Foreclosed Properties in Mississippi; Program Funds Administered by Mississippi Home Corporation](#)
- [MDA Tourism Division Director Craig Ray Announces Resignation Effective End of 2009; Deputy Director Mary Beth Wilkerson to Succeed Ray](#)
- [MEDC to Host Regional Workshop for Staff and Volunteers of State's Chambers of Commerce](#)
- [MDA Film Office Director Ward Emling Serves as Panel Moderator during Recent Film Commissioners International 2009 Cineposium Conference](#)

Vitro America LLC Expanding Operations at its Grenada Facility to Produce Safety Glass and Storefront Metal Systems; Project to Create 20 New Jobs over Next Three Years

Vitro America, a leader in the fabrication and distribution of architectural glass and aluminum products, announced last week it will consolidate the production of safety glass and storefront metal systems into an in-house operation at its Grenada facility. The company previously outsourced the production of its storefront metal systems. The company has invested \$1.2 million in new equipment to facilitate the new operations, and it will create 20 new jobs over the next three years. The Grenada facility currently employs approximately 100 workers. MDA provided the company with \$135,000 in Development Infrastructure Program funds for facility improvements, and the City of Grenada provided \$15,000 in matching funds.

Wayne B. Smith, Vitro America plant manager in Grenada, stated that the

company's plan is that its investment will enable it to be more competitive in storefront metal commercial markets and that the facility will soon outgrow its expansion, requiring even more capital investment and more jobs. Vitro America has had operations in Grenada since 1947.

To learn more about Vitro America, please visit the company's Web site at www.vitroamerica.com.

MDA Approves Homebuyer Assistance Program Funding for Foreclosed Properties in Mississippi; Program Funds Administered by Mississippi Home Corporation

MDA's Community Services Division, which oversees the Neighborhood Stabilization Program, recently approved and paid more than \$219,000 in Homebuyer Assistance Program (HBA) funding for eight foreclosed properties in Mississippi. HBA funds, which are administered by the Mississippi Home Corporation (MHC), provide one-time down payment assistance grants to low- to moderate- income individuals and families to assist with the purchase of abandoned and foreclosed homes while helping stabilize communities by getting individuals and families back into the homes. The program is available in 48 communities throughout the state, based on those that have the highest rates of foreclosure.

HBA funding for six additional properties in the amount of \$164,244 has been presented to MDA's Community Services Division for final review. To date, MHC has reserved more than \$1,000,000 in HBA funding. These grants would stimulate over \$4.5 million in mortgage loans. To learn more about HBA, or to view a list of the 48 communities eligible for funding, please visit stimulus.mississippi.org or contact Sheri Sullivan with MHC at 1-800-544-6960.

MDA Tourism Division Director Craig Ray Announces Resignation Effective End of 2009; Deputy Director Mary Beth Wilkerson to Succeed Ray

MDA Tourism Division Director Craig Ray has announced he will be resigning, effective at the end of this year, in order to pursue other opportunities in the tourism industry. During his six years as director of the Tourism Division, Ray has helped Mississippi identify and brand itself as the "Birthplace of America's Music," a tribute to the state's rich musical heritage. He has also implemented events, programs and messaging to help establish the brand globally, including the star-studded Mississippi GRAMMY® event, the state's new highway signage, the Mississippi Blues Trail and the Mississippi Country Music Trail.

Other milestones during Ray's tenure include the openings of the B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center in Indianola, the Riley Center in Meridian, the Corinth Civil War Museum, the Tunica River Park and the Jackson Convention Complex. Ray also provided invaluable guidance

regarding the state's involvement with the Viking Classic, the annual PGA tournament held in Madison, the 2008 Presidential Debate in Oxford, which attracted media from around the world to the University of Mississippi's campus, and much more.

MDA Executive Director Gray Swoope stated that under Ray's leadership, Mississippi's tourism programs have become a significant part of the state's economic development strategy, and he expressed his gratitude to Ray for his service to the industry and to the people of Mississippi.

MDA Tourism Division Deputy Director Mary Beth Wilkerson will succeed Ray as the division's director. Wilkerson joined MDA in 1991 and has served as deputy director since 2002.

MEDC to Host Regional Workshop for Staff and Volunteers of State's Chambers of Commerce

The Mississippi Economic Development Council (MEDC) will host "Connecting with Your Members," a regional workshop designed for the staff and volunteers of Mississippi's chambers of commerce, on Tuesday, November 17, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., at the Newton Station Depot in Newton, Miss. Sponsored by MDA's Mississippi Market Wholesale Show and Cellular South, the workshops will include presentations by the following speakers:

- Shane Moody, IOM, CCE, President/CEO, Destin Area Chamber of Commerce - "Making Your Chamber Relevant"
- Carol Hardwick, Executive Director, MEDC - "Benefits - The Reason to Connect"
- Beth Stevens, IOM, Executive Director, Greenwood - Leflore County Chamber of Commerce - "Boost Your Chamber Participation with Social Media"
- Chance McDavid or Virgil Culver, Mississippi State University Community Action Team - "First Impressions Do Make a Difference"

The cost to attend this training event is \$25 for MEDC individual members and \$40 for non-members. MEDC encourages economic developers to invite their board members to the workshop, as well. Please visit www.medic.ms for more information or to access an online registration form.

MDA Film Office Director Ward Emling Serves as Panel Moderator during Recent Film Commissioners International 2009 Cineposium Conference

MDA Film Office Director Ward Emling served as a moderator on a panel of industry executives last week during the Association of Film

Commissioners International (AFCI) 2009 Cineposium Conference in Universal City, Calif. Emling moderated a session entitled "Candid Conversations with Studio Executives: Creating Partnerships for Tomorrow" which focused on film commissions' efforts to maintain and enhance financial incentives and government support. The panel also included representatives from Hollywood-based Dynamic Media International, Inc., Walt Disney Company, Warner Bros. Entertainment and Sony Pictures Entertainment.

To learn more about APCI, please visit www.afci.org.

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