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**St. Jude Medical announces 300 jobs**

**By Gerald Garrett**

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LIBERTY — Pickens County officials have removed the shroud of mystery from the "John Project."

On Tuesday morning they revealed that St. Jude Medical Inc. is expanding its operations with a second facility at the Pickens County Commerce Park and will hire about 300 new employees over the next five years.

At the long-awaited announcement were state officials, South Carolina Gov. Mark Sanford, county and local elected officials, and representatives of Alliance Pickens, the agency charged with recruiting new industry to the county.

"These are the kinds of jobs we've been seeking," Pickens County Council Chair Jennifer Willis said. "They're good jobs with good benefits and St. Jude is an excellent company. We're thrilled to have them here."

Company officials said they plan to build a new 60,000-square-foot facility on 27 acres located near their original 100,000-square-foot facility in the Commerce Park. Construction on the new building will begin by June of next year and be completed in early 2008, according to St. Jude vice president Dave Ewing.

The announcement represents a major triumph for Pickens County officials in their efforts to increase the number of jobs in Pickens County, which daily, according to census reports, sees more than 20,000 members of its work force go out of county to work.

Last year, Alliance Pickens Executive Director Ray Farley announced that Maven Capacitors, a division of St. Jude Medical, would be consolidating several locations in Pickens County that had been operating since 1998 into one new facility at the Commerce Park. Since then, that operation has increased from 170 jobs to 300 jobs.

St. Jude, headquartered in St. Paul, Minn., does business in about 130 countries and employs more than 11,000 people worldwide. Corporate CEO Dan Starks, who also attended Tuesday's announcement, said the company this year will have revenues of between \$3.2 and \$3.3 billion and, over the past five years, has shown an average growth of 21 percent per year.

The company will use the new facility to manufacture hybrid microelectronic circuits, which are used as components in the company's implantable pacemakers and defibrillators, complementing an existing facility in Scottsdale, Ariz.

Mr. Farley noted St. Jude Medical had its choice of locations and chose Pickens County over others for its expansion.

"Pickens County and South Carolina stand in great appreciation for St. Jude Medical's decision to locate this critical piece of business here," Mr. Farley said, "and we will continue striving to prove that the choice St. Jude Medical has made is the right choice."

Gov. Sanford, noting the higher-than-average salaries for employees of St. Jude, praised local officials for their " ? clarity of vision, not just for this expansion but for this industrial park."

"From day one, our administration has been committed to recruiting high-tech jobs that can raise income levels and enhance the quality of life for our state's citizens," Gov. Sanford stated. "With 124,000 more people working in our state now than three and a half years ago, today's announcement reinforces the progress we're making in bettering the conditions for businesses to allow them to grow and succeed."

St. Jude will be the fourth manufacturing facility to locate into the 310-acre Commerce Park. Reliable Automatic Sprinkler announced in 2004 that it would relocate from New York to Pickens County and would create 300 jobs. That company now employs about 700 at the facility.

Last year, KeyMark announced a relocation from Anderson County and estimated it would create 10 jobs. It now employs 40 people.

And the initial St. Jude Medical facility, which consolidated several existing facilities in Pickens County and the cities of Liberty and Pickens last year, initially moved 170 existing jobs into the park and now employees more than 300 people.

Tuesday's announcement pushes the total number of jobs in the Commerce Park to more than 1,300. County officials had estimated when they created the park several years ago that it could accommodate as many as 3,000 jobs.