



Daily Journal

October 22, 2008

Pickens County industry to expand

By Greg Oliver

LIBERTY — The Champion Aerospace facility, which first opened in the mid-1980s and makes components for the ignition systems of aircrafts, will undergo an expansion of its product offerings resulting in the creation of 30-45 new jobs.

Alliance Pickens Executive Director Ray Farley said Tuesday afternoon that the expansion will occur immediately and should be completed within 30 days. The plant, located on S.C. Highway 93 between Liberty and Norris, currently employs 240 employees.

“I think it’s a real testament to the work force that, for the past seven years, we have seen specialty device manufacturing blossom in Pickens County,” Farley said, pointing to Reliable Automatic Sprinkler and St. Jude Medical as other prime examples. “That niche has blossomed because it requires a high level of engineering on site, we are blessed with engineering talent in our community, and it requires a skilled manufacturing work force on the production floor to assemble the specialty device.”

Farley credited the expansion with the successful teaming of the Champion Aerospace management staff with local and state officials following TransDigm’s acquisition this year of a product line from Unison Industries, LLC, a subsidiary of General Electric.

TransDigm officials announced that the acquired product line includes the highly engineered SLICK™ magnetos, harnesses and components that serve the general aviation aircraft market and are approved for use on virtually all of the world’s most popular general aviation piston aircraft.

The products are used on a wide array of aircraft applications that include the entire fixed wing piston aircraft line of Cessna and multiple models of Piper and Diamond aircraft.

South Carolina Secretary of Commerce Joe Taylor said the announcement demonstrates that the state’s skilled work force and business-friendly climate are working to grow existing businesses and create new jobs in the Palmetto State.

“Thanks to the team effort of state and local officials, Pickens County will benefit from this investment,” Taylor said.

Ed Parris, chairman of Alliance Pickens, said Champion Aerospace “has a proud tradition of designing and manufacturing high tech aviation products used around the world.”

“Alliance Pickens pledges our support to help Champion grow in today’s competitive global market,” Parris said.

Farley said the approximately \$3 million expansion will take place on the current floor space of the plant, and therefore, require no additional brick and mortar.

Pickens County Council chairman Neil Smith said it was always a pleasure to welcome a new employer but that it was even more rewarding to congratulate an existing industry on its success.

“Great job and thanks for being part of Pickens County,” he said.