

Expert: Pinal has jobs potential

By DONOVAN KRAMER JR., Managing Editor

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Pinal County has great potential to boost its economy as globalization becomes more important, a University of Arizona development specialist said Thursday.

Although economic changes are seeing many jobs move abroad, a net job gain is possible, John Grabo, director of marketing and international programs for the UA's Office of Economic Development told members of the Central Arizona Regional Economic Development Foundation.

He said Arizonans and others have a choice between ignoring globalization or "seizing the opportunity" to participate in international business. The western and central part of the county, located between two growing metropolitan areas, has "spectacular potential," Grabo said.

His appearance during the foundation's annual meeting at The Property Conference Center was sponsored by Great Western Bank.

As usual, some area jobs have been or will be lost due to plant relocations and closures. Attendees were told of others that have or will be providing new jobs, including:

- ACO Polymer Products Inc., which has about 50 employees at its Casa Grande plant near the airport, making drainage systems.
- Pinal Energy in Maricopa, where about 50 employees are making ethanol fuels with a by-product of distillers grain, used as cattle and chicken feed.
- Bright International Corp., which is expanding its Coolidge plant making hair care products, expecting to have up to 150 employees this year.
- National Gypsum Co., which will make enough wall board at its Eloy plant to build 100,000 homes annually. The plant is to have about 100 employees.
- Sky Cast LLC, planning an Eloy plant to make spun concrete lighting and telecommunications poles, employing 25 people per shift.
- Golden Eagle Distributors, expanding its Casa Grande warehouse and adding six to eight employees per year, and more than 20 in the last year.
- Wi-Vod Communications, working to provide broadband service all over Pinal County and moving its national headquarters to the area with 60 to 110 jobs, with a possibility of 800 in five years.

The companies were described in a video produced by Arizona Public Service Co.

Paul Ringer, executive director of the foundation, noted that Pinal County led the nation in housing growth in 2006, bringing it much attention from business. He said that an expansion of the Frito-Lay plant would add 45 jobs.

Jobs here, on the way

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