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Trade Mission to Mexico Broadens Broward County's International Reach

- County and Local Companies Reap Economic Benefits -



Broward County continued to fortify its position in the international business arena during its six-day mission to Merida, Yucatan and Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico. The purpose of the statewide Mexico trade mission, organized by the Broward County Office of Economic Development and led by Broward County Mayor Josephus Eggelletion, Jr., was twofold: to develop the relationship with the state of Jalisco and its economic development leaders that Broward has been building on for the past

five years, and to explore new opportunities.

"We have targeted Merida and Guadalajara, Mexico, for trade and investment because we share much in common with these Mexican cities in terms of economic growth sectors. We have the advantage of cross-cultural relationships already established, and that is becoming increasingly important in international business," stated Norman Taylor, Director of the Broward County Office of Economic Development.

"The opportunities in Mexico are widespread. We pursued a number of areas in pharmaceutical, electronics, information technology, bio-technology, nano-technology, bio-medical, healthcare, medical devices, jewelry and food products industries," said Mayor Eggelletion.

The business delegation included nine Florida companies that accompanied the Broward County Office of Economic Development and other representatives from Port Everglades, the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, Enterprise Florida, and the Broward Alliance. Broward County Commissioner Diana

Wasserman-Rubin participated in the mission, with her focus set on developing relations in the arts and cultural industries in the two cities.

“I believe we can achieve success in promoting opportunities for cultural tourism,” said Commissioner Wasserman-Rubin. “Five years ago we achieved great success on the County’s first trade mission to Guadalajara. This trip expanded our reach.”

The nine Florida companies participating in the mission represented an array of industries including medical devices, natural healthcare products, translation services, insurance, food products, and hurricane shutters.

Enterprise Florida and the Broward Alliance worked with their counterparts in Mexico to set up quality one-on-one business meetings in both cities. The companies averaged about 10 quality one-on-one appointments during the four days of meetings and, although their estimates are preliminary, one company predicts up to \$1.2 million in expected sales over the next 12 months generated from the mission.

“Enterprise Florida and the Broward County Mission assembled a dynamic group of companies from all over Florida to present new products and services to the country of Mexico. The products and services represented encouraged the development of bilateral trade. Patient Practitioners, LLC was very well received by the healthcare and educational community of Guadalajara, the ‘Silicon Valley’ of Mexico,” stated Dr. Naomi Melvin, President of Patient Practitioners, LLC, developers of a multilingual stand alone personal health electronic record.

The governmental officials on the delegation were met with open arms by their counterparts in both cities. Manuel Fuentes Alcocer, Municipal President of Merida had Mayor Elect César Bojórquez join him in his meeting with Mayor Eggelletion, which made it evident that the city of Merida values the relationship that has been established between the regions and their interest to continue working to improve that relationship.

Dr. Alfonso Petersen Farah, Municipal President of Guadalajara, joined Mayor Eggelletion in signing a letter of agreement to make the Office of Economic Development the location of the virtual office of the Mexican Chapter of the Latin Business Association. This will create an even stronger bond between the business communities of the two regions and make international business exchange that much easier.

Mayor Eggelletion also presented Municipal President Petersen Farah with a letter of intent to create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Broward County and the City of Guadalajara in order to bring the regions closer together in not only commerce, but also in culture. The creation of the MOU is a follow up to the relationship initiated by Commissioner Wasserman-Rubin. The

2003 Business Mission to Guadalajara fostered more than \$1 million in trade negotiated between Broward companies and companies in Mexico.

One of the highlights of the mission took place while the group was in the Yucatan. The entire delegation received a welcome surprise when the meet-and-greet meeting between Mayor Eggelletion and the Governor-elect of the State of Yucatan, Ms. Ivonne Ortega Pacheco, turned into much more. The Governor-elect requested a meeting later that night in order to introduce her economic development staff to the staff for Broward County as well as meet with each company that was participating in the mission. Governor-elect Ortega has great plans of business development for her state and sees Florida as a natural partner in the development process.

The Office of Economic Development, Port Everglades, and the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport representatives met with their counterparts in both cities and in every meeting were greeted with a keen interest in creating joint projects. The international airports in both cities were very interested in discussing the possibility of creating direct routes to Fort Lauderdale.

Mexico was the targeted mission for Broward County during fiscal year 2007. Mexico is South Florida's 17th largest trading partner with \$354,444,520 of trade during January to March 2007. Extensive follow-up is already in the works and talks of inbound missions from both cities have begun.

On April 17, 2007, the Board of County Commissioners approved a resolution relating to an International Trade and Investment Policy for Broward County that promotes the growth of international business, foreign direct investment, and increased trade activity through coordination and partnerships with public and private organizations in the region, state and nation.

The first International Trade strategy was developed in 2002 and resulted in major trade missions to Brazil, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, China, Spain and Germany. Broward County also successfully participated and/or coordinated eight missions to the United Kingdom (2004 and 2006), Mexico, Spain, Canada and South Africa in 2003 and 2004.

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For more information on Broward County's Office of Economic Development please visit www.broward.org/econdev.

Caption for Attached Photo:

Broward County Mayor Josephus Eggelletion, Jr. (front right) and the Municipal President of Guadalajara, Dr. Alfonso Petersen Farah, sign Memorandum of Understanding to bring the regions closer together in commerce and culture. June 2007.

