

Business park called an economic boon



Steve Hyde, right, executive director of the Genesee County Economic Development Center, presents to Dr. Bruce A. Holm a copy of the plaque that will bear his name at the Upstate MedTech Centre in Batavia. Groundbreaking ceremonies were Friday. At left is Dr. Marnie LaVigne of the University at Buffalo's Center of Excellence, which Holm directs. (Rocco Laurienzo/Daily News)

By Paul Mrozek

pmrozek@batavianews.com

Saturday, June 27, 2009 7:22 PM EDT

The newest business park in Genesee County will help technology companies put the pedal to the metal in the management of growth and development of products.

That was the message Dr. Bruce A. Holm delivered at Friday's groundbreaking for a new facility named in his honor, the Dr. Bruce A. Holm Upstate MedTech Centre in the town of Batavia.

Holm said the new center, to be built on Hawley Drive across from Genesee Community College, will use the "accelerator model" to assist high technology and biomedical science companies. Accelerator firms are ones that are beyond the start-up phase "but still not at the slam dunk stage" for success, he said.

"They still need some assistance," he said.

Holm, a former Batavia resident who moved out of the community several years ago, has extensive experience in the field. He co-founded two companies that brought prescription drugs to the market.

Holm is the executive director of the Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics & Life Sciences at the University at Buffalo. The MedTech Centre in Batavia is modeled after UB's Center for Excellence, to provide help to high technology firms as they expand.

The Center for Excellence promotes scientific research that helps diagnose and treat diseases and medical conditions. It works in partnership with local governments, academia, research facilities and private industry to promote economic development in Upstate New York.

Growing pains and a lack of required expertise can sink even the most promising company, Holm said.

Technology firms at the accelerator point, a crucial juncture, may need help in one or more areas such as investment capital, investors, business planning, research, technical resources, product development and marketing. It's not always about money, Holm said.

"They tend to require an interdisciplinary approach. We can help them," he said.

Holm said the medical and technology center takes "a regional approach," to attract companies and investors to Western New York.

About 50 people attended Friday's groundbreaking for the MedTech Centre. The first structure on the 32.5-acre site will be 43,000-square-foot professional building that will cost \$5.1 million.

D.A. Tufts of Batavia was awarded the construction contract. The price tag of the entire project is \$6.4 million.

Holm said it was "truly an honor" to have a facility with his name on it.

The Med Tech initiative is the brainchild of the Genesee Economic Development Center and has been in the works for about six years. Holm and GCEDC Executive Director Steve Hyde both cited a long list of partners committed to it, among them UB, GCC, University of Rochester Medical Center, United Memorial Medical Center, Empire State Development Corporation, Buffalo-Niagara Enterprise, Greater Rochester Enterprise, National Grid, United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Program, Five Star Bank, Genesee County, Livingston, Orleans and Wyoming counties and the town of Batavia.

Hyde said Holm, a distinguished professor at UB in two areas, pharmacology and toxicology and of pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, is "a pioneer and leader in life sciences innovation and commercialization here in Western New York."

The GCEDC, in its news release on the groundbreaking, called Holm's approach a "soft landing" for innovative companies that hopefully will put down long-term roots in the area and create good-paying jobs.

Most of the speakers at Friday's ceremony touched on two themes, collaboration and regionalism.

Partnerships, Holm said, "show that we can make it happen."

Holm pointed to posters on the wall of a tent where Friday's event took place. He noted the honors Genesee County and the city of Batavia have received as one of the top micropolitan areas -- small cities -- for economic development in the country.

Pursuing projects for the entire region allows industrial development officials to tap into talent available in micropolitan communities and not just draw its expertise from large

cities such as Rochester and Buffalo, Holm said.

Marnie LaVigne, director of business development for UB's Center of Excellence, also announced Friday that the center will have a satellite office inside the Holm MedTech Centre.

The other tenants announced for the MedTech Centre include GCC's nursing program, United Memorial Medical Center's occupational and physical therapy offices and the GCEDC.