



From left to right, Artie Wilson, Ronnie James, Roger Frisbee, Mark Burrows, Bob Bednarek and Jim Felty are pictured in front of PharmAgra Labs' new home.



PharmAgra employee Andy Noe worked on molecule development in the roomier lab setting last week. The business expanded its space (from 1,600 square feet to more than 11,000 square feet by moving from Arden. (Times photos by Jennifer Uhl-Ford)

County Officials Extended Welcome

PharmAgra Labs Relocated To Large Brevard Site

By Jennifer Uhl-Ford
Staff Writer

Local and state officials last week received a first glance at the success of a yearlong, collaborative effort to bring PharmAgra Labs to the area.

"The end result is what we all hoped to accomplish, and that's to see PharmAgra locate here in Transylvania County and to grow," said Ronnie James, the western region manager of the N.C. Department of Commerce.

The company was founded in 1999 by Roger Frisbee and Peter Newsome, who serve as the co-presidents of the custom organic synthesis business.

The lab was originally located in a rented, 1,600 square foot space in Arden.

"This was a fairly big step for us, and a lot of the help we got from the county made it possible for us to do a lot more," Frisbee said. "Essentially in moving in, we quadrupled the size of the company."

As of last week, PharmAgra officially settled into the 11,400 square foot building on McLean Road in Brevard that previously housed TransAmerica Medical Company.

Frisbee said he and his partner chose to locate in Brevard as a way to attract talented researchers with the area's reputable school system and high quality of life.

"It's a very nice community to live in," he said.

To make the move possible, officials from the Transylvania

County Department of Economic Development and the N.C. Department of Commerce helped the small business secure a low-interest loan.

According to Mark Burrows, director of the Transylvania County Department of Planning and Economic Development, PharmAgra agreed to hire 27 new employees within the next three to five years as a condition of the low-interest loan.

The company currently employs mainly Ph.D.s and experienced B.S. chemists to produce compounds for medicinal use, but Frisbee said jobs requiring less expertise are a future possibility.

The additional space provided by the new building could help PharmAgra secure a pend-

ing arrangement to provide the manufacturing process for products distributed by a biotechnical company on the west coast.

"If we move in that direction we could definitely generate some manufacturing jobs," Frisbee said.

According to Transylvania County Manager Artie Wilson, PharmAgra is the type of business that county officials, members of the Economic Development Advisory Board and the Brevard/Transylvania Chamber of Commerce set their sights on attracting to the area.

"One of the things that had been outlined early on was to look at small businesses with good paying, quality jobs," he said. "And (this) is the type of business that clearly has been targeted as what we want

have in our community."

PharmAgra serves as visible evidence that extensive collaborative economic development efforts take time to reach fruition. And while not all of the recent economic projects have yielded successful results, the company provides proof that

new employment opportunities in the county remain a possibility.

"I know we've all faced some troubled times here," James said. "But it's through efforts like (these) that we're going to see things hopefully turn around."