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## A Shot In The Arm

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### Activity to expand, Portage company to build new facility at Rose Industrial Park

LA PORTE -- La Porte received an economic shot in the arm Monday with the announcement that a Portage company will build a new facility and a La Porte company will expand an existing one in Thomas Rose Industrial Park on the city's east side, creating 61 new jobs.

MonoSol LLC, a Portage company that produces a plastic film used to cover fertilizers, pool chemicals, laundry detergent and dishwashing mix, will invest \$11.1 million in construction and equipment for a 30,000-square-foot facility to be built on a 16-acre undeveloped lot in the industrial park beginning this summer.

And the former Field Container, now Altivity Packaging, will expand its business in the industrial park and boost personnel.

MonoSol is expected to hire 36 employees and Altivity 25.

#### Knocked on LP's door

"I want to say how excited we are to welcome (MonoSol) to our community," Mayor Leigh Morris said at a press conference at La Porte City Hall Monday afternoon. "This enriches the mix of jobs in the community. Many people say manufacturing is dead in this country, but it's not. It's alive and different and this is the future."

The MonoSol facility in La Porte will accommodate two lines and will have 36 people in place by 2009, but has the capacity to grow to eight lines and employ more than 100 people, Vice President of Global Operations Robert Rottinger said. Wages will range between \$14 and \$23 an hour.

The plastic film manufactured by the company dissolves in water and surrounds such products as squares of laundry detergent and dishwashing soap.

When MonoSol ran out of space at its 100,000-square-foot Portage facility, where it employs 140, the company, which started in Portage in 1953, first considered Europe when conducting its search for a new location. The company already has an existing facility in England and 60 percent of its product is exported to Europe. The company also looked in northwest Indiana, however, and following a lead from the Northwest Indiana Forum came knocking on La Porte's door more than a year ago.

#### Technological presence

While the Portage operation will continue to focus on the companies more traditional products, the La Porte facility will do that as well as manufacture more specialized film for the optical industry and food industry. That could mean edible wrappings for drink mixes, soups and spice mixes, said Associate Director of Global Sales David DeVoll.

Attracting a company that will employ chemists and engineers and use state-of-the-art equipment demonstrates the direction city officials hope to take in terms of future economic development.

"We're looking for cutting-edge technology. People say there's no reason to stay in La Porte, but this shows there's reason to stay in La Porte," said Tim Gropp, executive director of the Greater La Porte Economic Development Corporation.

City officials emphasized the team approach taken in landing the company; in addition to city officials and the Economic Development Corporation, the Greater La Porte Area Chamber of Commerce and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation played roles. The Indiana Economic Development Corporation is providing \$170,000 in performance-based tax credits and up to \$78,500 in training grants.

The La Porte City Council on Monday approved \$923,000 in real estate and personal property tax abatements for MonoSol, which expects to spend \$3 million to build the new facility and an additional \$8 million to equip it.

The council also approved the \$150,000 sale of land inside the park to MonoSol. When completed, the facility will fill up the remaining space inside the city-owned industrial park, although that easily might not have been the case.



Photo: By Bob Wellinski

Altivity employee Dave Povlock checks the quality of Nabisco Wheat Thins boxes at the La Porte plant this morning.

**Altivity stays in LP**

When Field Container, including its La Porte facility, was sold to Altivity Packaging in August 2006, a cloud of uncertainty hung over the folding carton manufacturer.

But when it became apparent the new owner had no plans to shut down the facility at 115 Koomler Dr., everyone at the facility was relieved. Now the La Porte facility is on the brink of an economic rebirth, as a production line will be added and 25 more people hired.

To make it happen, La Porte City Council approved a tax abatement on \$6.4 million in new equipment Monday. Installation of the new equipment will begin in July and be completed by January 2008.

The La Porte facility already produces boxes for such food brands as Quaker Oats, Kraft and Smuckers. The new production line will accommodate a new account: General Mills. The new line will result in a 50 percent increase in annual sales, Site Manager Mike Haney said.

"This will allow us to remain competitive for a long time to come. This solidifies our presence in the community," he said.

Currently there are 97 employees at the 138,000-square-foot facility. Entry-level positions pay \$12 an hour while more skilled positions earn \$22 an hour. The former Field Container opened in the industrial park in 1989.

The job expansions at both La Porte facilities, however, don't make up for the more than 150 total job losses recently announced at Nash Finch Company food distribution center in Westville and EGS Easy Heat Inc. in New Carlisle later this year.

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