

\$4 million at both the inn and other area restaurants and stores once the hotel reaches a stable occupancy rate, according to a feasibility study commissioned by Lafrance. The same study concluded the hotel could bring over \$1 million worth of wages to the area with 75 construction jobs, up to 25 hotel positions and additional employment created at other local businesses to support the hotel operations and guest needs.

The \$8 million inn will feature a conference center, indoor pool, fitness room, and guest laundry. Lafrance encourages the use of local workers whenever possible. As a testament to that business philosophy, E.L. Vining & Sons of Farmington have cleared and prepared the six acre building site, and Ranor, Inc. of Jay has been contracted for the plumbing.

"We're making good progress, and we're looking forward to opening next May or June," said Lafrance.

The new Comfort Inn & Suites will be the first nationally recognizable hotel on Route 2 between Routes 95 & 93. It will benefit the area by identifying Franklin County as a natural travel stop for both business trips and leisure visits to enjoy the region's many year-round activities according to Christine Thomas, Director of Real Estate and Acquisitions for Choice Hotels, International.

"The enthusiasm of Franklin County for this project has made it possible. Alison Hagerstrom and the Board of Directors of Greater Franklin Development Corporation have well represented the area with their positive approach, knowledge of the area and their tenacity. Many area individuals and officials were also extremely helpful, including: Richard Batt of Franklin Community Health Network, Theodora Kalikow and her team from the University of Maine at Farmington and Town Managers, Richard Davis and Peter Nielsen," said Thomas.

Hagerstrom, Greater Franklin Development Corporation's Executive Director, started working with Choice Hotels, International over four years ago to bring a Comfort Inn & Suites to the region because she believed a well known hotel would be a catalyst for other developers and businesses to move here, including a national chain restaurant. She also anticipates it will bring in clients and vendors who have business customers here, but who now stay in hotels in nearby towns.

"There is very much a need for a brand hotel here. It will allow us to attract more people to enjoy our area," she said.

Developers from Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan and New York visited the area, but it was the Lafrance family's visit in 2005 that proved to be the perfect fit, according to Hagerstrom.

"The Lafrance family fell in love with this area," she said, "They have a strong history of being good corporate citizens by supporting the local community through financial donations and volunteerism," she said.



"Our hope is that our hotel will stimulate tourism. It gives people a reason to stay in the area which can help boost related businesses such as restaurants and retailers."

In 2005, Lafrance Hospitality committed to building a hotel in the area and began reviewing building sites, eventually purchasing the Bowering property in Wilton on Route 2 near the Farmington town line in early 2007. Lafrance told members of the local press he was willing to take a chance on the untried Southern Franklin County market, in part, because of the positive response he received from university and hospital officials as well as Wilton and Farmington town officials.

In August 2007, Wilton voters approved a tax incentive for the Comfort Inn & Suites project to support job creation and retention, encourage capital investment and increase the local tax base. The positive vote paved the way for construction to begin.

Insyt Partners With Ski Industry Giants Rossignol & Dynastar

Innovative web solutions paired with tested marketing strategy prove successful for the Insyt New Media™ company.



FARMINGTON - What do you get when you put five twenty-somethings into an office together five days a week? If you answered, "An award winning, new media company," then pat yourself on the back. Insyt New Media™ recently had two web sites nominated as "Best of the Web" finalists by MESDA, Maine's Software and Information Technology Industry Association. "We won for creating the best arts and entertainment web site in the state with a site we designed for Magic Falls, a white water rafting company. Our web site for Saddleback was a finalist in the corporate image category," says Peter Roberts, president of Insyt. "That's exciting because it positions us as one of the top web development agencies in the state."

Although Insyt New Media™ is sought after for creating innovative web sites, web-based solutions represent only 50% of the company's business, Roberts explained. Insyt's office is a bustling hub of creativity. Upon entering, the first thing one might notice is the soothing sound of Pete's voice, most likely singing something off of the "Hitch" sound track. Stomachs will cringe at the sight of Sid and Nate drinking their Red Bulls for breakfast, preparing for another day of programming. One can't help but smile as Jon explains to another client how "exquisite" he actually is today. Don't mind the muttering from Steve's desk; he's searching to plug in his ipod to drown out Pete's singing. It is this team, through marketing strategies and synchronized print, radio, television and web site design, that helped the Saddleback ski area grow 28% last year.

Over the past two years, Roberts and his team have developed inControl™ Content Tools, a proprietary set of web-based tools that allow clients to manage and modify their web sites without computer programming knowledge, through any web browser.

Ski and snowboard manufacturers Rossignol and Dynastar have signed up for an inControl™ module that allows them to create and maintain employee training and incentive programs accessible by their web site. Store reps throughout the country can use these programs to learn more about each product line and individual product features while earning rewards and discounts. The goal is to better serve ski and snowboard customers with a more knowledgeable sales staff. Ski bums around the world have to agree with Dynastar and Rossignol when they say inControl™ is "gnarly dude." Not into the snow? Not to worry! "The inControl™ system is adaptable to almost any retail product that relies on the in-store rep to push sales," Roberts explained.

One of the few things never heard out of this young team is the word "impossible." With a digitally fearless attitude, Insyt's team has been able to develop interactive touch screen kiosks, interactive CDs and DVDs, 3D modeling and animation and much more for its clients. "We're growing. Over the past eight months, we've hired two new full-time employees," said Roberts. His seven-member team now serves clients as far away as Vermont, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Utah. "We are developing high-end new media solutions from right here in Farmington, Maine, and we're having fun doing it."

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Fall 2007

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Fall is upon us and with that comes hard work; whether it is raking leaves, stacking firewood or closing down camp for the winter. In this issue, you will read about companies that have put in hard work of their own; local business people demonstrating that imagination and determination drives economic growth and development. At Insyt New Media™, creativity means using the internet as a platform for innovative training programs that can serve clients worldwide. Several area companies have been awarded funding by the Maine Technology Institute for their efforts in product research and development. The new hotel and conference center under construction in Wilton is a resourceful solution to meet the growing business needs of our region. Each of these efforts to build a better business helps shape the Franklin County we want to work and live in today and tomorrow.



I hope you enjoy reading, and remember to visit us at: **www.GreaterFranklin.com**

Alison

Alison Hagerstrom
Executive Director



CONSTRUCTION BREAKS GROUND FOR NEW COMFORT INN & SUITES

As many as 39 new jobs and an estimated \$4 million could be added to the Southern Franklin County economy once the new Comfort Inn & Suites is up and running.

WILTON - On a crisp, clear September afternoon, dignitaries from local government, area businesses, Franklin Memorial Hospital, the University of Maine at Farmington and Comfort Inn & Suite's corporate parent, Choice Hotels International joined Richard Lafrance, CEO of Lafrance Hospitality, to kick off construction of his 88-room Comfort Inn & Suites.



Rendering by Opeechee Construction Corporation

Members of the Lafrance family and hotel management team also attended the event. The groundbreaking ceremony at the building site on Route 2 adjacent to Franklin Memorial Hospital will hopefully mark the start of a multimillion economic infusion into the Southern Franklin County area.

"Our hope is that our hotel will stimulate tourism. It gives people a reason to stay in the area, which can help boost related businesses such as restaurants and retailers," said Lafrance, whose three-generation family business has built and operated hotels in New England for more than 50 years.

The inn is expected to be a boom to the regional economy as more than 38,000 guests are anticipated to visit the hotel each year; spending an estimated

Creative Research And Development Powers Franklin County

Five area companies win a total of more than \$500,000 to finance new product development and production.

FRANKLIN COUNTY - What if you could build a nail gun that would fire self-puttying nails, leaving a building surface ready for paint or stain?

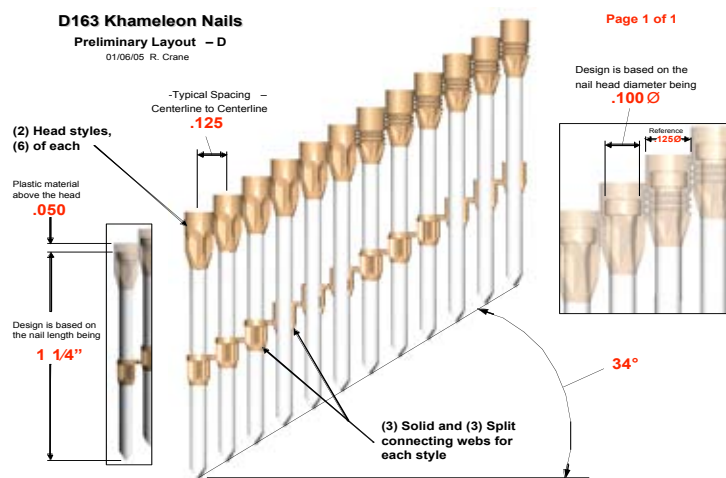
What if you could create a wireless thermal sensor system that would allow farmers to check their compost piles for safer organic produce?

What if you could produce a computerized woodworking machine that could craft precision joints for timber frame construction?

What if you could open a profitable manufacturing plant in rural Maine to make structural insulated panels (SIPs)?

These are some of the creative business ideas that five Franklin County companies are developing with financial assistance from the Maine Technology Institute (MTI) this year. Two new companies received significant MTI development awards. microSpectral Sensors of Wilton will use their almost \$350,000 award to begin production of their innovative series of spectrometers. Khameleon Nails of Carrabassett Valley will use their \$165,000 award to develop a working prototype of their self-puttying nails and nail gun. Three other companies received smaller seed grants of up to \$12,500 to develop promising concepts. Mike Smiley Timberframes of New Sharon will realize his design of a new type of computerized woodworking machine. Pike Agri-Lab Supply of Jay is testing a wireless probe system to monitor temperature in compost piles. And, Joshua Wojcik of Perkins Township will develop a business plan for a structural insulated panel (SIP) manufacturing operation.

MTI was created in 1999 by the State Legislature to promote economic and job growth by funding research and product development when it was discovered that Maine companies were investing less money in research and development than their peers in other states, according to MTI President Betsy Biemann. The private, non-profit organization co-invests in new technology development with Maine companies in seven key



areas: biotechnology, environmental technology, information technology, precision manufacturing, aquaculture, composite materials technology and advanced technologies for forestry and agriculture. Most of its funding comes from the State through the Department of Economic and Community Development.

"There's a positive ripple effect in the local and state economy when a business grows and develops. Not only can research and development create a new product or new applications, but a thriving business also benefits the local pizza shop and the downtown office supply store," Biemann said.

To support emerging technologies that will create more jobs and increased economic growth, MTI development awards are conditional loans that recycle repayments to support new technology projects at other companies. All MTI development award winners must secure matching corporate funding to receive MTI support.

Khameleon Nails plans to use its development award for market analysis, design refinement, and development and testing of a working prototype of the self-puttying nail gun system, according company CEO Jeff Strunk.

"We'd like to make this product in the state of Maine; we're now building the prototype. We're building the nails, the nail gun and even the manufacturing process from scratch,"

he said. The self-puttying nail will be round and double-headed, he added. Its unique design will require a new type of nail gun that can push rather than slam nails into a surface; a process that creates a cleaner, circular hole that can be more easily filled.

Strunk is an inventor rather than a carpenter. The Farmington native created an award-winning game called Stack in 1988 and patented his idea for a cell phone directory assistance service in the 1990s.

"I've never picked up a nail gun in my life. I was looking for a new idea. I was in my office staring at the walls which are covered in wainscoting; I saw some of the nail holes hadn't been filled in. That's when I realized how much work it must take to putty all those nail holes," he explained.

Strunk and his partners researched the \$23 billion domestic nail market and realized that a self-puttying nail would save professional and do-it-yourself builders time and money. One Rangeley builder told Strunk that a high-end home could have as many as 32,000 nail holes that required puttying. Manufacturers of mobile and modular homes, who Strunk talked to at trade shows around the country, were particularly interested in a self-puttying nail. "We could help them get a higher quality product to market faster," he added.

The MTI award was a valuable resource for Khameleon Nails. "The application process was painstaking, but ultimately, they help you refine your idea and do the necessary research," Strunk said.

"MTI funds support research and experimentation; a high risk investment that usually cannot be funded by traditional means," Biemann said. "Generally, banks want to see an established company with steady revenues before they provide financing," she added.

Using a computer assisted woodworking machine to create precise joints could make the beauty of timber frame construction more cost-effective, according to Mike Smiley, owner of Mike Smiley Timberframes. Timber frame construction, which uses fewer, larger timbers to build homes with exposed beams, is a very labor intensive process and more expensive type of home construction. Smiley, who has designed and now plans to create a working prototype of his woodworking machine, believes it could make his business more competitive.

"The MTI seed grant is tremendously helpful. It probably would have taken me years to build it. Having the funds

available will speed up the process and give me more opportunity to experiment with different ideas," he added.

Robert Pike, founder of Pike Agri-Lab Supply, has toyed with the idea of creating a wireless thermal sensing system for composting for about ten years. Farmers can determine when harmful bacteria have been killed off by monitoring the temperature of a compost pile. Originally, temperature probes were large and bulky, but micro technology advances and MTI funding has allowed Pike to develop a working prototype of a small, relatively inexpensive multi-temperature probe system that is now being tested.



Innovative Technology Company Expands in Wilton

microSpectral Sensors receives \$350,000 Maine Technology Institute award to develop a new production line.

WILTON – microSpectral Sensors President Rand Stowell hopes to create a thriving technology business in downtown Wilton over the next several years. Using a development award of almost \$350,000 from the Maine Technology Institute(MTI), his company will build the latest version of their ground-breaking measurement tools, a series of smaller, more inexpensive spectrometers.

The award is actually a loan that will be repaid over time to MTI who will then use the money to aid another business in bringing new product to the marketplace, according to MTI President Betsy Biemann.

Spectrometers are basic pieces of laboratory equipment which are used to determine the biological or chemical make-up of liquids. "Spectrometers are laboratory instruments which pass light through a liquid sample and measure the absorbed light to determine the presence of chemical or biological compounds, by their unique 'spectral fingerprints'. Miniaturizing this function allows an end user to bring the instrument to the sample, for rapid measurement results," explained Stowell from his offices in the former Bass building, downtown.

"What we've done is to miniaturize a spectrometer. We call it a 'spectrometer on a chip.' By making it small, we can drive down the cost. By driving down the cost, we can broaden its applications." Stowell added, "When used in industry such as a paper mill or an oil refinery, a process spectrometer is a very large, very expensive piece of equipment." By contrast, the brain of a microSpectral sensor is a pin-point dot of a computer chip embedded on a translucent strip of plastic less than two inches long.

"The MTI award is to take our sensor technology and incorporate it into an online measuring system such as for water distribution lines or a pipeline in a paper mill, a beverage plant or a petroleum refinery," according to Stowell.

The company's sensor will sit at the top of a stainless steel enclosure enabling liquids to flow through the pipe while simultaneously taking measurements. The enclosed sensor is about four inches high and the accompanying optics board is smaller than a computer keyboard.

"Our system will cost a fraction of the traditional process

spectrometers, enabling the use of several sensors in various process lines. One potential application is for an early warning of contaminants in a water supply system, enabling isolation of a problem before it becomes widespread," Stowell detailed.

In November, microSpectral Sensors plans to introduce a handheld unit named the i-LAB™. This portable spectrometer, about as big as a cell phone, can be

used not only in the laboratory, but also directly in the field for homeland security, forensic, educational and water quality measurements. Additionally, the small size of the sensing technology makes it ideal for on-line process applications, including measuring the level of chlorine in water or octane in gasoline. Another product planned for the future is a handheld surface reader that will take measurements on solid surfaces rather than liquids. Applications for this product include detecting bacterial contamination in vegetables, or even matching paint colors.

Stowell has been working on this project for five years. He ran a family forest products company in Dixfield for many years. After the family business was sold, he became a business consultant. Stowell started working on a chemical sensor to detect chlorine dioxide, a chemical used in paper making. Although that device didn't work, it led him to a new technology that was much more efficient and was patentable.

