



**March 2010**

**Grow Minnesota! Launches BusinessConnection in River Heights Community to Provide Business Answers and Assistance**

**Inver Grove Heights/South St. Paul, MN** February 5, 2010 – The River Heights Chamber of Commerce and Progress Plus are proud to announce that the Inver Grove Heights and South St. Paul companies and entrepreneurs now have a single entry point to become connected with private and public resources to solve everyday business problems.

BusinessConnection – a new business assistance and referral network – was launched recently by Grow Minnesota!, a subsidiary of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce.

BusinessConnection is open to all businesses and can be reached via the Web site [www.mnbizconnect.com](http://www.mnbizconnect.com). BusinessConnection is also available toll-free by calling (888) MINN-BIZ (646-6249), with live operators standing by.

“Our state has the business-assistance resources to solve most problems,” said Bill Blazar, senior vice president of public affairs and business development at the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the state’s largest business-advocacy organization. “But our Grow Minnesota! business-retention visits also suggest that Minnesota companies are generally unaware of the resources and how to identify and access those that can solve their problems.”

Grow Minnesota!, a distinctive private-sector business retention and economic development program, is conducted in partnership with over 50 local chambers of commerce. Staff and volunteers average about 900 one-on-one visits per year with owners and/or managers of Minnesota businesses.

Most importantly, in five years of operation, Grow Minnesota! has solved more than 500 separate problems for individual companies. The requests for help range from acquiring specific permits to looking for a raw material supplier for a manufacturing process to searching for potential buildings and sites to expand within a community or the state.

The number of queries and range of assistance provided were the impetus for creating BusinessConnection.

“Job retention and creation is our number one priority. This network will increase utilization of existing assistance programs for business and that will go a long way toward keeping jobs in Minnesota as well as helping businesses grow.” Jennifer Gale, River Heights Chamber of Commerce and Progress Plus.

Grow Minnesota! is the Chamber’s job-retention and business-growth program. BusinessConnection is a joint project of Grow Minnesota! and the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). The service is designed to be statewide, well-publicized and easy to access.

Grow Minnesota! worked closely with DEED, as well as other public and private economic development organizations, to shape BusinessConnection.

“Preserving and growing jobs is increasingly challenging in today’s global economy,” Blazar said. “Businesses face enough obstacles without being frustrated in their attempts to find answers to simple questions or navigate the regulatory landscape.”

Grants from the McKnight Foundation to Grow Minnesota! and DEED will cover the start-up and initial operating costs of BusinessConnection. Use of the database and network will be monitored carefully to determine the program’s permanency as part of Grow Minnesota!.

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