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NEWS RELEASE

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDES FUNDS FOR BUTLER COUNTY SHELTERED WORKSHOP

Greg Branum, Missouri State Director for USDA Rural Development, and Rural Development staff participated in a ground breaking ceremony on Friday, March 30, 2007, for a new building that will house the Butler County sheltered workshop. The workshop is operated by Manufacturers Assistance Group (MAG), located in Poplar Bluff.

Mr. Branum presented MAG with a mock check in the amount of \$1,518,000 to help fund the 40,000-square foot workshop. MAG was also awarded a community development block grant from the Missouri Department of Economic Development in the amount of \$300,000, and Poplar Bluff Industries donated six acres for the site of the new building.



Branum said, "I am extremely pleased to partner with the Missouri Department of Economic Development and Poplar Bluff Industries for such a worthwhile cause. Rural Development has enjoyed a great – successful relationship with Poplar Bluff Industries that resulted in the location of Nordyne Industries."

The new facility will be located in the Poplar Bluff Industrial Park. The 200-foot by 200-foot pre-engineered metal building will be separated into four quadrants of approximately 10,000 square feet each. Uses for the quadrants include a pallet shop, warehouse, subcontracting work area and an office/cafeteria area. An entrance road off of Cravens Road has already been created by the Butler County Highway Department.

"This new building will help us maintain a safe and healthy working environment for our employees. The Board of Directors, along with our staff and employees would like to thank everyone involved in the project," said Susan Williams, MAG Board President.

MAG, a not-for-profit organization, currently provides employment for 80 mentally challenged adults and has seven staff members. With the new facility, they will have space for 20 additional employees. The workshop currently has contracts with six firms and builds pallets for two companies. The larger building and additional employees will enable the workshop to accept more contracts for the workers and also provide more warehouse space.

The funding awarded to MAG from USDA Rural Development originates from the Community Facilities Direct Loan program. This program is specifically designed for municipalities, counties or non-profit organizations that cannot finance projects from their own resources or through commercial credit at reasonable rates and terms. The loan purpose is to construct, enlarge, extend or otherwise improve essential community facilities.

Further information regarding Community Facility loans, or any of the USDA Rural Development programs, is available by contacting the Poplar Bluff Rural Development Office at angela.reynolds@mo.usda.gov or by calling 573-785-9679, ext. 4. Rural Development's web site is: www.rurdev.usda.gov/mo.

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