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DALBY: 1si president speaks on mission

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Local Columnist

> SOUTHERN INDIANA — As One Southern Indiana enters its 5th year of operations, we felt it might help to define our purpose and work, and explain how our efforts impact our two-county area.

The mission of One Southern Indiana is simple — to bring greater prosperity and employment opportunity to southern Indiana. We do that by attracting new companies into our area, helping our existing businesses grow and by facilitating new business creation.

In short, we help businesses thrive; and when they thrive, more money circulates throughout our economy. As a result, the tax base expands and more money is available to pay for essential services like education, public safety, water, sewers, streets, etc. Furthermore, more money is made available for not-for-profit social service contributions that help make our region a great place to live. It all starts with business sustainability and growth, and our staff and resources help our member businesses thrive.

One common misunderstanding is that One Southern Indiana is a government agency funded by tax dollars. One Southern Indiana is not a government agency. In fact, less than two percent of our total budget comes from public dollars. [The City of Jeffersonville has contracted with us for \$30,000 for the past two years for economic development services ... and gained hundreds of thousands of dollars each year in new taxes ... a great return on their investment.] 1si is primarily funded (98 percent) by the private sector — companies and organizations that provide support via investments, memberships, sponsorships and advertising. Those businesses and organizations believe in our ability to grow the economy and know their investment in 1si makes Clark and Floyd Counties a better place to live.

During the past four years, 1si has had remarkable success in assisting in economic growth. We have led the efforts in bringing 10 new company locations to Clark and Floyd Counties resulting in more than 1,600 new jobs developed during the next few years. What part did we play? We helped these companies realize the great potential for their businesses by locating here (versus other locations competing for their business), assisted them in applying for state and local tax phase-ins, and helped them find the local resource providers to make their new location a reality.

Sometimes people think our economic growth work only involves new company recruitment and that we can't or won't do anything for existing industries. That is absolutely false. During the same four-year period, we've helped 46 local companies with 52 significant expansion projects, adding more than 4,000 new jobs and \$260 million in new capital investment ... taxable capital investment. This work — to both retain and grow our existing businesses and foster the jobs they create — is the real on-going success of 1si.

The southern Indiana economy has been built on a foundation of small to mid-sized, privately held and often family-owned companies that have invested in our region and have grown right here in Clark and

Floyd counties. We are proud of the work we've been able to do to assist them in their growth. To date, we've helped more than 350 local companies overcome some challenge to their success — assisted with traffic signal issues, helped them find employees, helped find service providers, provided one-to-one and group networking opportunities and helped connect them to “best practices.”

What does the future hold? We've organized our staff into three areas of operations — Business Services — connecting businesses of all types to potential clients, business resources and economic data, Economic Development — delivering incentives to qualifying companies, and Business Advocacy — promoting the value of a strong, sustainable business environment to our federal, state and local elected officials. And in each area, we're expanding our efforts.

As the economy continues to recover, we'll reach out to support our existing companies as they adjust to the “new economy,” and we'll encourage new business creation. We're fortunate to administer the Horseshoe Foundation of Floyd County Small Business Revolving Loan Fund, plus having the business resources of our higher education institutions and our local Small Business Development Center to support entrepreneurship. We'll continue the internationally recognized work of our award-winning Economic Development team. And we'll add a more active advocacy component, including a well-funded Political Action Committee, to work closer with our elected officials to jointly encourage and implement government attitudes and policies that encourage job growth — both from existing businesses and through the creation and attraction of new companies.

We're proud of the work we've done to add jobs, prosperity and economic opportunities in Clark and Floyd counties and their component communities. We're thankful for all those companies that “invest” in 1si and, in effect, provide our area with professional business development services. If you own a business and haven't tried our services, I encourage you to experience a new type of “chamber of commerce.” And to our elected officials, we look forward to collaborating with you during the next four years to serve our citizens and create a “best in class” region.

Dalby is the president of One Southern Indiana.