

High-Tech Hopes

By Samantha Sommer

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Fourth-grader Bethany Moehn likes to play games on computers, but after Monday she's thinking about another way to use the machines. Now, hearing them talk about all this stuff, I think I might want to work here, said Moehn, who attends Reid Elementary School.

The event witnessed by Moehn at PrimeOhio Corporate Park on Monday was important for students like her and their future job opportunities, said public and private leaders who attended the groundbreaking for the more than \$30 million LexisNexis data center. The Miamisburg-based database and information company is building the 60,000 square-foot center on a 40-acre site to create space for back-up, storage and research. The center is expected to generate at least 80 jobs that will pay \$60,000 to \$100,000 each. Completion of the building is scheduled for December 2004. The company has archived more than 4 billion documents and provides searchable information to lawyers, journalists, educators and government employees.

Gov. Bob Taft attended the groundbreaking, calling it good news for Springfield and Ohio. The state provided a business development grant, training dollars and job creation tax credits for the project, Taft said. The governor took the occasion to encourage voters to approve state Issue 1 — a \$500 million bond issue that will promote high-tech jobs in Ohio. Information technology is growing rapidly and it is one of our primary economic development targets, Taft said. Issue 1 will make it possible to grow our economy and create the kind of jobs that these school children will need in the years to come. The issue is on today's election ballot.

Several states and cities competed for the new data center, as did Ontario, Canada.

Cooperation between the public and private sectors set Springfield apart, said Bill Pardue, chief executive officer of corporate and federal markets for LexisNexis. Springfield put forth a united front, Pardue said. They moved quickly when necessary and were thoughtful when necessary.

Many people thanked U.S. Rep. David Hobson and The Turner Foundation on Monday for their roles in bringing the company to Springfield. Hobson agreed that cooperation benefited Springfield. We didn't just have the development people that are normal to a project like this, the Springfield Republican said. Everybody worked together as a community, and we didn't give up.

Students from Reid, Warder Park-Wayne and Horace Mann schools attended the groundbreaking. They drew pictures of how they imagined the new data center will look. Moehn's drawing included workers at computers visible through several windows of the building.

The database company provided \$2,000 checks to the three schools. LexisNexis employees often donate their time as tutors and mentors, Pardue said, a practice he expects them to repeat in Springfield. Clark-Shawnee Local School Superintendent Debbie Finkes said the checks were unexpected. An employer such as LexisNexis can have a give effect on the school district, she said, and some high school students are scheduled to tour the company's Miamisburg campus soon. The most exciting thing is that they want to come into your schools and help your students learn, she said.

LexisNexis is just the first step, said John Landess, executive director of The Turner Foundation. We really envision marketing Springfield aggressively, focusing on high-information companies and creating a Dayton-Columbus technology corridor, Landess said.

The LexisNexis people negotiating the deal have been first rate, Mayor Warren Copeland said. Springfield was heralded as a manufacturing innovator decades ago, Copeland said, and with this deal can reclaim that reputation. Today we take a huge step from the past into the future, he said. We need to work together to follow that step with another step, and another step after that.