

IOWA NEARS TOP IN QUALITY OF LIFE

When it comes to quality of life, Iowa has jumped to 2nd in the nation, according to a widely-published comparison of the 50 states issued each year by Washington-based Congressional Quarterly Press. Factors including a healthy population, safe neighborhoods and excellence in education contributed to Iowa's best showing in three years.

"This study reaffirms to Iowans and demonstrates to people outside of the state what a great place Iowa is for families, careers, business, tourism and recreation," said Michael Tramontina, Director of the Iowa Department of Economic Development. "It is statistical confirmation that our Midwestern values and hard-working people are what make Iowa strong and resilient for everything that comes along."

Other states ranked with Iowa among top five are Wyoming, 1st; New Hampshire, 3rd; Minnesota, 4th; and Nebraska, 5th.

State Rankings 2009 is an annual comparison in 44 statistical categories that are indicators of quality of life. The comparison uses a broad range of economic, education, health-oriented, public safety and environmental statistics. Iowa's rankings have steadily moved up over the past few years:

IOWA RANKINGS IN MOST LIVABLE STATE

2009	2nd
2008	5th
2007	6th

Continued on page 2

Wind turbine service facility under construction

NextEra Energy Resources, LLC, whose subsidiaries operate seven wind energy farms in Iowa, recently held groundbreaking ceremonies for the Generation Repair and Service (GRS) facility in Story City.

The GRS facility will be used to overhaul and repair the company's wind turbine electric generation equipment as well as warehouse and store parts and supplies to support renewable and other energy-related operations throughout the Midwest.

"Renewable energy is key not only to long term issues, such as the environment and national security, but for our immediate need to create jobs in Iowa," said Governor Chet Culver. "NextEra Energy's facility represents a positive step in moving Iowa's economic growth forward by a company that has been a leader in generating wind power across the nation. The jobs created here are going to be jobs of the future, and they're coming to Iowa."

NextEra expects to invest approximately \$20 million to expand an existing building

located in the I35 Business Park east of Story City. Construction of the 60,000 sq. ft. expansion is expected to be complete by the end of 2009. Once operational, the facility will have 20 to 25 full-time employees.

"By having what amounts to our own in-house maintenance facility for certain wind turbine components, we will be able to reduce our equipment down time," said NextEra Energy Resources President and CEO Mitch Davidson. "We appreciate all the support we've received from state and local authorities and look forward to expanding our presence in Iowa."

The project was made possible because of the support of Governor Culver, the Iowa Department of Economic Development and Story City Economic Development Corporation. The teams collaborated with GRS to assemble a variety of incentives and assistance.



Governor Chet Culver helps break ground for the Generation Repair and Service facility to be owned by NextEra Energy Resources, LLC in Story City.



Budcat's heroic success in Iowa

You don't have to be located in Silicon Valley, Los Angeles or Seattle to design and market best-selling video games. Budcat Creations is an award-winning video-game designer with more than eight years of development experience and 15 published titles to its name. Since its move to Iowa City from Las Vegas in 2005, Budcat has grown from six employees to more than 60.

The development studio, with expertise on the Wii™ home video game system and the Nintendo DS™ platform, has grown rapidly due to its work on the immensely popular "Guitar Hero®" series of video games.

"We've developed "Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock," "Guitar Hero: Aerosmith" and "Guitar Hero World Tour," says Jeremy Anderson, Budcat general manager.



The company has designs to grow even more now that it's been acquired by Activision Publishing, the Santa Monica, California-based owner of the Guitar Hero franchise.

"We are thrilled to partner with Activision and believe that this acquisition is a perfect fit for both companies," says Andersen. "Their world-class sales and marketing support means that we can focus our time and resources on what we love and do best — creating great games."

"We're always looking for talent," says Anderson. "And we've had more success recruiting people to Iowa City than we ever had recruiting people in Las Vegas."

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Continued from page 1

The state of Iowa has ranked among the top ten most livable states for 18 straight years and has placed in the top five for 13 of those years. The most livable state ranking of CQ Press is widely used by state economic development agencies, human resource recruiters, and tourism promotion groups across the nation.

GOVERNOR CULVER AT MICROSOFT HEADQUARTERS



Governor Chet Culver stands next to Kevin Williams, Microsoft's director of data center services on the Microsoft campus in Redmond, Washington, where he had a day of meetings with company officials. The Governor urged Microsoft to move ahead with the delayed Iowa project, a \$500 million next generation data center announced last year for West Des Moines.

"I had a very positive, productive meeting with Microsoft about their plans for Iowa. In fact, I've been assured by Microsoft that it is not a question of 'if' but of 'when' they move forward with this project in Iowa. They understand Iowa has a great workforce, a great quality of life, and is a great place to do business. And I look forward to Microsoft playing a role in Iowa's economic success story," said Governor Culver.

Hire talented summer interns

Hiring college students for summer internships this year? Small and medium sized companies in the biosciences, information solutions, or advanced manufacturing industries can apply for intern subsidies from the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED).

"It's an excellent way to improve the flow of talented young Iowans into jobs in local industries," said IDED Director Mike Tramontina. "The Iowa Student Internship Program assists smaller companies with the costs of hiring interns, putting in one dollar in for every two dollars paid by industry."

Interested companies should act right away. The application for the Iowa Student Internship Program is posted at http://www.iowalifechanging.com/business/ic/internship_program.html.

A NEW “WOW FACTOR” FOR IOWA EDUCATION

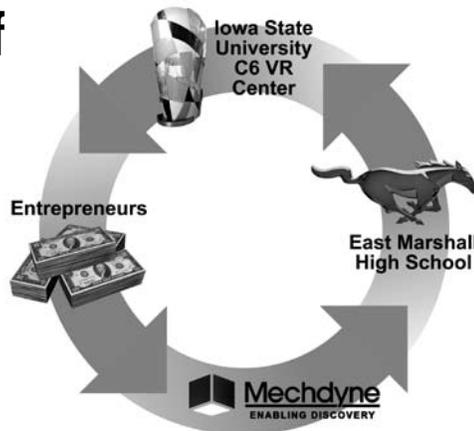
What happens when you donate advanced computer visualization technology to a rural high school and let the students figure out how to put it to work? In the case of East Marshall High School, you become a model for the state of Iowa and form the basis for a pilot program in discovery education.

MechDyne Corp., the Marshalltown based leader in advanced visualization technologies, was installing a new three-dimensional interactive imaging system at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota. Phil Anderson, account manager, asked what they were going to do with their old system. Mayo didn't know. Would they donate the system to a school? Anderson had in mind his old high school, East Marshall and called Principal Ed Kozak to see if his students would like to work with advanced visualization, if MechDyne got them a free system. The school would but lacking special resources for instruction, Kozak turned the manual over to students to see what they could do with it.

The results have been amazing. Students working with their teachers have created visualizations to illustrate science concepts at East Marshall, peaking their own interest and making math and science courses more interesting for other students. The experience has attracted the attention of Iowa technology companies familiar with funding sources for career promotion. A pilot program is being put together in hopes of duplicating East Marshall's success in drawing young people into technology education.

Iowa's Circle of Innovation

East Marshall, the local high school for students from Le Grand, Gilman, Ferguson, Query, Dillon, Dunbar and Laurel, completes a circle of innovation that shows flowing connection between education, entrepreneurs, and companies in the new Iowa economy.



Jack Harris, Director of Advanced Manufacturing for Rockwell Collins, has taken the lead to recruit corporate sponsors to donate technology systems and expertise for the Iowa Virtual Reality (VR) Education Pilot. They will request \$250,000 to organize the pilot from the Iowa Career Awareness Fund at the Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED). The Pilot will bring technology educators, including those from Iowa State University's virtual reality center, together with company experts to bring discovery education into six other high schools.

“We're seeing a circle of innovation here that is really remarkable in making a difference,” said Karen Merrick, administrator of IDED's Innovation & Commercialization Division. “You have the founders of MechDyne, who came out of Iowa State University as entrepreneurs. Their company donates virtual reality technology to East Marshall, where it interests students in further VR education and becoming entrepreneurs themselves.”

“We haven't seen an opportunity quite like this before that combines innovation, education and commercialization (moving new products to market) into a loop. The Iowa VR Education Pilot could play a key role in preparing students to become skilled workers and entrepreneurs in the 21st century economy,” said Merrick.

If you would like more information on the Iowa Career Awareness Fund, contact the Innovation & Commercialization Division at innovation@iowalifechanging.com.

IOWA METROS AMONG THE BEST FOR BUSINESS & CAREERS

Nine Iowa metro areas are ranked in the top half of Best Places for Business and Careers by Forbes magazine in the 11th annual comparison.

“The Forbes ranking is certainly helpful in sustaining Iowa's progress in a challenging economy,” said Michael Tramontina, Director of the Iowa Department of Economic Development. “This ranking should make the decision easy for everyone considering Iowa for their career and family life.”

In the new ranking, Des Moines ranked the highest at 7th among the 200 large U.S. metros for business and careers. Other Iowa metros in the large group ranking are: Council Bluffs/Omaha, 35th; Cedar Rapids, 42nd, and Davenport, 97th.

Business and living costs, job growth and educational attainment are among the 11 criteria used in comparing U. S. metros to arrive at the Forbes Best Places for Business and Careers.

Among individual factor scoring, Davenport ranked 2nd best among metros for Cost of Living.

A companion comparison of Best Small Places for Business and Careers has Iowa City ranked 9th and Ames ranked 20th, primarily because of strength in educational attainment. Ames ranks 3rd and Iowa City 5th in educational attainment of the population.

Other small metros with high rankings for business and careers are Waterloo, 32nd and Dubuque, 40th. Sioux City is ranked 53rd overall and captured 9th place among small places for cost of doing business.

The Forbes comparisons used data from Moody's Economy.com and city researcher Bert T. Sperling.

CALENDAR

- May 4-7 Windpower 2009
- May 8 Smart Conference
Polk County Convention Center
Des Moines
- May 13-16 BREI 2009 Annual Conference
Marriott Downtown
Des Moines
- June 6-9 IFT'09 Annual Meeting and Food Expo
- July 19-22 BIO World Congress on Industrial Biotechnology
and Bioprocessing

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Educating wind energy technicians



A groundbreaking ceremony at Iowa Lakes Community College in Estherville officially launched an addition which will allow enrollment to increase in the wind energy and turbine technology program. Al Zeitz, director of the nationally recognized program, said the new facility will engage more students in exploring sustainable energy feasibility and applications. CEO Ron Litzinger of the wind energy company Edison Mission Group was present to announce a \$100,000 contribution to the expansion.

Financial support for IT innovations

Consumer Safety Technology, Inc. (CST) of Des Moines has successfully applied for \$65,000 from the Iowa Information Technology Joint Venture Fund. CST will work with Precision Development Inc., a West Des Moines software developer, on a significant advancement in the ignition interlock device used to prevent drunk driving.

The advancement would transmit real-time digital images and breath sample data of drivers being monitored, so attempts to circumvent the device could be quickly discovered.

The award was approved by the Economic Development Board and recommended by the Technology Commercialization Committee of IDED's Innovation and Commercialization Division.

"CST is claiming the first award from the IT Joint Venture Fund, which is available for many kinds of projects where Iowa companies form a partnership to develop innovations in Information Technology. We'd like to see a lot of proposals come in for review," said Kim Bentley, IDED's coordinator for information technology programs.

Joint Venture Fund awards are available up to \$100,000. Companies must match the award with at least two dollars of non-state money for every dollar of state funding.

To obtain a project review form from the Iowa Department of Economic Development, send an e-mail to innovation@iowalifechanging.com.