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### Soladigm CEO wants to push county forward

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JB Clark  
News Reporter

TUNICA - Rao Mulpuri, CEO for Soladigm, told Northwest Mississippi business leaders Wednesday about the qualities that make this region attractive to manufacturing companies during the Technology-Driven Development Forum.

Mulpuri said he wants his company to be a leader in the development of DeSoto County.

"I believe we can be a part of helping this region recognize its future, bringing in more high tech manufacturing jobs, higher paying jobs," Mulpuri said. "We hope to be the catalyst to that."

To make sure Soladigm and the region have access to a skilled workforce, they have partnered with Northwest Mississippi Community College to screen and train job candidates.

They have also begun offering two scholarships a year to DeSoto County high school students.

"At two a year, Soladigm will be paying full tuition for up to eight students at any time to have an education at a Mississippi university," Mulpuri said. "They'll have the opportunity to work with us in the summers and of course when they graduate we will consider them for our workforce."

Mulpuri said his company talked to representatives from eight different states, including the company's home state of California, and very easily decided to locate their high volume manufacturing in Mississippi.

"Governor Barbour gets it," Mulpuri said. "He can look at any company and figure out, 'What are your needs, what can you do for me and this state and why does it make sense for you to be in this state?' And this state I found to be the most cohesive between the state government, the county officials and the city of Olive Branch. They worked so cooperatively to not only submit a proposal but show us where we can be in 10 years."

Soladigm has developed a glass window that can tint on demand, saving energy by reducing the heat gain crossing the window-pane.

The windows are estimated to reduce heating and cooling energy consumption in commercial and residential buildings by up to 20 percent.

The company announced their decision to locate in Olive Branch in July of 2010, bringing with them more than 300 new jobs, most of which will be manufacturing.

Mulpuri said North Mississippi's eager and experienced manufacturing workforce, along with the convenient proximity to transportation hub Memphis, made Olive Branch the perfect location for the company's high volume manufacturing component.

Construction inside Soladigm's 300,000 square-foot Leed Silver building has begun and its Human Resources department will begin hiring technicians soon.

Leed Silver is an architectural and engineering certification given to buildings built above industry environmental standards.

"Our team has their work cut out," Mulpuri said. "We're marching forward, starting early hiring so we can train them locally and in California so we'll be ready to run with the work force we need when we open."

Mulpuri was the keynote speaker for the Northwest Mississippi Community Foundation's regional forum Wednesday at the Gold Strike Casino in Tunica. The forum was a discussion of moving Mississippi forward through technology-driven development.

Contact JB Clark at [jclark@desototimestribune.com](mailto:jclark@desototimestribune.com) or at 662-429-6397 ext.236

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