



Governor praises Orion as 'shining light'

Doyle touts green economy at open house

BY CHARLIE MATHEWS • HERALD TIMES REPORTER • APRIL 23, 2009

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MANITOWOC — Gov. Jim Doyle believes the state's economic health can benefit from going green.

"About 10 to 15 percent of the state's economy can be in energy conservation and green energy production," Doyle told a standing-room-only audience Wednesday afternoon in the conference center of Orion Energy Systems' new Technology Center.

"Orion has been our shining light," Doyle said on Earth Day at the 70,000-square-foot, three-story building's VIP open house.

"Orion has been mentioned directly by President Obama and is a company whose brand is becoming synonymous around the country with innovative light and energy systems," Doyle said with a beaming Neal Verfuert, president and chief executive officer, a few yards away.

Former Wisconsin Sen. Gaylord Nelson played a key role in founding Earth Day, with a focus on environmental issues, nearly 40 years ago.

"It is very fitting that we are celebrating Earth Day at a business," Doyle told the assembled Orion employees — in green polo shirts — as well as local elected officials, business partners and investors.

"It's not just about doing the right thing for the planet, but creating jobs around a high purpose ... that's the future of Wisconsin's economy."

Verfuert and his wife, Pat, founded Orion in 1997, took the company public in 2007 and have seen the manufacturer of Apollo Light Pipes and energy efficient fluorescent lighting fixtures grow to about 260 employees.

Orion promotes its technology as producing twice as much light for half the cost. Its products have been installed in some 3,700 facilities nationwide, including more than 100 of the Fortune 500 companies.

Most employees work in the Technology Center and adjoining 260,000-square-foot manufacturing plant that formerly served as Mirro cookware's distribution center. Some of Orion's sales staff remains at its original Plymouth facility.

Orion's new building includes energy-efficient technologies, including a thermal storage chiller system and closed-loop shared energy system. Light pipes bring sunlight into the building.

Officials said a public open house would be scheduled in the next few months.

Online: www.oesx.com



Orion Energy Systems officials were in New York Wednesday morning to ring the opening bell on Earth Day on the NASDAQ stock exchange. Among those participating were, from left, Amy Bolgert, marketing assistant; Linda Diedrich, corporate communications director; Erik Birkerts, chief operating officer; Scott Jensen, chief financial officer; and his wife, Gina Jensen. Photograph © 2009, The NASDAQ OMX Group, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

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Neal Verfuert, Orion's president and chief executive officer, left, shows off the company's new Technology Center to Gov. Jim Doyle. Charlie Mathews/HTR

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