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Wright Medical doubling manufacturing space

BY TOBY SELLS

Medical device maker expands adds buildings

Wright Medical Group, Inc., is investing \$15 million-\$20 million in a construction project that will add 67,000 square feet, a new building and office renovations to its Arlington campus.

The company is nearly doubling the size of its 65,000-square-foot manufacturing building that sits on the east side of Airline Road with a 50,000-square-foot addition.

Wright's vice president of manufacturing, Kyle Joines, says the expansion is necessary to make way for increased production, additional equipment and some new products.

Wright has been rapidly expanding its foot and ankle medical device business. The ink is barely dry on its acquisition of ankle system maker Inbone Technologies, Inc. That acquisition marked the seventh business development initiative targeting the foot and ankle surgery market that Wright has made in the past year.

Joines says the new space will bring new employees to the company's manufacturing facility. He says Wright began hiring new employees in the first quarter of 2007 and has been actively hiring ever since. The company now has 826 local employees, but reported 700 local employees in Memphis Business Journal's 2008 Book of Lists, up from 641 in 2007.

Grinder-Haizlip Construction Co., Inc., is in charge of the manufacturing facility construction as well as a new, two-story building directly across the street from the company's main office building. The new building will have office space on 8,500 square feet on the second floor. The lower level will house an 8,500-square-foot employee cafeteria that can also double as meeting space.

"If we want to have a large meeting now we go to Arlington Town Hall, which is just down the street," Joines says. "More importantly, though, the space is for the employees. Right now, they either bring their lunch or go to a restaurant. This is for them." The new office space will allow some employees in the growing administration department to move out of temporary office trailers "and into a proper office space conducive to a work environment," Joines says. The company's information systems department operates out of the old Arlington school house.

Robert Nelson, the project's manager with Grinder-Haizlip, says the new building will have curved glass walls on the inside and a corridor that connects the new building with the manufacturing building. That building will get a new facade to match the new office building's. Once finished, the two buildings

will appear as one.

Nelson says his company is nearly halfway done with both construction projects, which should be complete by early fall. Once they are completed, he says, they will pick up the project's second phase in spring of 2009. That project will include putting the facade on the manufacturing building and completely renovating the current office building.

"This project will do a lot to enhance the look of the area," Nelson says. "There will be new landscaping and walkways along the fronts of the buildings. It will look much better than a parking lot and a bunch of old buildings."

Memphis firm Allen & Hoshall engineered the project and JBHM Architects designed it. Nelson says Wright's operation has been business as usual while his crew has been on their site.

"That's been one of the big challenges for us, to work around their existing environment without disturbing them while they continue to make their products," Nelson says. "This is a large project for Memphis either way it goes."

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