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### NEWS BRIEFS

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Wachovia Bank has awarded \$10,000 to the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor to assist in the development of a Discovery Center near the Charleston Visitors Center. Renovation of the Eastern Shed of the Camden Towers Sheds is expected to be complete in 9-12 months.

The Heritage Corridor consists of four regions along the southern boarder of the state and is comprised of 14 counties stretching from Clemson to McClellanville. Designated by the U.S. Congress in 1996 as one of only 20 National Heritage Areas, the Corridor offers opportunities for economic development through heritage tourism in rural South Carolina.

Each of the four regions of the S. C. Heritage Corridor will have a Discovery Center to serve as a welcome center focusing on regional interpretation. The center located at the Camden Towers Sheds will feature the heritage tourism opportunities in the Corridor's Lowcountry region, covering Charleston, Colleton and Dorchester counties.

According to Corridor field coordinator Alta Mae Marvin, "Predictions indicate that within two years of opening, we can expect more than half a million visitors annually to our Discovery Center. Visitors, students and residents will be re-directed into our rural areas and counties,

and self-guided maps, signage and brochures will help us all enjoy our Lowcountry treasures.”

Summertime puts more people on the road and outside the coverage of their normal HMO or PPO. This trend concerns businesses with a substantial number of traveling employees who may need medical services while out of town. Companies typically pay retail for those doctor and hospital visits, causing their health care costs to rise.

Now, traveling employees can get the care they need at in-network PPO rates thanks to the Travel Network—a new national PPO system comprised of health care providers in all 50 states. Assembled and coordinated by Atlanta-based Coalition America Inc., the Travel Network gives travelers access to a national PPO network anywhere in the U.S.

“At a time when health care cost increases are back in the double digit range, companies find that they can achieve real savings in their employee medical outlays,” said Sean Smith, Coalition America chairman. According to Smith, the Travel Network offers travelers several key benefits: nationwide medical provider access; savings on medical claims; toll-free telephone and Internet access to participating doctors, hospitals and other providers in the Travel Network accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; and a single-source contact point for provider questions.

Mayor R. Keith Summey has announced that the city and The Noisette Company are planning to create a permanent home in North Charleston for the South of Broadway Theatre Company. The SBOTC is South Carolina’s first Broadway-quality, full-time, professional theater company, completely contracted through the Actor’s Equity Association. The company’s initial productions will be held at the performing arts center, with later productions slated for a planned arts center within the 3,000-acre Noisette urban redevelopment project.

“We are excited that the South of Broadway Theatre Company is locating in North Charleston,” says Summey. “It’s a step forward in enhancing the quality of life for the people of our city and the entire Lowcountry. The company’s decision to locate within the Noisette project zone is the beginning of locally-based, world-class programs of visual and performing arts in the city.”

Robert Ivey, with more than 25 years experience of arts direction in the state, will serve as the SOBTC’s artistic director, while Mary Gould, with a background in international opera and theater management, will be the company’s producer.

The SOBTC will locate its administrative offices and theater support facilities on the former Charleston Navy Base, under the redevelopment efforts of the Noisette project. The company will work with both the city and the Noisette Company to create a multi-use, community-driven facility.

The company envisions six major productions a year at its maturity, each running an average of five weeks. Theater professionals and technicians from across the state will work alongside “name” performers to create an artistic presence of international scope.

## **2002 small business legislative session results**

The 2002 small business legislative session has ended, with a number of changes for businesses in South Carolina. Some legislative issues resolved are:

– Mandatory employee wage garnishment—opposition from several organizations kept a bill that would allow the court to order an employer to garnish the wages of a worker for collecting personal debt from advancing.

- Increase in bad-check fees—legislation was passed to increase the fee businesses can charge for bad checks of \$100 or less from \$25 to \$30. The fee for bad checks over \$100 was already \$30.
  
- Main street development—the Historic Rehabilitation Incentives Act will give tax incentives for the rehabilitation of historic buildings, an economic stimulus effort for local small businesses.
  
- Sales tax fairness—a bill that would exempt sales tax or “use tax” on Internet purchases of up to \$10,000 per year for personal use did not advance. The bill would have given Internet stores a taxpayer-funded pricing advantage, encouraging the public to make purchases via the Internet instead of buying from South Carolina stores.
  
- Reduce state income tax for small business—bills to reduce state income tax for small business did not pass in the General Assembly due to agency budget cuts because of revenue shortfalls.

According to the South Carolina Small Business Chamber of Commerce in Columbia, the General Assembly, whose 2002 session ended June 6, has allocated \$34 million of lottery funds for technical college tuition assistance, reducing the tuition by about 50%.

The SCSBC, which considers technical colleges a labor source for small businesses and believes low tuition will help increase enrollment, had lobbied for more state funding to make technical colleges tuition-free and will continue lobbying for more technical college funding.

CRC Insurance Services Inc., the wholesale insurance subsidiary of Branch Banking and Trust Company, has announced plans to buy New York City-based American Marketing Center.

One of the Northeast's largest insurance wholesalers, American Marketing Center will operate as a division of Alabama-based CRC, which was acquired by BB&T on Jan. 1. The American Marketing Center transaction should be completed in July.

Branch Banking and Trust Company is the principal subsidiary of Winston-Salem-based BB&T Corp., operating in 45 states, including the Carolinas.

Founded in 1980, American Marketing Center began as a primarily wholesale broker for real estate products. Its specialty lines now also include professional liability for the health care industry, liability coverage for directors and officers, errors and omissions policies and all other casualty and property coverage offered by wholesale brokers.

With \$73.9 billion in assets as of March 31, BB&T Corp. is the nation's 13th largest financial holding company.

Charleston-based communications agency BlueMaggie has signed Circa Lighting and Fountain Walk and is overseeing web development and design for both companies. Circa Lighting is a new upscale retailer specializing in antique light reproductions. Fountain Walk is a waterfront development located next to the South Carolina Aquarium and home to a variety of business ranging from IMAX Theatre to restaurants.

“As a communications agency it is imperative that our client’s web site reflect its overall message and it is our job to best relay this to web users and the public alike,” says BlueMaggie creative director JJ Ohlinger.

Mount Pleasant-based Universal Solutions has been chosen to upgrade the existing Avaya communications system serving the County Judicial Center located downtown at 2 Courthouse Square.

“We are very excited to be working with the county on this project,” says Gracie Russell, general manager for Universal Solutions.

The project is estimated for completion in late July.

In an effort to enhance communication with fans this season, the Charleston Battery engaged marketing and Internet services firm Sans Locus to overhaul the professional soccer team’s web site. The new site ([www.charlestonbattery.com](http://www.charlestonbattery.com)) was launched earlier this year and according to Battery officials, the strategy has paid off.

“When Sans Locus told us what was possible for our new site, we knew it would generate interest and excitement among our fans,” says Andrew Bell, director of PR & marketing for the Battery.

According to Bell, traffic to the new site has increased by 100% and the site now enjoys more than 10,000 visitors per week. Adding to the return on investment, the site also generates significantly more revenue through improved e-commerce functionality, including online ticket sales and Battery Pro Shop merchandise.

“In sports, information is time sensitive as fans want to know what’s happening with the team at any given moment,” says Sans Locus co-founder Jamie Posnanski. “To maintain and encourage that interest, it was critical that we provide a customized suite of comprehensive web-based administrative tools that allow the Battery front office to manage and update virtually all of their own content in near real-time.”

Additional enhancements to the site are in the works, including SMS wireless alerts, match updates and a contest that will allow fans to guess the winning team from a list of the week’s A-League pairings for prizes.

Internet provider Ulanji Inc. recently announced the launch of an Internet restaurant portal designed to give Charlestonians and visitors an opportunity to research local restaurants from home or office. Promoted on Clear Channel’s six local radio stations and their respective web sites, Dine In Out ([www.charlestdineinout.com](http://www.charlestdineinout.com)) allows diners to search by restaurant location or type of cuisine.

With Ulanji’s technology, restaurants can manage and change their menus and specials, offer coupons, post non-food merchandise for sale and receive take-out orders online.

Ulanji launched its first Dine In Out portal in November 2001 in Myrtle Beach, partnering with WPDE Channel 15. Myrtle Beach Dine In Out ([www.doorwaytothegrandstrand.com](http://www.doorwaytothegrandstrand.com)) has approximately 100 restaurants using proprietary “ulanji n-jine” technology.

Interior Environments is now conducting business as Carolina Business Interiors. Its showroom will remain at 416 King Street. Locations in Charlotte and Raleigh will also work under the new name.

Public docks are disappearing as waterfront property becomes more expensive and harder to find, according to Charleston-based Applied Technology & Management Inc., a leading environmental, coastal and water resources engineering firm. To combat the skyrocketing costs of desirable waterfront locations, waterfront developers are transforming public marina facilities into marina villages and other mixed-use developments. While they offer plenty of amenities, these mixed-use developments are eating up the docks and slip space that were once available to the general boating public.

“High costs and market pressures are pushing developers to take public marinas and integrate them into residential communities,” says Sam Phlegar, vice president of Applied Technology & Management. “It may be the best investment for waterfront developers, but the average boater is losing the ability to keep his boat in the water.”

Fewer waterfront locations are causing public marinas to disappear. “It’s a simple fact that there are fewer locations suitable for marina facilities along the East Coast,” says Phlegar. As more people migrate to the coast, the availability of desirable property is declining. With any waterfront development project, one of the key criteria is ease of access, and a location with shallow water or high wave and wake potential is much less attractive.

As marina owners struggle with the rising costs of buying and maintaining waterfront property,

they're passing the costs to boaters. According to Phlegar, more and more marina owners are selling slips instead of leasing them. The average boater is faced with the choice of making a large investment and long-term commitment to a marina or potentially getting forced out of his or her current slip.

As demand for waterfront property increases, more developers are considering mixed-use projects to make the most of their investment. Ed Modzelewski, chairman of ATM, estimates that more than 80% of new marina facilities are being integrated into mixed-use development, particularly in Florida. "The combination of residential, retail and marine facilities is a good way for developers to make their waterfront investment more profitable, but as they transform public facilities into marina village communities there's increasingly limited space available to the boating public," he says.

The Charleston County Housing and Redevelopment Authority is in the running for a national award honoring superior assisted housing and community development programs that help low- and moderate-income people.

The agency was nominated for its partnership with the Mayflower Court Tax Credit Project, which helps provide affordable housing for elderly individuals.

The nomination for a 2002 Award of Excellence comes from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials. The agency already has won an Award of Merit for its program from NAHRO. The awards are to be presented July 11 at the association's summer conference in New York. The Award of Merit Regional Jury nominated the agency for the Awards of Excellence, which will be presented at NAHRO's National Conference and Exhibition in Seattle on Oct. 27.

The Mayflower Court Project involved moving 14 World War II era cottages from a church property to a 1.6 acre tract of land donated by the authority. The cottages were totally

rehabilitated through the combined efforts of the authority, the City of Charleston, Charleston County, Enston Homes Foundation, S.C. State Housing Finance & Development Authority, First Federal of Charleston, First Sterling Financial Inc., Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta and the Low Country Housing and Economic Development Foundation, Inc. The project now provides elderly people with affordable housing in a park-like area.

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