



SkyLink USA recently flew a giant transformer to Bagdad.

AOD

around the old dominion

Stories compiled by Heather B. Hayes

SkyLink USA seeks dangerous assignments

When others flee disasters, SkyLink USA runs toward them. The Dulles-based firm provides transportation, communications and other logistical support to government and nonprofit organizations during crises around the world.

While there are plenty of logistics competitors, SkyLink USA occupies an unusual niche, says David Henze, the company's president and CEO. "We are on-demand, we do jobs that a lot of other companies either can't do or won't do, and we get projects accomplished and things moved to places that

define the word 'difficult.'"

Recently the company moved a generator transformer to Baghdad to provide electricity for nearly 150,000 families. "We uniquely designed a way so we were able to move it via aircraft," Henze explains. "The only way it would have gotten to Iraq otherwise would have been by ocean freighter, and that would have been a two- to three-month transit. Instead, in 36 hours, we had it delivered, and it was in operation in a week and a half."

SkyLink USA's customers include the International Red Cross, United Nations and World Food

Programme. The company is a part of SkyLink Group in Toronto. Since 9/11, Skylink USA has been involved in so many projects in the Middle East that SkyLink Group created a new subsidiary, SkyLink Arabia.

SkyLink USA currently has eight employees and 10 consultants. Henze won't release revenues but says the company has been growing at an annual rate of 10 percent, after accounting for the transfer of contracts to SkyLink Arabia. He expects employment to double and revenue to climb 20 to 30 percent in the next year.

Va. Asian Chamber starts trade group

The Virginia Asian Chamber of Commerce apparently believes in the adage that good things happen to those who help themselves.

The organization has started the Virginia International Business Alliance (VIBA), a group intended to assist small, minority-owned companies gain access to global markets.

"The problem with small business is the smaller you are, the less attention that you get, and a lot of that is because there is a perception that small business cannot enter the world market," states Tinh Phan, chairman of the Asian Chamber. "We think that perception is very wrong, and we wanted to prove that by supporting our members in whatever way we could."

VIBA provides members with information about world markets and helps them connect with potential suppliers, buyers, lenders and other resources. The group currently has 45 members trading in Asia, Africa, Western Europe, Latin America and Canada. A majority of members are small Asian-American companies, but many are owned by Hispanics and African-Americans.

One of them is Jasmin Perez Gross, a native of Paraguay, who is president of Aravore Co., an infant apparel firm based in Richmond. She wants to sell her products in Western Europe and Asia. She joined VIBA to network with other business owners and to learn how to effectively sell overseas.

"People in the Asian community and other minority groups are really looking for practical solutions," says Phan. "They want to hear the practical experience of somebody who has done what they want to do and that has done it successfully."

Two companies celebrate major milestones

Through more than a century of world wars and economic upheaval, two Richmond-based companies not only have survived but have thrived.

Owens & Minor Inc., a Fortune 500 medical supply company, recently celebrated its 125th anniversary by, among other things, ringing the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange. Meanwhile, C.F. Sauer Co. a manufacturer of spices, Duke's mayonnaise and other food products, held an outdoor birthday party for employees and guests to mark 120 years in business.

At both companies, the founders' descendants still have a hand in steering operations. G. Gilmer Minor III is chairman of the board at Owens & Minor. Fourth-generation family members involved in C.F. Sauer include Conrad F. Sauer IV, president and CEO; Mark Sauer, executive vice president of sales and marketing; Brad Sauer,



Owens & Minor officials ring the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange.

the head of Sauer Properties; and R. Tyler Sauer, who is in charge of plant scheduling.

Owens & Minor has been a public company since 1988 and now has annual revenue approaching \$7

billion. The company distributes medical and surgical supplies to about 4,000 health-care customers. C.F. Sauer remains a privately owned company with 900 employees and nearly \$300 million in annual sales.

