

BUSINESS

# Michelin plans to make Tweel in Piedmont

By Rudolph Bell  
Staff Writer  
dbell@greenvillenews.com

Michelin North America isn't saying how many new jobs, if any, it plans at a Piedmont site it has designated for production of its airless tire called the Tweel.

The tire maker announced Thursday that it plans to officially dedicate the new plant during a ceremony next week.

It will take place at the plant site, a 135,000-square-foot former textile warehouse at 280 Griffin Road, Piedmont, the Greenville-based tire maker said.

Michelin North America Chairman and President Pete Selleck will be on hand, the company said in an advisory to news media Thursday.

Michelin spokesperson Stephanie Tarbet said more details would be available at the 10:30 a.m. ceremony next Thursday.

Michelin last month announced a deal to make the Tweel original equipment

for John Deere's ZTRACK 900 Series commercial mowers.

Michelin at the time listed various benefits it said landscape professionals would enjoy by using the Tweel on mowers. Those included less downtime from flat tires, enhanced hillside stability and longer-lasting treads.

Ralph Dimenna, head of Michelin Tweel Technologies, said as part of the October announcement that Michelin had been working on a partnership with John Deere for several years that had the potential to "dramatically change the commercial mowing market."

The Tweel was developed at Michelin's research center in southern Greenville County and announced as an invention in 2005. In subsequent months, it was designated "Best of What's New" in automotive technology by Popular Science and made the cover of Time magazine as one of the top inventions of 2005.

The Tweel is a combination of a tire and a wheel, with flexible spokes leading to a shock-absorbing rubber tread band.



Michelin's airless tire, called the Tweel, shown on a front end loader. (COURTESY OF MICHELIN NORTH AMERICA)

# Home builders' outlook improving

By Rudolph Bell  
Staff Writer  
dbell@greenvillenews.com

Local home builders who gathered for a trade association meeting Thursday said they're seeing an improving market.

Joe Hoover, owner of Hoover Custom Construction of Taylors, said he and most of the contractors he knows are "pretty busy."

"People definitely are getting off the couches and making decisions to move forward on things," Hoover said.

The only problem, he said, is finding lots to build on.

"No one has developed land in Greenville for quite a few years," Hoover said.

He was one of the contractors gathered at the TD Convention Center on Thursday for the annual meeting of the Home Builders Association of Greenville.

Special guest was Jerry Howard, chief executive officer of the National Association of Home Builders in Washington, D.C.

Michael Dey, executive vice president of the Greenville association, which counts about 300 companies as members,



Jerry Howard, CEO of the National Association of Home Builders in Washington, DC, was guest speaker for the annual meeting Thursday of the organization's Greenville County affiliate. (MYKAL MCELDOONEY/STAFF)

said the local market is improving quickly, though it still hasn't returned to pre-recession levels.

Greenville County builders are working at about 60 percent of the "normal" pace of 2003, when they obtained about 4,000 building permits, Dey said.

The Greenville market today is producing about 2,800 permits a month, he said, with the pace expected to hit 3,400 permits a month next year.

Dey said a surge in housing prices indicates plenty of demand.

He said the builders he's talked with over the last couple of months are "all planning to ramp up further in the next year, adding new subdivisions, adding capacity, planning more starts."

"We're going to continue to see that improve, but it's still a couple of years away before we hit a normal market," Dey said.

Across the Upstate, the

number of building permits per month for single family housing has nearly doubled since 2009, said Dave Watcher, owner of Construction Week, a market research firm in Charleston.

Watcher said the average number of monthly permits through the first 10 months of the year for the five Upstate counties rose from 1,650 in 2009 to 3,297 this year.



Priscilla Haynsworth greets SYNEX executive Peter Larocque after a ceremony where SYNEX presented \$230,462 to Haynsworth's Clement's Kindness charity. Also shown; Knox Haynsworth, center, and Ben Norwood, right. (BART BOATWRIGHT/STAFF)

# SYNEX helps local charities

Funds raised in Share the Magic

Staff report

SYNEX Share the Magic, a charity fund-raiser created by SYNEX Corp., announced Thursday that it has raised more than \$1.284 million for children in need.

Nearly \$810,000 is to be distributed among four Upstate children's charities: A Child's Haven, Clement's Kindness, Make-A-Wish South Carolina and Pendleton Place for Children and Families.

"On behalf of SYNEX Corp., we are proud of the SYNEX associates and business partners, along with the local organizations and individuals, who united in the spirit of charitable giving to make a significant impact through these four well-deserving organizations," said Peter Larocque, president, North America Distribution, SYNEX.

"We look forward to continuing our work to make a difference in the lives of our community's children in need."

Founded in 2011 by Larocque, \$750,000 was raised in 2012, and \$1.065 million in 2013.

SYNEX Share the Magic is a yearlong initiative that raises funds through several community events and culminates with an evening gala each October featuring nationally acclaimed entertainment and high-dollar silent and live auction items.

# Beach says behave or stay home for Memorial Day

By Dawn Bryant  
Sun News

A campaign sending a strong message to potential Memorial Day weekend visitors to obey local laws will kick off in early 2015 and cost six-figures, part of an effort aiming to regain control of the holiday weekend after it turned deadly this year.

This campaign doesn't have the usual roll-out-the-red-carpet message of typical tourism ads aiming to lure potential visitors to a destination and could cause some pushback.

The message will be "we welcome anyone and everyone who desires to visit our local community and obey our laws, but if you don't intend to follow our laws, we prefer you stay home or go else-

where," said Brad Dean, president of the Myrtle Beach Area Chamber of Commerce, which is putting the campaign together.

Dean, who has been outspoken about regaining control of Memorial Day weekend, said he's hopeful the strong message in the ads won't turn off potential visitors, and that they might appreciate the community's effort to keep the destination safe.

"We remain hopeful that likely visitors will appreciate our community's desire to maintain a safe, lawful environment for everyone," Dean said. "We may get some pushback from those who believe they are above the law, but we cannot condone the lawlessness and mayhem that regularly

ruins what should be a wonderful weekend spent celebrating our true American heroes."

Tourism drives the Grand Strand economy, and millions of dollars are spent annually on ads and marketing aiming to entice travelers to vacation here. There is a risk that the message in this campaign will turn off tourists and they'll take their vacation dollars elsewhere.

"Absolutely. There is that possibility," said Jim Creel Jr., chairman of the chamber's marketing committee who will become chairman of the chamber's board of directors in December. "But the community, the citizens of Myrtle Beach and our sister communities have said enough is enough."

Local leaders have

been working to put together a strategy aiming to regain control of Memorial Day weekend after three people died and seven were injured in eight shootings on Ocean Boulevard this year, when thousands of visitors were in town for Atlantic Beach Bikefest, holiday events or to take advantage of a three-day weekend. Local leaders are working on a traffic plan for the holiday weekend but no decisions have yet been made.

After the violence, the chamber said it would lead a publicity campaign emphasizing lawfulness and safety. It has been working on the campaign for about six months with media partners and publicity firms, Dean said. The campaign will rely largely on social media.