

Georgia Consular Corps visits Griffin, Otsuka on area tour

BY RAY LIGHTNER

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The Georgia Department of Economic Development's annual VIP Tour for members of the Georgia Consular Corps visited Griffin on Friday.

They arrived on a bus for the third day of the tour that showcased Middle Georgia to members of the Consular Corps, representing the following countries — Liechtenstein, Estonia, Liberia, Albania, Barbados, Belgium, France, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Haiti, Taiwan, Malta, Bahamas, Germany, Japan, Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, Slovenia, Canada, Tanzania, El Salvador, Costa Rica and the United States.

There was a reception at the Griffin Regional Welcome Center, includ-



RAY LIGHTNER/DAILY NEWS

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ing breakfast and a "commercial" on the economic development and industrial

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TOUR

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parks here, followed by a tour at Otsuka, one of the international companies in the Lakes at Green Valley industrial park. Griffin-Spalding Development Authority Chairman Chuck Copeland welcomed the visitors, saying, "We are pleased to have you here today."

Copeland said, "Griffin's history is steeped in economic development," noting the city was founded by Gen. Lewis Lawrence Griffin, who had an idea to develop a city at what would be the natural area for the intersection of the east/west and north/south railroads. "He was a bit off," Copeland said, "with the railroads eventually intersecting 45 miles to the north, in Marthasville, which is now called Atlanta."

He said, "There are very diverse countries in our industrial parks" and noted the Chamber of Commerce had tried to address the needs of national and international business. Flags from some of the countries were on display, with Development Authority David Luckie saying he'd like to add more flags to the collection.

Max Gallman, of the chamber's International Committee, said it was created to let businesses know about Spalding County and other businesses and suppliers here, as well as training resources available. "We want to let you know the chamber is here for you; we're here to serve you."

Takashi Shinozuka, the consul general of Japan in Atlanta, also spoke, thanking Griffin and Spalding County, "such a wonderful place." He said he was "very excited to see more and more of his colleagues" (in the Counselor Corps), and said "Griffin and Spalding County should be very proud."

Copeland said, "Our community has been very fortunate to attract a lot of international development, with hundreds of millions of dollars in investments." He credited it to "the very hard work of Executive Director David Luckie."

Luckie said, "Economic development is a team sport, and he may be the quarterback or the guy on the bench," thanking the local officials for their support. He noted the SPLOST funding for the Lakes at Green Valley, the state's first eco-industrial park.

Luckie, in the "commercial" for the communities, noted the recent awards in 2016 including Regional Deal of the Year for a joint effort with Butts County on the Dollar General distribution center. The distribution center is a 1.2 million-square-foot facility and a \$85 million investment, bringing 600 jobs. Other awards included being a finalist in the Governor's International Awards 2016 for the Lakes at Green Valley, which has attracted three Japanese companies so far.

Luckie said they are in final negotiations on four other sites with other international

companies. Otsuka was the first to come to the Lakes at Green Valley, he said, "making a green product in a green park."

He also touted the location, with all of the industrial parks clustered in the same area, including the 600 acres at Lakes at Green Valley, as well as Hudson and Green Valley industrial parks, all about seven minutes out of a four-lane state highway from Interstate 75, and about 37 miles from Atlanta and Hartsfield Jackson International Airport.

"We are also a Camera Ready Community, with many film and television productions, including 'The Walking Dead' being filmed here," Luckie said.

The tour also visited and toured Otsuka Chemical America, in the Lakes at Green Valley. The three-day tour included Peachtree City, Senoia, Warm Springs,

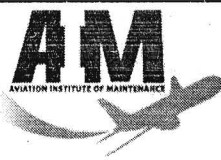
Richland, Cordele, Fort Valley, Perry, Warner Robins, Macon, Griffin and Hampton. During the visit here, they took a brief tour of the museum at the Welcome Center, with many interested in the Doc Holliday exhibit.

While most of the Counselor Corps is based in Atlanta, there are a couple based in Macon, including Dr. Bruce Allen, representing Liechtenstein, and Chris Smith, represent-

ing Denmark. Theodore Britton, a U.S. ambassador, said some of the

representatives are American but represent foreign countries here.

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