

SDI Set to Relocate to Meadow Ridge Park

By Cara Host, Staff writer, chost@observer-reporter.com

WAYNESBURG - A West Virginia mine construction company plans to relocate to Mt. Morris, bringing 98 jobs to the area.

Shaft Drillers International will move its headquarters from Morgantown to a 44,500-square-foot building that will be built at Meadow Ridge Business Park. The company develops mine shafts that are used for ventilation as well as transporting workers and equipment underground. SDI also drills for the natural gas and civil engineering industries.

The state offered SDI \$2.1 million as enticement to locate here. The funding package includes a \$2 million grant through the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program, which can be used to pay for some of the construction costs. SDI also will get \$110,000 to help train people to work at the company.

Greene County Commissioner Pam Snyder said Pennsylvania was competing with West Virginia to convince SDI to locate in their respective states. The money, which was negotiated through the Governor's Action Team, "tipped the scales in our favor," said Snyder.

"We worked very hard on this one," Snyder said. "It will be a huge project that will fill up Meadow Ridge, and I think you will see a lot of good things happening in Mt. Morris."

Kevin Adrians of SDI's land development department said the state incentives played a major role in the company's decision to locate to Mt. Morris, but another reason had to do with the company founders' Greene County roots. SDI executives Scott Kiger and Charlie Riggs grew up here.

"They're Greene County natives, and I know they are just excited that they can bring their company back home," Adrians said.

Greene County Industrial Development Authority and Regional Industrial Development Corp. in Pittsburgh started developing the 108-acre business

park about 12 years ago. A few small businesses located there, but the park has had some difficulty luring other companies.

In recent years, the county has tackled several infrastructure projects to make the park more appealing. A water line was extended to the area, and Allegheny Power's nearby power line project will upgrade the park's electrical system.

SDI also will benefit from Meadow Ridge Business Park's designation as a Keystone Opportunity Zone. Businesses that move into a KOZ get breaks on local and state taxes. SDI will enjoy tax abatement through 2017.

"This was a competitive project, and SDI's decision to move its global headquarters to Pennsylvania is a direct result of the commonwealth's economic development efforts," Gov. Ed Rendell said in a news release. "This project, and the 98 high-paying jobs it will create, is great news for Southwestern Pennsylvania and its work force."

SDI started as a geo-technical construction company more than 30 years ago. The company drills coal shafts, bores tunnels, provides ground stabilization and helps build gas transmission facilities in North and South America. SDI recently increased its services to address advances in mining and drilling techniques arising from Marcellus Shale natural gas exploration.

"The steady growth of SDI's services in civil and energy construction has positioned the corporation to make this move at a very strategic time," Kiger, co-founder of SDI, said in a news release.

Adrians expects the company should be ready to start construction on the new building by spring, and the yearlong project should be finished by spring 2011. Once complete, the building will replace SDI's smaller offices in Morgantown, and it will function as corporate headquarters for SDI's global operations.

The 98 jobs are new positions that the company expects to create in the next three years, based on its current growth rate. SDI will need people in engineering, accounting, legal, administrative and field support roles.

The project also will help retain 146 existing jobs in Pennsylvania.