

Oil and gas heavy metal manufacturing company grows with Louisiana New Markets program; Advantage Capital Partners invests \$7.5 million in SMI Companies, Inc.

Louisiana -

OIL AND GAS HEAVY METAL MANUFACTURING COMPANY GROWS WITH LOUISIANA NEW MARKETS PROGRAM

Advantage Capital Partners invests \$7.5 million in SMI Companies, Inc.

NEW ORLEANS, La., June 4, 2009 - Advantage Capital Partners and its small business lending unit BizCapital provided \$7.5 million in financing to the SMI Companies, Inc., a fully integrated provider of heavy metal manufacturing and turnkey product solutions for oil, gas and energy services business in Louisiana and nationwide. The financing, made possible through the federal and Louisiana New Markets Development programs, will allow the company to grow its operations at its Franklin, La. facility. The company also operates facilities in Berwick and Bastrop.

"SMI proved during the devastating hurricanes of 2005 that it could respond quickly to repair the damage to oil and gas industries along the Gulf of Mexico," said Michael Johnson, managing director of Advantage Capital Partners. "The company has a solid reputation, and this investment using the Louisiana New Markets program is a good example of strong economic development for the state of Louisiana."

SMI owners Benny Splane and Roger Moore started their business in 1987 in the family garage and operated a welding service out of the back of their pickup truck. As their reputation for quality work became known throughout the oil and gas industry, the company expanded its operations. SMI's primary manufacturing capabilities include cutting and welding of all sizes and shapes of heavy metal flat, round structures and piping into custom required shapes, configurations or systems. On-site services for both onshore and offshore clients consist of turnkey fabrication and installation of steel structures, and mobile construction.

"Our company has come a long way in the past 20 years," said Benny Splane. "We are in a strong position for growth, and the financing through the Louisiana New Markets program couldn't have come at a better time."

"The south central region of Louisiana is growing and I am excited about the investment into one of the companies in my district," said Senator D.A. "Butch" Gautreaux (D), Morgan City. "This is a public private partnership that is good for the state of Louisiana, and it's good for SMI."

Rep. Sam Jones (D) Franklin added, "this growth is important in preserving good jobs in one of Louisiana's key industries, and this investment will have a very meaningful economic impact on Saint Mary Parish."

SMI's sustained growth has empowered management to be able to create a policy of offering full-time employment and as result has built a long-term loyal work force providing top pay, excellent benefits and a source of career opportunities at all levels. Recruitment has been simplified by SMI's reputation in the local employment area. Cross training of all key personnel and permanent employees ensures manufacturing flexibility, diversity and continuity.

About Advantage Capital Partners

Advantage Capital Partners (www.advantagecap.com) is a leading venture capital and small business finance firm focused on early stage companies and other investments supporting state and local economic development efforts. With offices and partners in New Orleans, St. Louis, Austin and other U.S. cities, Advantage has raised more than \$1 billion since 1992 and invested in companies located in geographic areas underserved by traditional venture capital.

About the Louisiana New Markets Development program

The Louisiana New Markets Development program encourages investment in small businesses located in distressed communities throughout the state and particularly those communities in the GO Zone still recovering from the devastation of the hurricanes of 2005. The program enables up to \$400 million of capital investment in Louisiana's small businesses. The state program attracts investment in low-income

communities through a state tax credit modeled after the federal New Markets Tax Credit.

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