

# Innovative tribal business hub, Tamarack Business Center, opens in downtown Sault Ste. Marie



JETA Corporation President and CEO Linda Grow, center, cuts the ceremonial ribbon signaling the grand opening of the Sault Ste. Marie office of her firm's energy supply and support operations.

### STORY AND PHOTOS BY RICK SMITH

An open house conducted at Sault Tribe's new Tamarack Business Center in downtown Sault Ste. Marie drew quite a crowd on Jan. 15. Representatives of the inaugural tenant companies of the recently built offices were on hand as were officials from tribal, state, regional and local organizations involved in establishing the facility. The primary goal of the Tamarack Business Center is to provide opportunities and advantages for Sault Tribe members to launch or grow businesses on trust land. In addition, the businesses bring a variety of employment opportunities to the area.

Eight office spaces have a conference room, video studio, kitchenette and laboratories for amenities at 531 Ashmun St. in downtown Sault Ste. Marie. Current tenants are Tipping Point Solutions from Colorado, JETA Corporation from Wisconsin and Kingdom Key Upper Peninsula Real Estate. Of three office spaces remaining vacant, Moore Troser Construction Company of Holt, Mich., committed to moving into one.

In addition to creating a launching platform for local enterprises, businesses attracted by the business center bring jobs and opportunities along with them as they move into the Sault Ste. Marie area. Jobs brought by JETA Corporation, for example, include construction work while building facilities for warehousing operations along with more permanent jobs in distribution, shipping, receiving and other functions. For another example, Kingdom Key Upper Peninsula Real Estate seeks people interested in careers in selling real estate.

"Kingdom Key Upper Peninsula Real Estate will be looking for those wanting to make a career move into real estate," said owner Michelle LaDuke. "KKUP is really about honor, service and understanding the housing needs of tribal members. Homeownership brings a sense of pride and stability to all families and I'm looking forward to helping tribal members to understand the full benefits to living or owning a business in the tax agreement areas across the seven counties. With the support of the tribe and its members, we're looking to the future with unlimited growth potential for our communities."

John McClellan, Sault Tribe economic development specialist, said the new office spaces could serve as either temporary or permanent offices depending on the needs of the businesses. "The goal for the Tamarack Business Center is to foster growth," he said. "For some businesses, like real estate, this space would be adequate for what they want to accomplish and might be permanent. Other businesses, like JETA, will need a larger space and the Tamarack Business Center will be a temporary solution for them. It all depends on the business."

Sault Tribe Economic Development Director Joel Schultz stressed the importance for Sault Tribe members to realize the opportunities and advantages of doing business on tribal lands and the tribe's board of directors is committed to creating opportunities for them. "The goal of the space is to work with Sault Tribe members to successfully launch or grow businesses on trust land," he said. "Each lease will have unique aspects, and be designed to fit the tenants needs. The board of directors has been very progressive in creating this space to create tribal economy, allowing us to be flexible."

Schultz said the office spaces are considered suitable for up to 20 employee accommodations. "As companies grow we would expect to see more than one person per office, the office spaces are pretty large with multiple line drops and computer ports."

Schultz said the successful creation of the business center received critical help from the inaugural tenants, Sault Tribe, Michigan Economic Development Commission, Michigan Senator Wayne Schmidt, Economic Resource Alliance, City of Sault Ste. Marie, Sault Convention and Visitors Bureau, Sault Downtown Development Authority, Sault Chamber of Commerce and the private sector.

However, Rick Schmidt, president and CEO of Tipping Point Solutions, remarked that Schultz was the "visionary" behind the project.

Preparation for building the offices was done by Sault Tribe Construction and McGahay Construction built the offices in about 60 days. Northern Hospitality provided the flooring.



Tipping Point Solutions CEO Rick Schmidt, Tipping Point Solutions Business Development Manager Mari Schupp and Sault Tribe Economic Development Director Joel Schultz cut the ceremonial ribbon on the firm's new Sault Ste. Marie office.



From left, licensed real estate broker and owner of Kingdom Key Real Estate stands with State Senator Wayne Schmidt and Sault Ste. Marie Convention and Visitors Bureau Executive Director Linda Hoath in the new office of Kingdom Key Real Estate of the U.P.



From left, State Senator Wayne Schmidt, Tipping Point Solutions President and CEO Rick Schmidt, Tipping Point Solutions Business Development Manager Mari Schupp.



Sault Tribe Board of Directors Unit I Representative DJ Hoffman addresses the open house assembly as other members of the board look on as do, from left at the rear, Tipping Point Solutions President and CEO Rick Schmidt and Sault Ste. Marie Mayor Tony Bosbous.



Sault Tribe Economic Development Director Joel Schultz speaks to the open house crowd as Sault Mayor Tony Bosbous looks on.



From left, JETA Vice President Thomas Grow, procurement specialist Tyler Bouschor, State Senator Wayne Schmidt, Founder/CEO and President Linda Grow, procurement specialist Adam Rutledge and human resources specialist Abigail Arnoldussen.