



# BUSINESS JOURNAL

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# Hispanic Chamber hits growth spurt

### Group ranks tops in state of Ohio

BY BRITTANY HART  
DBJ STAFF REPORTER

Rafi Rodriguez's passion for both the Spanish culture and growing local businesses has led to Dayton Hispanic Chamber doubling its membership this year.

The chamber, which formed in 1992 and works to promote the development and growth of the Hispanic business community and overall Dayton economy, has grown to 100 members. The membership spike makes the organization the fastest growing Hispanic chamber in Ohio.

The expansion is a result of the re-branding of the organization. Under the leadership of Rodriguez, who became the chamber's president last year, the nonprofit, volunteer-run organization launched a new logo and Web site. It also marketed to the Dayton business community the group's goals of bringing more Hispanic culture to Dayton and growing local businesses with partnerships through the organization.

Local businesses responded by embracing the chamber and offering to host networking and fundraising events.

"We had more offers to host events than we had event dates on the calendar," Rodriguez said.

The organization also added three new directors this year, expanding the volunteer committee to seven. Rodriguez said the organization looks to bring on 10 new volunteers next year — and, if sponsors step forward — even add a three-member, part-time staff to run daily operations, including updating its Web site with events and resources for members. The chamber's office is located at 1 Chamber Plaza near downtown Dayton.

The chamber's new members include Hilton Garden Inn, Wright State University and Kettering Health Network.

Corporate sponsors can donate on four benefit levels, ranging from \$125 to \$1,000. Individual memberships are \$50 a year and \$35 for students.

Rodriguez attributes the group's expansion to his decision to move each of the

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BRITTANY HART ■ DBJ

**Adding Members:** Rafi Rodriguez is president of the Dayton Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, which has doubled members in the past year.

# Defense firm plans to hire 100 in a year

BY JOE COGLIANO  
DBJ STAFF REPORTER

A national defense contractor has launched a Dayton-area facility and plans to grow it to 100 workers within a year.

Herndon, Va.-based Emtec Federal opened an office in October in Beavercreek.

Keith Bentley, who was recently hired by Emtec Federal to run the local operation, said the 2,000-square-foot office in the Signal Hill TechCenter on Colonel Glenn Highway opened with two employees and can hold up to 20.

However, Bentley is confident the company will garner enough new work

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# Preble County firm to expand

BY JOE COGLIANO  
DBJ STAFF REPORTER

A Preble County tech company plans to buy a nearby building and more than triple its office space.

Eaton-based Opti-Vise LLC is slated to close this week on the property at 127 West Main St., said Kent Hamilton, co-owner of Opti-Vise. The 3,300-square-foot building, which has been sitting empty for about a year, had been the home of a medical transport company's billing office. Currently, Opti-Vise leases about 1,000 square feet at 123 W. Main St.

In 2010, the company boosted revenue and added workers, which is driving the need for more space.

Opti-Vise bills itself as an outsourced information technology department for

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## FOCUS ON EDUCATION & TRAINING

Colleges are putting more focus today on preparing students for real world job experiences.

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## CHAMBER: Moving networking events among various sites has helped grow members

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group's monthly networking meetings to different locations, from restaurants to universities and other businesses throughout Dayton — including Hilton Garden Inn, Wright State University, University of Dayton, Kettering Health Network and Premier Health Partners. Each monthly meeting was formerly held at El Meson Restaurant in West Carrollton. Bill Castro, co-owner of El Meson, is a former president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

With the unstable economy, membership growth for chambers has become a greater challenge, said Cleve Buddelmeyer, president and executive director of Beaver Creek Chamber of Commerce.

However, Beaver Creek's chamber membership has maintained a steady growth this year by marketing to new businesses moving into the area and opportunities with nearby Wright-Patterson Air Force

Base.

The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce has grown from 550 to more than 800 members in the past four years due in part to a volunteer ambassador club, which works to retain existing members and attract new members.

The down economy actually offers a unique opportunity for businesses, said Michael McDorman, president and executive director of the Springfield chamber.

"(The chamber) will help not only connect (business owners) to greater possibilities for their company, but also to the greater community around them," McDorman said.

Rodriguez, who owns and runs



Bill Castro

Beaver Creek-based Rodriguez Financial Strategies, also serves as chairman of Ohio Hispanic Chambers, which consists of Hispanic chambers in Dayton, Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland and Toledo. His leadership of both groups has allowed local members to network with businesses around the state at semi-annual Ohio Hispanic Chamber meetings.

Each year, the Dayton Hispanic Chamber also hosts 11 fundraising events, which feature local and regional business speakers and networking opportunities. At Ohio Hispanic Chambers annual gala, each chamber contributed \$1,200 to the event and received \$3,000 back, which has helped the chambers develop more resources for members — including Web sites and business development workshops.

"I believe we have to be involved and give back to the community," Rodriguez said.

"And as business owners, if we don't help each other, who is?"

Changes that have helped the chamber expand this year are:

- a new Web site;
- re-branding with a new logo;
- member e-mail and newsletter updates; and
- new business development workshops for members.

Members of the chamber gain access to multiple resources including:

- free admittance to monthly networking meetings;
- links to Hispanic job searches through the organization's Web site;
- advertising of their business through the organization's Web site; and
- opportunity to sponsor a chamber event to showcase their business.

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## DEFENSE: Company acquired Illinois firm this year, which had contracts through WPAFB

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to warrant adding space and as many as 100 workers within a year.

Emtec Federal sought out a Dayton presence to be near Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, where it is handling several contracts, so it can be in a better location to go after military deals.

The company, a subsidiary of Springfield, N.J.-based Emtec Inc., provides information technology services such as consulting, applications, infrastructure and cloud services. Bentley said it has traditionally done work for organizations such as the state department and FBI.

In the push to win military work, Emtec Federal's biggest focus will be on process improvements.

"We want to take a process that (the U.S. Department of Defense) is doing, figure out a way to do it better, and give them an increased return on investment," Bentley said.

During the summer, Emtec Federal acquired Illinois-based Secure Data Inc., which had been doing Defense Department work for a decade. Secure Data's portfolio included more recent contracts through Wright-Patt.

Bentley said Emtec Federal is now looking to boost its work for the Defense Department, so having an office in the Dayton area made sense, as much of purchasing done by the Air Force flows through the base.

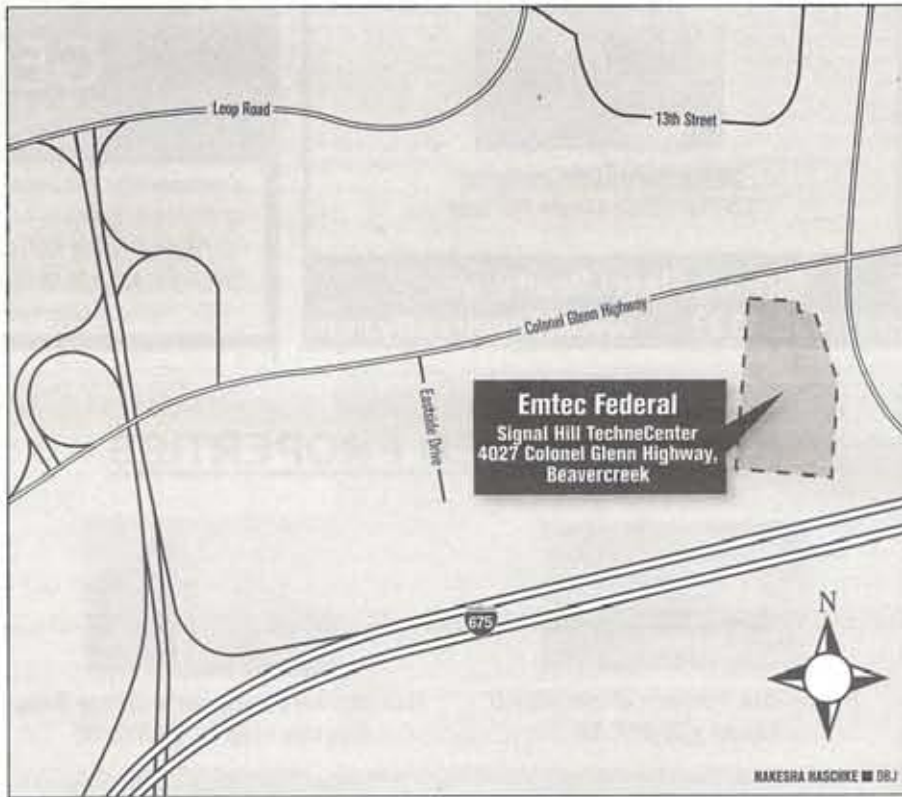
For more than 20 years, Bentley served in various roles at Wright-Patt. He rose to senior financial advisor, a civilian executive, at Air Force Materiel Command before going to U.S. Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois in 2004. Bentley spent about six years at Scott — where he was essentially the chief financial officer and the civilian equivalent of a two-star general — before coming to Emtec.

"The reason I joined Emtec is they're looking to grow," said Bentley, who serves as client partner for the company.

In addition to opening the Beaver Creek office, Emtec Federal recently doubled the size of its headquarters when it moved to Virginia from New Jersey.

The company now has 14 offices and employs about 1,000 across the U.S., Canada and India.

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## PREBLE: Official expects company revenue should increase 70 percent this year

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businesses, providing network monitoring and management along with tech consulting services. Kent Hamilton, 53, operates the company with his 28-year-old son, Kyle Hamilton. Its clients span southwest Ohio and include a wide range of companies, from insurance agencies, doctors offices and banks to educational institutions.



Kent Hamilton

Kent Hamilton said Opti-Vise has picked up some new clients this year — including the Eaton Community School District — and he expects revenue to

be up 70 percent compared to last year. The company has six employees, including two new hires this year.

"We've grown during 2010 and basically we're crammed in like a bunch of sardines right now and we really need some space to be able to expand ... to have a chance to keep on growing," Kent Hamilton said.

Ann Gallaher, chief operating officer at Technology First, a regional trade association, looks for companies such as Opti-Vise to continue growing as



Kyle Hamilton

demand for managed IT services gains momentum during the next five to ten years.

The key is getting buyers to make the leap.

"People are still assessing the risks and the benefits and the costs, because when you let go of your communications systems and you let go of your data, it's kind of a scary thing for companies," Gallaher said. "It's as much of a cultural shift as it is a technology shift."

Kent Hamilton said the new facility doesn't need much work and he hopes



Ann Gallaher

to move in by the end of the year, or shortly after. The company may also have enough room left over to rent some office space to small businesses, he said.

If Opti-Vise continues boost revenue, Kent Hamilton expects to add employees in 2011.

"I'm excited about next year," he said. "We think there's some opportunities out there we are hoping to take advantage of."

Opti-Vise roots trace back to a company Kent Hamilton started in the late 1980s. It has gone through several name changes before becoming Opti-Vise in 2007.

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