

**SPACE TRAINING**

Kelly student attends Honeywell Challenge Academy



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**BASED IN BEAUMONT**

Community buys Houston bank



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**PULL OF THE PUMP**

United Rentals acquires National Pump for \$780 million



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**SANDWICH SPECIALIST**

Family opens Woogies shops in Vidor and now Silsbee



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beaumont  
**BUSINESS JOURNAL**  
Serving Jefferson, Orange & Hardin Counties, Texas



Photo by Lauren Dodd

With shovels from left, Timothy Chargois, Randy Reese, Frank Choufoer, Nassef Sawiris, Bo Alfred, Becky Ames and Jim Rich

**Netherlands fertilizer giant makes giant investment in Southeast Texas**  
Methanol plant near Beaumont to be nation's largest

BY LAUREN DODD  
BUSINESS JOURNAL

The excitement was palpable on the sunny afternoon distinguished guests and media gathered to celebrate what the mayor of Beaumont called the single largest investment in the city's history.

Netherlands based fertilizer giant OCI N.V. and its wholly owned subsidiary, Natgasoline LLC, held a groundbreaking ceremony Thursday, March 20, to mark the commencement of site preparation for its new greenfield methanol production plant in Beaumont. "This is the first time

you get the feeling its really happening," said Frank Choufoer, president of Natgasoline, in reference to the project that has been in the works for almost two years. The future methanol plant will sit on a 514-acre plot of land near the intersection of Highway 69 and Texas 347 southeast of downtown. Ac-

ording to OCI, the project will represent about \$1 billion in private investment. The project was awarded a grant of \$2.1 million from the Texas Enterprise Fund (TEF), as well as incentive commitments from local entities including the city of

SEE OCI, PAGE 2

**OCI NATGASOLINE LLC BY THE NUMBERS**

<b>1.75 Million</b> metric tons per year of methanol produced	<b>\$1 Billion</b> approximate private investment	<b>3,000</b> construction jobs
<b>240</b> permanent jobs	<b>\$2.1 Million</b> Texas Enterprise Fund Grant	<b>\$75,000</b> average annual salary for permanent jobs

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## CORRECTION

In the March 2014 edition of the Business Journal, we failed to credit photographer Bart Bragg for photos taken at the Port Arthur luncheon featuring Gene Krantz. We regret the omission and take this opportunity to thank Mr. Bragg for allowing the use of his photographs.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The Business Journal welcomes your input. Send your comments, complaints and suggestions to

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## OCI, FROM PAGE 1

Beaumont, Jefferson County, the Beaumont Independent School District, the Port of Beaumont and the Sabine-Neches Navigation District. The TEF is a cash grant used as a financial incentive tool for projects that offer significant projected job creation and capital investment and where a single Texas site is competing with another viable out-of-state option.

The Legislature created the TEF in 2003 and re-appropriated funding in 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013 to help ensure the growth of Texas businesses and create more jobs throughout the state. TEF projects are approved by the governor, lieutenant governor and the speaker of the House.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry said, "Texas has always been a proud home to bold innovators, so we're delighted OCI is expanding its presence in the Lone Star State. Our low taxes, reasonable and effective regulations, fair courts and world-class workforce make Texas an ideal destination for anyone seeking to grow their business, and I look forward to seeing this new facility take shape and lead both OCI and the people who'll work here to continued success in the years to come."

Under a white tent, OCI business director Frank Choufoer officiated as Master of Ceremonies at the groundbreaking. Jefferson County Commissioner Bo Alfred, Beaumont Mayor Becky Ames, BISD superintendent Dr. Timothy Chargois, and OCI N.V. CEO Nassef Sawiris shared their enthusiasm for the new project during the ceremony.

After thanking OCI N.V. and Natgasoline for their investment in Jefferson County, Commissioner Alfred emphasized Southeast Texas' international business community, saying, "A number of major corporations that we have in our community are from around the world."

Listing the nationalities of various corporations in the area, Alfred added, "Jefferson County is happy to add to that list the Netherlands.



OCI, we are very happy to have you here."

Giving the audience a brief history lesson, Mayor Ames detailed Beaumont's long-standing history with the American petrochemical industry, starting with the discovery of oil at Spindletop 113 years ago.

"With that history and against that backdrop, you're about to break ground on the biggest methanol plant in the United States," said Ames.

The mayor of Beaumont expressed her gratitude toward OCI N.V. and Natgasoline LLC, saying, "It is another great day in Beaumont because you're here, and we welcome you with open arms."

Attendees of the ceremony followed the speakers outside for the grand finale. With investors looking onward from a sandy hill, Dr. Chargois, Choufoer, OCI CEO Nassef Sawiris, Alfred, and Ames grabbed their gold shovels and "turned dirt" on the long-awaited project to great applause from the crowd.

During the groundbreaking reception held at the Compro Center, Texas Secretary of State Nandita Berry said, "Clearly Texas is a success story. Our regulations are working. Plants such as these are what allow us to say that our economy is working."

Berry also said of the community's part in OCI's selection of Beaumont, "The logistics of this area, the infrastructure with the pipelines

in this area, all serve to further the business interests here."

The new methanol plant isn't just good for Beaumont, the OCI CEO says; it's a step in the right direction for the entire country.

Sawiris said, "This is a milestone step in the realization of OCI's natural gas monetization strategy in the United States. We are firm believers in the U.S. economy and in the nation's long-term natural gas advantage versus global competitors and aim to continue to invest in this market. Methanol is a diverse building block for industrial chemicals and has huge potential as a clean direct fuel substitute for vehicles in the United States."

"Texas has been a welcoming home to our methanol businesses, and we look forward to continuing to be a contributing member to the community through the creation of approximately 3,000 construction jobs over the next three years and approximately 240 permanent jobs when the plant commissions."

Of course there is much work to be done, as Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce President Jim Rich pointed out: "It's going to take a team effort to make this project successful."

Sawiris added, "OCI's Construction Group will be involved in the construction of the plant, creating job opportunities in Texas, and facilitating the completion of the project on schedule."

Natgasoline LLC is ex-



**Frank Choufoer**

pected to have a capacity of up to 5,000 metric tons per day (tpd), equivalent to approximately 1.75 million metric tons per annum (mtpa), and is expected to start production in late 2016, according to the company. It will be the first methanol facility of this scale in the United States and will be the country's largest methanol production facility based on nameplate capacity.

Methanol — one part carbon, one part oxygen and four parts hydrogen — is a key component in refining and manufacturing essential elements of our everyday lives. The plant will utilize state-of-the-art methanol technology and will incorporate the best available environmental control technology.

Sawiris, Egyptian CEO of OCI N.V. since 2009, closed the program. Keeping his speech short, simple and to the point Sawiris, exclaimed, "Thank you, Texas!" ■