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Milton breaks ground on \$18.5M Batavia facility

Rocco Laurienzo/Daily News

DIG HERE: Manning shovels in ground-breaking for Milton Caterpillar's new complex on East Saile Drive Monday are, from left, Genesee County Highway Superintendent Tim Hens, Deputy Highway Superintendent John Hiltchey, Stephen Griffin, vice president of business development for the county Economic Development Center; Milton Chairman Jack Milton; company President Chris Milton; county Legislator Hollis Upson, a GCEDC board member; and electrical contractor Gary Nanni.



By Roger Muehlig
Daily News Staff Writer

The president of the second heavy equipment dealer to embark on a relocation project to Saile Drive in the town of Batavia praised local officials for their assistance Monday and said he is "extremely excited" to be in Batavia.

Site work has begun for Milton Caterpillar's 103,000-square-foot sales, rental, service, parts and office facility on East Saile Drive, near the county airport.

The project, estimated at \$18.5 million, according to the

Genesee County Economic Development Center, is expected to take 18 months to complete.

Milton President Chris Milton said his company has built eight to 10 facilities during the past 25 years. At times, the preliminary process "can be kind of challenging," he said.

Apparently not here, however.

The assistance and cooperation it received from the town of Batavia and Genesee County made this one "the easiest and the best, from our stand-

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Milton

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point, that we've ever had," he said during an official ground-breaking luncheon at the site.

IJR Inc., down the road on West Saile Drive, started site work at the 60-acre location about two weeks ago. IJR was also a contractor for Vantage Equipment, which opened on West Saile Drive in March.

Both projects went through the county Economic Development Center and the town of Batavia permitting process. A third, Tracey Road Equipment, is still pending.

The Milford, Mass.-based Milton company intends to consolidate its Western New York region offices at the Batavia location, as it did with its Eastern New York offices in

Clifton Park. It also intends to have an agricultural equipment base here and to create 100 jobs in the process.

Milton said the company, the largest Caterpillar franchise in the country, has three- and four-acre sites in Buffalo and Rochester, and those would not be adequate to produce the desired service to its customer base.

The new site, he said, will allow for larger inventories of machines, engines and tools to enlarge its capacity for customer support and allow the company to specialize in different business areas.

The point, he said, is to "provide a better package to our customers."

GCEDC directors gave preliminary approval to a

sale/leaseback arrangement for the project at their last meeting, said Stephen Griffin, vice president of business development for the agency. The arrangement includes a 60 percent tax saving over the next 10 years, he said, plus one-time sales and mortgage tax savings of around \$780,000.

Several Milton officials, including parts, service and sales managers for the Batavia location, were at the luncheon and ground-breaking, as were Assemblyman Stephen M. Hawley, county Legislature Chairman Mary Pat Hancock, town Supervisor Greg Post, and a number of other local officials and GCEDC representatives.

Milton, third generation in

his family to be at the helm of a Caterpillar dealership, said the company is from the Northeast, but his family roots are in upstate New York. His father, he said, worked for an upstate International Harvester dealership in the 1940s, gradu-

ated from Syracuse University and is a member of the university's board of trustees.

When Milton acquired Syracuse Supply Co., another heavy equipment dealer, in 2004, it was "sort of a homecoming of sorts," he said.