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MGPI Begins Move to Recently Constructed Technical Center at Newly Named Cray Business Plaza

ATCHISON, Kan., Feb. 9 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- MGP Ingredients, Inc. (MGPI)(Nasdaq: MGPI) announced that construction of its new technical innovation center in Atchison has been completed and that work on the company's new corporate office building will be finished next month as planned. The company also announced the naming of the new two-building complex, located at the intersection of Second and Commercial Streets, the Cray Business Plaza in honor of Cloud L. "Bud" and Sally Cray and other members of the Cray family, including Bud's father and company founder the late Cloud L. Cray, Sr., for their dedication to the business and longtime commitment to the local community.

The Cray family has been at the forefront of MGPI's evolution and growth since the company's founding in 1941. Simultaneously, family members have contributed immensely to the Atchison community in time and service, as well as philanthropically through their generous support of projects that enhance the quality of life.

"Through the years, the Crays have provided great inspiration and visionary guidance for all of us who have ever had the fortune of being associated with the family and with this company," said Ladd Seaberg, chairman and chief executive officer. "We are all very pleased to have this opportunity to pay tribute to their role in building this business and being the cornerstone for many progressive initiatives and developments throughout the community."

Other members of MGPI's staff and board of directors voiced similar comments. "The naming of our new office/technical center complex in honor of the Crays is highly warranted," said Tim Newkirk, president and chief operating officer. "This form of recognition is long overdue considering all that this outstanding family has meant to the company and has done for the betterment of the town through the years. The buildings not only reflect MGPI's ongoing involvement, but also stand as testaments to the significant role the family has had and continues to have in our progress."

Board member Gary Gradinger said: "I honestly can't think of any family that has had a more significant and comprehensive impact on their community than the Crays. Whether the subject is business, education, health, social issues, or the arts, their unselfish and generous leadership has touched all of us. Regarding Bud and Sally, in particular, I don't know of a town anywhere that a couple has loved so much or given of itself so much to make it a better place. The Cray Business Plaza serves as a wonderful landmark and visible reminder of their positive influence on the development of both the company and community."

Mike Braude, a director since 1991, commented as follows: "I am thrilled that this wonderful new addition to Atchison is being named for the Cray family. I have known Bud and Sally for many years and recognize how deeply committed they are to the company and how they have been the catalysts for many of the extraordinary activities that make Atchison such a progressive community. Each city should be fortunate enough to have a couple like them in its midst."

Bud Cray joined the company as a fulltime executive in 1942 and served as president from 1962 to 1980, when he became chairman of the board. He stepped down as chairman this past October, but remains an active member of the board.

"I'm sorry my father is not here to see these beautiful buildings his company has built on the riverfront of the town he loved so much," Cray stated. "He would be very proud of the honor the company has bestowed on the name he brought to this community."

Technical Center Strengthens Product Development Capabilities

With work completed on the technical innovation center, MGPI's research and development and applications technology personnel began moving into the building earlier this week. The company expects the structure to be fully occupied by mid-February. Each level of the two-story building encompasses 9,800 square feet of space.

"The technical innovation center is symbolic of the company's successful evolution from a one-plant alcohol distillery to an innovative multi-faceted leader in the development, production and marketing of a wide array of specialty ingredients and alcohol products," said Seaberg. He added: "This facility will be valuable in helping us strengthen our capabilities as a developer of naturally-derived ingredient solutions for the marketplace. It provides improved accommodations and greater opportunities for us to conduct practical research and development for the next generation of innovative ingredients with high prospects for commercial success; undertake formulations and applications development in support of R & D and customer-based projects; conduct training of MGPI personnel and its global distributors and customers; and host and work directly with customers in providing solutions to their R & D and product development initiatives."

The technical innovation center houses 19 offices, two conference rooms, and nearly a dozen different laboratories, including protein and starch research labs, separate applications labs for bakery, meat, prepared foods, biopolymer and distillery products, a state-of-the art culinary kitchen, and sensory testing, instrumentation and analytical labs. These laboratories are equipped with some of the latest technological equipment and instruments to serve the research, applications, and training needs of the company's various ingredient technology and alcohol business unit platforms.

"We are very excited about the strengthened capabilities the new technical center will provide us in our goal of continually creating better solutions for our customers," stated Sukh Bassi, Ph.D., vice president of new product innovations and chief science officer. "It will better enable us to more fully address evolving market trends through the application of our scientific endeavors on several fronts, including health and wellness issues, nutrition, taste and consumer convenience, and increased demand for functional pet treats, renewable fuels and other bio-economy initiatives."

Ody Maningat, Ph.D., vice president of applications technology and technical services, said the new technical center "provides testimony of MGPI's serious and continued commitment to product innovation." He added that the facility "gains increased importance as we expand training, research and applications activities to support our product development efforts in a number of areas. Together with our new corporate office building, it hopefully is a source of pride not only for our company, but also for the local community, as it symbolizes MGPI's optimism for the future after more than six decades of continuous operation."

Through extensive research, MGPI scientists over the years have developed a wide array of ingredient solutions, principally wheat proteins and starches, for use by manufacturers of food, pet, personal care and natural polymer-based products. "Our product lines continue to evolve as we partner with customers who face ever-changing demands from an increasingly sophisticated consumer base," Dr. Bassi said.

Preparations Underway for Move to New Corporate Offices

By mid-March, corporate management, finance and accounting, marketing and sales management, and administrative staffs will complete their move into the new corporate office building. Each floor of this building consists of 9,000 square feet. It and the new technical innovation center combined will house up to 60 employees.

MGPI broke ground for construction of the two structures on January 6, 2006. Both buildings were designed by Nolte and Associates, Inc., an architectural firm based in Overland Park, Kan. Merit Construction, Kansas City, Kan., was hired as general contractor for the project.

Seaberg said that from the very beginning of the project, MGPI wanted Cray Business Plaza to be an attractive addition to the adjacent riverfront that helps spur further economic development in the community. A \$4.2 million revitalization of the riverfront completed in June 2004 was one of scores of community enhancement projects generously supported by the Cray family over the last several decades.

The corporate office building occupied by MGPI at 1300 Main Street since 1979 will be converted to an operations and engineering center and also will house human resource and information technology personnel. Once personnel have vacated the existing research laboratory facilities, the space will be converted to offices for quality assurance, plant supervisory and environmental safety personnel.

SOURCE MGP Ingredients, Inc.