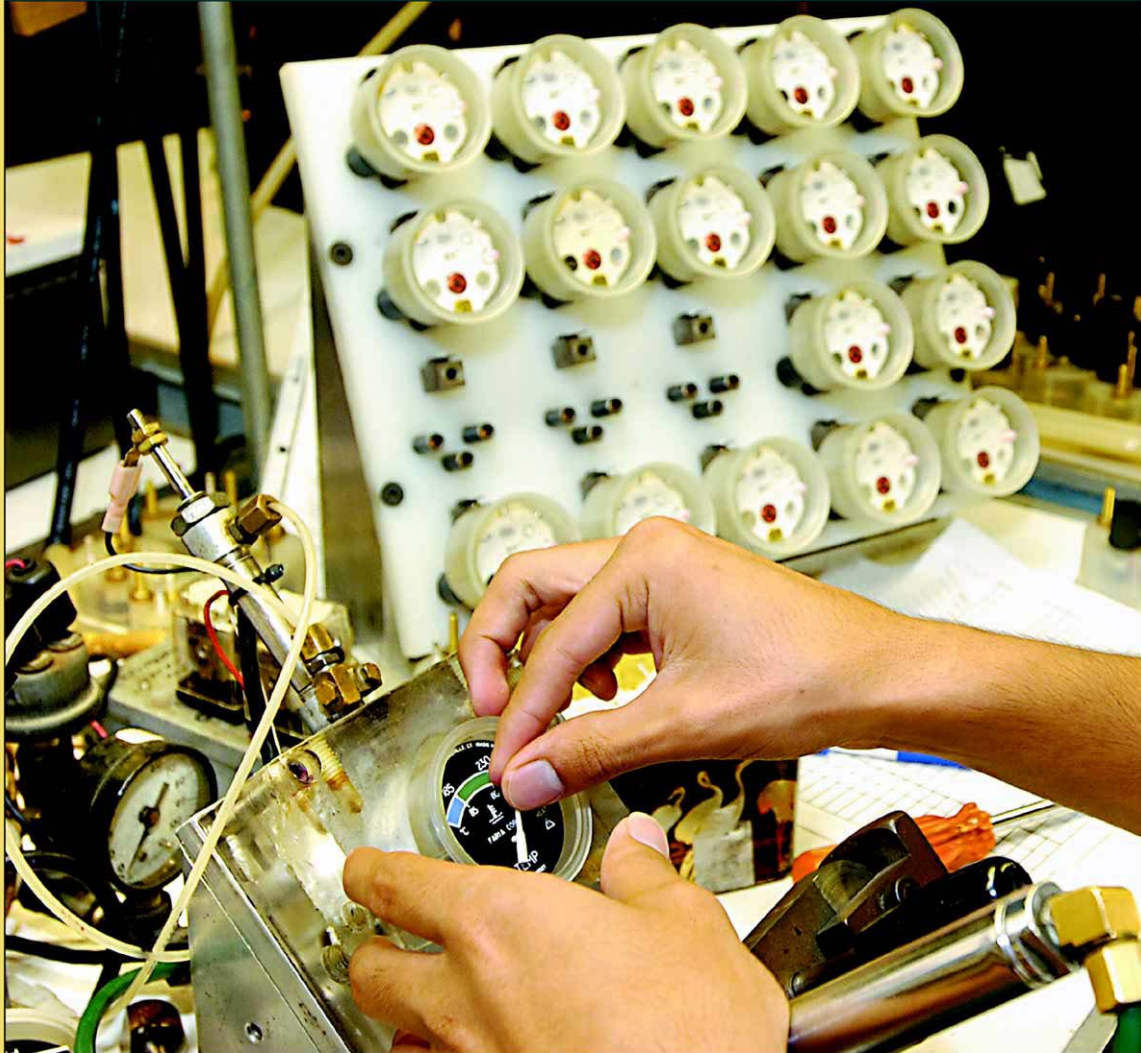


# ENTERPRISE

A MONTHLY REVIEW OF BUSINESS IN EASTERN CONNECTICUT



The Thomas G. Faria Corp. in Uncasville takes advantage of the state Procurement Technical Assistance Program.

Adena Stevens / The Day

## Hands-on help for contracts

Agency gives area firms  
free assistance in landing  
valuable government  
contracts. **PAGE 3**

# Tapping into government contracts; agriculture geared toward 'shareholders'

It's certainly a long name – the Procurement Technical Assistance Program – but it has a short task: Teach small businesses in eastern Connecticut and around the state how to tap into the bountiful flow of state and federal contracts.

That can sometimes be a confusing, frustrating process, but the "PTAP" team headquartered in New London is helping businesses around eastern Connecticut and beyond find a new source of business – and revenues.

This month's issue of *Enterprise* takes a look at this innovative program and at some local companies that have found its advice and suggestions very helpful toward future growth. Find out more about this business program by reading this month's cover story, "Tapping Into Success."

■ And if you've ever been to Scott's Farm in East Lyme, a longtime staple in that community, you may have heard about its new program to build an agricultural version of

"shareholders." The farm has signed on to an interesting concept called "Community Supported Agriculture."

Maybe you know of someone in agriculture who can benefit from this novel way of adding some financial stability to Connecticut's farming community.

■ For those who are into truly "classic" cars, you'll want to read about Vintage Motorcars, where a father-and-son team have taken some rusty heaps and transformed them into pure gems of motoring. The Westbrook company transforms nearly everything automotive – from a classic Cadillac in need of some new luster to a vintage fire truck from one of the Montville fire companies.

■ This month's issue also includes a look inside real estate sales activity in Jeff Blodgett's "Economy Watch" column. You'll be interested to learn Jeff's opinion about the "real estate bubble" – or lack thereof. And business writer Pat Dad-

## ENTERPRISING thoughts



ANTHONY  
CRONIN

[a.cronin@theday.com](mailto:a.cronin@theday.com)

dona offers her latest opinions about business-related books that have caught her reading eye.

We hope you enjoy this August edition of *Enterprise* and we'll see you again next month with more features and articles about the businesses – large, small and somewhere in between – that call eastern Connecticut their home.

*Anthony Cronin is the editor of Enterprise business review and is also The Day's business editor.*

## How to reach PTAP counselors

■ **The statewide procurement-assistance program** is headquartered in New London, with other offices in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Britain and Waterbury.

■ **To qualify for its free services**, you must be in business for at least two years and must have email and Internet access.

■ **To reach the New London office**, call 1-888-673-2837, ext. 207, or send an e-mail to [ptap@secter.org](mailto:ptap@secter.org). More information is also available at [www.ctptap.org](http://www.ctptap.org).

■ **Once qualified**, your business can receive a multitude of services, including one-on-one counseling services; bid-match services; registrations to do business with government; bid-and-proposal preparation; post-award assistance; and e-Business information about contracts, bids, etc.

say, gives them the expertise and equipment to handle such work, whether it's in New London or in New Orleans.

"Kim and I are living our dream," says Lowe. "And not many people are living their dream."

■ ■ ■

Brien Robertson smiles when he talks about success stories like Lowe Carting or other small businesses that are the backbone of eastern Connecticut's \$13 billion economy.

"We help them with registration and other details, so they can do business with the federal (or state and local) government," he says. "Some want assistance since they're new to the government marketplace and others are well entrenched (in the government contracting system) but are interested in developing more."



Brien Robertson

The procurement-assistance program started in Connecticut in 1993. Since then, it's grown into an economic juggernaut that's provided more than \$1 billion in new government contracts to state firms, from New London to Norwalk and elsewhere.

Robertson admits that understanding how to bid on a government contract — and better yet, how to win a government contract — can be a daunting process, especially to neophytes or small businesses that don't have dedicated "procurement" executives who know the ins and outs of procuring government work.

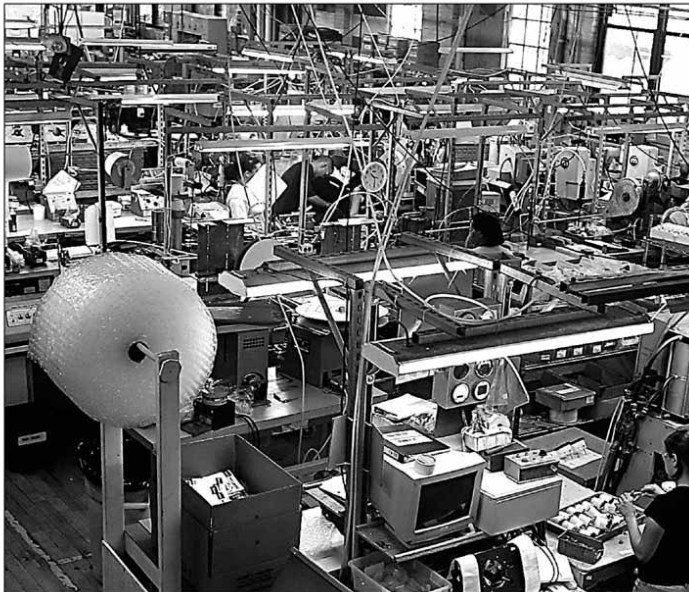
That's where his agency steps in. As director of the statewide program, he oversees a sophisticated staff in regional offices that help businesses find out about government work and gain those contracts.

The process is free, and confidential, and is successful.

"We can help them determine what market they want to go into and we can show them the advantages and disadvantages of each," says Robertson, a former state Department of Transportation official with deep experience in government procurement issues.

"And we're really good listeners. We listen to what the company is all about," he says of the confidential one-on-one counseling services offered by his agency.

"We start right from the beginning, at the registration process, and we explain all the various regulations," Robertson says.



The Thomas G. Faria Corp. plant in Uncasville, which makes instrumentation for the auto industry, military and others, has used the PTAP program to help it get more government work. **Adena Stevens / The Day**

# Tapping into PTAP

From 5



At the Thomas G. Faria Corp. manufacturing plant in Uncasville, workers assemble high-tech gauges and instruments that will find their way into automobiles, recreational vehicles and military vehicles, including the ubiquitous Humvees found in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Pete Harpin, who oversees commercial sales at the sprawling Uncasville factory, says that the PTAP program has been invaluable to the longtime company off Route 32.

"They bring to the table a lot of knowledge about how to find where the opportunities are," he explains. "They can determine if the product or the activity that our company is involved in is right for certain (government) bid requests or are the type of things the government is looking for," says the 16-year Faria employee.

The U.S. government, he says, buys "something of everything that's made, from soup to nuts to vehicles and various kinds of technology."

As Faria has deftly moved from making conventional analog instruments, such as tachometers that measure an engine's revolutions per minute, to ultra-sophisticated, and detailed, electronic and "telematic" products that can send monitoring information through cyberspace, it has used the PTAP program to investigate new opportunities from the myriad of government agencies in search of such high-tech equipment.

Agencies including the Department of Homeland Security are interested in telematic equipment, which can be used for defense or protection purposes. Such equipment is used by the trucking industry to record logistical information, such as where a truck is located, or for law enforcement or military uses as well as other commercial work.

Among its many capabilities, the sophisticated equipment (whether for an RV or a military or other vehicle) provides a user-friendly screen (and the accompanying electronics) allowing Internet access anywhere the vehicle travels, camera pictures of the outside or rear of the vehicle and updates on engine and vehicle information.

For instance, Faria's new "Watchdog" technology is a compact and powerful communications, navigation, tracking and monitoring device that can be used for a variety of government purposes - from protection to military applications.

"They're (PTAP) a very good resource. We all tend to get very busy these days keeping all our balls juggling up in the air, and we probably don't have enough time to be resourceful about all the new opportunities," says Harpin. "We find (PTAP) to be a useful resource for that sort of thing."

*a.cronin@theday.com*



Lydia Santos, of New London, tests the microprocessor boards that will eventually end up in a military vehicle at the Thomas G. Faria Corp. plant in Uncasville. The plant makes instrumentation for the auto industry.  
**Adena Stevens /**  
The Day