

Photo Galleries



Mayor gives State of the City Address



Spurs defeat Lakers 112-91



Space Shuttle Discovery Makes Last Trip

Most Viewed Most E-Mailed

1. Matriach of largest known San Fernando Valley family dies at 87
2. TRAFFIC ALERT: Southbound Golden State (5) Fwy lanes closed due to...
3. LAKERS NOTEBOOK: World Peace discusses suspension
4. Union Station design finalists display their proposals to revamp the...
5. NEW YORK 99, CLIPPERS 93: After loss without Paul, Clippers could...
6. Local bankruptcies: April 9 - April 12, 2012
7. Parents wire kids to prove teachers' verbal abuse
8. Woman gets 4 years in death of Lancaster motorcyclist
9. Mom wins bid to change billboard in Van Nuys

Recommend Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

Share Tweet 0

Print Email Font Resize

BOOKMARK

Valley businesses learn to profit from exporting

By Gregory J. Wilcox, Staff Writer
Posted: 08/12/2011 09:36:54 PM PDT
Updated: 08/12/2011 09:44:16 PM PDT



Ace Aguilera assembles light stands at Matthews Studio Equipment on Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2011. The Burbank company designs and manufactures equipment for the film, television and still photography industry. (Michael Owen Baker/Staff Photographer)

Matthews Studio Equipment reversed a popular trade route to navigate the roiling economic waters.

"We make stuff here and ship it to China," said a smiling Robert E. Kulesh, vice president of sales and marketing at the Burbank-based company, which makes a wide array of products used in film and still photography productions.

Kulesh's simple explanation of how Matthews boosted its bottom line might set a good example for other San Fernando Valley area businesses struggling after the Great Recession.

At least that's what officials of local economic development agencies and the Port of Los Angeles believe.

The Valley Economic Alliance, the Valley International Trade Association, Los Angeles County Economic

Breaking News

- TRAFFIC ALERT: Southbound Golden State (5) Fwy lanes closed due to jackknifed truck
- Woman gets 4 years in death of Lancaster motorcyclist
- Police ask public's help to find missing Van Nuys girl
- Industry woman may have been victim of a homicide
- 3 westbound Ventura (134) Freeway lanes to close tonight
- 2 new sister cities: Boring, Oregon meets Dull, Scotland
- 'Climate of fear' blamed in canceling high-profile Mexico-Irish boxing match
- Cracking down on corruption in U.S. border town
- Feds nab 28 gang members linked to drug trafficking
- President Obama or candidate Obama, taxpayer still pays

- 10. **UPDATED:** Man dies after fiery head-on collision on PCH in Malibu

Local News

- Matriach of largest known San Fernando Valley family dies at 87
- Union Station design finalists display their proposals to revamp the historic L.A. site
- Settlement: Disabled must be included in disaster plans
- LAUSD slashes summer school, smallest offerings ever
- L.A. City Council approves district changes to LAUSD maps
- North Hollywood, Granada Hills teams going for academic gold
- 2 people ill after odor from roof repair work circulated through Woodland Hills building
- \$50,000 reward proposed to catch "painter's mask" robbers
- Home sales, prices up in San Fernando Valley
- Curb flap at Studio City condos has residents and authorities seeing red

The Valley Economic Alliance, the Valley International Trade Association, Los Angeles County Economic



Iris Flores cuts green screen fabric at Matthews Studio Equipment on Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2011. The Burbank company designs and manufactures equipment for the film, television and still photography industry. (Michael Owen Baker/Staff Photographer)

Development Corp., Port of Los Angeles and the U.S. Department of Commerce are among the entities encouraging businesses to view the world as one big marketplace.

The alliance, port and Commerce Department recently partnered in a "Trade Connect" workshop that highlighted the help available for firms that want to export. The event at the Anheuser-Busch brewery in Van Nuys drew a standing room-only crowd of about 85 people.



Now planning is under way for a workshop in Northridge that will target the aerospace and manufacturing sector and another for businesses in the East Valley.

"I've seen more and more interest. (Businesses) need more sales, and exporting offers them the opportunity to

increase their sales," said Peter Ruiz, the LAEDC's regional manager for the Valley area, based at the Alliance's Sherman Oaks office.

And it does seem like the world offers a rich sales target. According to the LAEDC, exports through the Los Angeles Customs District totaled \$105.3 billion last year, an increase of 22 percent from 2009 and the second best year behind 2008.

But 85 percent of California companies currently don't export their goods and services and the number based in the San Fernando Valley area is likely higher, trade officials estimate. And 95 percent of the world's consumers are outside of the U.S., they say.

"We've been puzzling about this forever," Katherine Whitman, chairwoman of the Valley trade group and a professor of economics and international business at Mount St. Mary's College, said of the lack of local exporters.

"Perhaps most of the businesses in the Valley are small. But there is the chance of (export) success even for the smallest business," she said.

Matthews, a 41-year-old company now operating out of a 75,000-square-foot headquarters, distribution and manufacturing facility, offers a good example of export success.

The company, which has a 188-page product catalog, began exporting about 15 years ago.

"We realized we had pretty much filled up the coffers with the production centers here and we saw that production was going off-shore so we decided to chase it," Kulesh said.

Today the company has customers in 73 countries with exports accounting for 43 percent of sales.

"Being a small company we couldn't do the whole world at once so we targeted Asia first. After about four or five years we targeted Europe and now our successes are in Central and South America," Kulesh said.

Kulesh, who travels about four months out of the year, often relies on the Commerce Department's regional office in West Los Angeles to help smooth the way when doing business on foreign soil.

The agency can prepare marketing reports on the sales potential of products or services in foreign countries, background reports on the people businesses will be dealing with, and do match-making - help business find a foreign partner.

Fees range from \$550 to \$1,900 for the latter.

**Get
TransUnion
Credit
Monitoring**

**And Get a
FREE Score**

[CLICK HERE](#)

CLICK HERE



"For that fee we will be your boots on the ground," said Julie Anne Hennessy, director of the L.A. office.

"We are the ones that actually do the search for you based on what you are looking for in a partner."

International trade is also a source of jobs for the Valley, said port spokesman Phillip Sanfield. The port generates 1,687 direct jobs here and 8,132 in indirect jobs, according to an economic analysis of the ports impact on the region.

"I think it's a hidden jewel, the number one gateway to the world," said Jim MacLellan, director of trade development at the port.

The port has a lot of resources, including 13 shipping lines. And many of the ships that arrive here full leave with cargo space available, which means reduced shipping rates, he said.

As part of the Trade Connect project the port also offers a three-hour class designed to introduce businesses to the exporting experience and point out other sources of assistance.

Matthews' Kulesh thinks Valley businesses should take advantage of these assistance programs.

"Businesses are missing out. If 95 percent of the world's buying power is outside of the U.S. and you are not going after it, you're not going after growth for your business," he said.

BOOKMARK

Print

Email

Font

Resize

Return to Top

Email Marketing works for your small business!

- Easy to use. No tech skills required.
- Keeps your biz top-of-mind.
- Super-affordable.



Get started

FREE

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU

- ▶ Citigroup CEO Vikram Pandit Steps Down: Hot...
- ▶ Handicapping Key Earnings Reports
- ▶ Death at Bumble Bee tuna plant devastates...
- ▶ Daughter of Mexican drug lord arrested at US...
- ▶ School janitor robbed of pants in Highland
- ▶ 10 Best 2012 Leftovers For Bargain Car Buyers

— SPONSORED LINK —

Equal Energy Closes Sale of Canadian Assets
(From DailyMe.com)

Powered by **newstogram**

• Readers: [Learn more about the Daily News commenting system](#)

140 comments

Add a comment

Warning: http://undefined/ is unreachable.



Rahim Khaja · ★ Top Commenter

Bigg Boss is outstanding.....superb voice.

Reply · 1 Like · October 28, 2011 at 3:48pm