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Letterkenny Army Depot looks for new business opportunities

By Jim Hook Senior writer

Letterkenny Army Depot will be striking up new relationships and cementing old ones at its fifth annual business showcase.

Local and national business representatives on Wednesday and Thursday will get a sense of what Letterkenny is all about.

"It takes 100 business contacts to get one deal," said Letterkenny Chief of Staff Mark Sheffield.

He hopes the Letterkenny Business Opportunity Showcase will lead to a new business deal three to five years down the road, as it has in the past.

"The grand prize is an opportunity to bring in several partners to look at expanding workload into new opportunities," Sheffield said. "We have specific targets that amount to six different objectives."

Letterkenny looks to expand relationships with Lockheed and Raytheon and explore four new workloads, he said.

About 170 people are expected to attend.

Letterkenny's fortunes have turned around in the past decade. The \$11 million shop preparing Patriot missiles for overseas duty is open. The military and the private sector partner to manufacture mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles. Letterkenny's vehicle and electronics shops have earned Shingo medallions for manufacturing excellence.

"The showcase has been a part of Letterkenny's success and has been an integral part of the strategy to grow the depot," said David G. Sciamanna, president of the Greater Chambersburg Chamber of Commerce.

Letterkenny, the largest employer in Franklin County, employs

3,520. Sheffield expects that the depot will add 150 jobs by January. The depot also has been investing in modern equipment.

"We have been working on that for a long time," Sheffield said. "They won't be looking at your grandfather's depot. What we have in facilities rivals private industry."

The success of the neighboring Cumberland Valley Business Park also is linked to Letterkenny's success, Ross said. Several buildings rented in the business park house Letterkenny operations. A major defense contractor had considered moving to the Letterkenny area, but decided to stay put when the economy soured.

A dinner at the Orchards restaurant on Wednesday kicks off the showcase. Baker Spring, a fellow in National Security Policy at The Heritage Foundation, will speak. He defends performance-based logistics where the original manufacturer

gets a bonus for improving the performance of the product for the government. He's also shown how missile defense systems can strengthen world stability.

Lt. Gen. James Pillsbury will speak about the equipment coming back from Iraq that must be rebuilt.

On Thursday, the first Patriot missile will be certified in a ceremony that will give Letterkenny the green light to manufacture more. Then 200 yards away, a monument will be dedicated to Staff Sgt. Daniel R. Lightner Jr., a 28-year-old Hollidaysburg man who was killed in 2005 in Iraq when an improvised explosive device detonated near his Humvee.

State funding for the showcase expires this year, but Ross said he is confident that there will be another next year.

Depot wins 6th Shingo

Letterkenny Army Depot will receive its sixth Shingo Medallion during the annual showcase.

Robert Miller, executive director of the Shingo Prize for Operational Excellence, will present a bronze medallion at 11 a.m. Thursday in Building 370.



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The international award recognizes manufacturing excellence. Letterkenny won its first medallion for repairing Patriot missile launchers in 2005, the first year government groups were eligible for the award.

Letterkenny has won five medallions for individual work areas. This is the first for an entire assembly line, the Patriot missile launch system.

The Shingo Prize, dubbed the Nobel Prize of manufacturing, was established in 1988 to improve productivity and quality through employee empowerment and effective leadership. The prize is named for Dr. Shigeo Shingo, who helped create the renowned Toyota Production System.

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