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Tuesday 16 September, 2003 | Home > News > News > Top Stories

- ▼ **News**
- Top Stories
- Local
- World & Nation
- Business
- Local/Region
- Editorial
- Health
- U.S. News
- Weather
- Tides
- Politics
- Columnists
- Death Notices
- Late Lotteries
- Corrections
- AP - The Wire
- Crime & Punishment
- 2003 Summer Guide
- Contact Us
- ▶ **Sports**
- ▶ **Lifestyle**
- ▶ **Features**
- ▶ **Progress Report 2003**
- ▶ **Friday!**
- ▶ **Announcements**
- ▶ **USA Weekend**
- ▶ **Government**
- ▶ **Classifieds**
- ▶ **Personals**
- ▶ **Business Directory**
- ▶ **News Delivery**
- ▶ **Our Newspaper**
- ▶ **Lifestyles**
- ▶ **Personal Finance**
- ▶ **Consumer Guide**
- ▶ **Subscribe!**
- ▶ **Circulation**
- ▶ **Newspaper Jobs**
- ▶ **Fun and Games**

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Top Stories

Biotech firm lands at ATMC

MARC MUNROE DION , Herald News Staff Reporter

08/20/2003

FALL RIVER -- Avant Immunotherapeutics Inc., a company that manufactures vaccines, will open a pilot manufacturing facility at the Advanced Technology & Manufacturing Center. Representatives from the company said the facility should be open in 2004.

Initial hiring will mean at least 10 jobs and Avant may provide many more in the future.

At a Tuesday press conference at the ATMC on Martine Street, Fall River Mayor Edward M. Lambert Jr. said it is to be hoped that in the coming years Avant will provide hundreds of jobs for area residents.

"We are incredibly pleased to make this announcement," Lambert said.

"Avant is Fall River's first biotech firm," he added. "It is our hope that this facility leads to bigger and better things and a possible manufacturing facility in the years to come."

"We're a vaccines company and we make cutting-edge vaccines," said Avant Chief Executive Officer Una Ryan, adding that the company is in the development phases of creating a vaccine that will help control cholesterol.

The company also makes vaccines used in biodefense.

The pilot manufacturing program the company will run at the ATMC will encompass 11,000 square feet. Avant is headquartered in Needham and has a facility in St. Louis, Mo.

"What we will be doing here is making very innovative vaccines," Ryan said. "What we make here will go around the world."

Ryan praised Lambert and the city for actively recruiting Avant to this area.

"When you begin looking for a place to locate, you look at the globe," Ryan said.

Michael Hogan of MassDevelopment noted that facilities that do their research and development in Massachusetts must be convinced that those companies can stay in the state to manufacture the products they develop.

University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth Chancellor Jean F. MacCormack spoke of the value of partnerships between the university, the government and private industry.

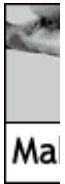
Lambert noted that jobs in biotechnology may require a higher level of skill than some manufacturing jobs, but also noted that jobs in biotechnology tend to pay more than many jobs in other areas of manufacturing.

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Reader Opinions


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► **Name:** David Tibbetts

Date: Aug, 20 2003

This is terrific news for Fall River and the SouthCoast. Biotechnology is one of the few sectors of the economy that continues to grow, with the potential to create high-skill and high-wage jobs. Congratulations to Mayor Lambert and to Chancellor MacCormack for their advocacy to attract this company, and to MassDevelopment CEO Hogan for recognizing the opportunities presented by the SouthCoast.

Number of Opinions: 1

Back to top 



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