

Former industrial park building sold

Medical testing firm plans to increase business here

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Cape Charles: A company whose product is used to test pharmaceuticals will be expanding with the recent purchase of the building it is renting here -- the former Port of Cape Charles Sustainable Technologies Industrial Park structure.

Ralph Dodd, the agent for Southport Investors group, said the 10-year-old building and three acres were sold to Wako Chemicals USA Inc. for \$1.75 million.



"We are very excited to announce Wako Chemicals has purchased the formerly known STIP building to expand their current operations," said Cape Charles Town Manager Heather Arcos last week.

"We hope for new job opportunities as their operations grow as a result of the purchase," said Arcos, noting the need for more jobs in the town and Northampton County.

Wako Chemicals extracts the blood from horseshoe crabs to test medicines and medical devices, said Ron Berzofsky, who has a Ph.D. in biochemistry and is general manager.

The extraction of blood does not harm the crabs, and they are returned to the ocean. Berzofsky said the facility bleeds 500 crabs a day beginning in late spring and into early fall and returns them alive. He said they will bleed about 60 percent more horseshoe crabs this year by increasing the number of days, not volume per day.

Berzofsky said they currently have eight employees -- seasonal and year-round positions -- and will be hiring more workers. He said Wako

currently occupies 25 percent of the building and will be expanding to some of the unoccupied space. He said there is another tenant in the building who will be staying. Berzofsky said the blood is blue because horseshoe crabs have copper in their blood. He said they don't bleed horseshoe crabs twice in the same year, and mark them on their shells and can tell by the type of mark what year they have bled them.

The facility opened in Cape Charles in 2002 in the former eco-industrial park, which was highly touted as a model for sustainable development. But by 2005 the industrial park idea had fizzled, and Northampton County Industrial Development Authority unanimously agreed to transfer the park, commonly called the STIP, back to county control and ownership.

By the next year, the building attracted attention as a possible branch location for Eastern Shore Community College, but that idea did not materialize. It was later sold.