

# Manufacturer set to expand

By SUSAN FIELD  
Clare Managing Editor

Unified Brands plans to expand its plant outside Lake Isabella and create as many as 158 new jobs.

The company, formerly Randell Manufacturing, is planning to relocate its operations in Arizona to the Broomfield Township plant, according to the Michigan Economic Development Corp.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm on Tues-

day announced the expansion plan, which is expected to bring 327 new jobs, including about 158 directly related to the plant.

Broomfield Township approved a 12-year tax abatement to support the expansion, which prompted the MEDC to give the township a Michigan Economic Growth Authority board to approve a state tax credit of more than \$1.4 million over seven years, Middle Michigan Development Corp. President George Dunn said

Tuesday.

"Needless to say, it is terribly, terribly exciting news for our community and our county," Dunn said. "The bottom line is, to win a deal from a southern state is huge."

Not only will Unified Brands continue to operate in Broomfield Township, its expansion will increase the tax base, Dunn said.

"Real job growth and economic growth comes from companies we already have," Dunn said.

Unified Brands President William Strenglis said that "the tremendous skills and commitment of our current employees, coupled with the pro-business environment orchestrated by the MEDC, has made this expansion possible."

Kathy Methner, director of business development for the MMDC, said the expansion strengthens Unified Brands' presence in Isabella County.

"We are extremely pleased that Unified Brands has chosen to expand their facility in Isabella County," Methner said. "They have had a strong presence here for a lot of years and we are fortunate that the state, Broomfield Township and the MEDC were willing to partner with us at the Middle Michigan Development Corporation to help grow the company here in Michigan."

James C. Epolito, president and chief executive officer of the MEDC, said the expansion is the result of a group

effort.

"An excellent workforce, strong business climate and great teamwork helped win this project," he said. "Today's great news would not have been possible without the support of Broomfield Township and Middle Michigan Development Corporation, who partnered with us to make a strong business case to win these new jobs."

Dunn also credited Broomfield Township officials, citing the fact that local support is a must in obtaining MEGA support.

An MEDC economic analysis estimates that the expansion

will generate as many as 169 Michigan jobs in addition to the jobs created by Unified Brands.

The project is also expected to generate more than \$92 million in personal income for Michigan workers over the life of the tax credit, MEDC spokeswoman Bridget Beckman said in a press release Tuesday.

Unified Brands and its Groen, Randell and Avtec product lines produce cooking equipment, cook-chill production systems, custom fabrication, food service refrigeration, ventilation and air handling systems.