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DURBIN

Durbin visits successful business

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Elastec/American Marine CEO Donnie Wilson gives Sen. Dick Durbin (right) a tour of the company's Fairfield plant Wednesday, August 22, 2012. The Carmi-based company manufactures pollution recovery systems and employs about 140 people. (Becky Malkovich / The Southern)

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August 23, 2012 1:00 am • BY BECKY MALKOVICH, The Southern

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FAIRFIELD — Sen. Dick Durbin's quest to discover the secret to success in the business world led him to the small Wayne County town of Fairfield on Wednesday.

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Durbin, D-Springfield, visited one of the several Southern Illinois facilities owned by Carmi-based Elastec/American Marine, manufacturers of pollution recovery systems.

The company, which led the controlled burn operation during cleanup of the Gulf oil spill in 2010, is enjoying international success, with sales in more than 145 countries.

That success brought Durbin to Fairfield to tour the facility and speak to owners about how the company has thrived in the global marketplace.

"What I've tried to do in the last year is visit successful companies in Illinois, companies that have weathered the recession and are hiring and expanding. I want to find out if there's a commonality," he said. "You've got some pretty determined, talented people who are driving a business model, and Elastec is a classic illustration of that."

Durbin toured the Fairfield facility, which employs about 35 of the company's 140 employees. The plant turns out a variety of booms used in the recovery systems.

"It's incredible what they've done," Durbin said. "They've created a global competitor in a field where 80 percent of the product is exported overseas. It's an amazing story."

Elastec/American Marine CEO Donnie Wilson said the company is growing, with four manufacturing and warehousing facilities in Southern Illinois and another facility in Cocoa, Fla. Satellite sales offices are in Virginia, India, Turkey and China.

"What makes us different is the entrepreneurial spirit of probably not knowing what we're getting into until we get into it and it's too late to do anything different," he laughed. "We like to solve problems. We like to build teamwork and we like to accomplish things."

The company has a good local workforce, with a strong work ethic and the necessary skills, he told Durbin.

Other companies have trouble finding enough skilled workers to fill positions, Durbin said he has learned during his visits.

"We need to engage our community colleges and high schools to make sure the young people are developing the skills they need in today's market," Durbin said.

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