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LOCAL NEWS



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FOCUS ON TROY



**Troy-based
firm catches
Clinton's eye**

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Cover Story

Troy-developed product a big hit with jr. senator

Robert Cristo
The Record

ALBANY — A Troy-based business's device that makes it easy for senior citizens to hand-write and send e-mails without a computer caught the eye of Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., during Friday's conference on job growth at the state University at Albany.

Before giving the keynote speech for the New JobsNY Innovations & Opportunities in Telecommunications conference, Clinton spent some time perusing the kiosks of start-up technology companies, like Celery LLC, which developed a stand-alone e-mail machine that can send and retrieve e-mail.

"That's great ... I love this idea," said Clinton to Celery Chief Executive Officer Andrew Gibson, who moved from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute business Incubator to a new office on River Street in Troy last year.

Gibson says the product, which looks like a small fax machine, is geared towards an untapped market of more than 70 million seniors who tend to be intimidated by the ever-changing technology of today.

"It allows seniors to be included in e-mail communi-

ation without having to own any complex technology," said Gibson. "Your grandmother can actually handwrite a letter, slip it through the machine, and it will turn up on your e-mail and you can write her from your computer and send it back like a fax."

"We're going after the huge anti-tech market ... our philosophy is keep it simple and inexpensive," he added, saying the machine costs about \$120 plus \$12-per-month service fees. Clinton wanted to know how the product worked, what she can do to help make the product a success and when she can pick one up for her mother.

"Your grandmother can actually handwrite a letter, slip it through the machine, and it will turn up on your e-mail and you can write her from your computer and send it back like a fax."

"Sign me up," said Clinton. "I want to buy one for my mother. ... All she has to do is put the paper in."

Andrew Gibson
CEO of Celery LLC

Company leaders from Calleveryone.com say they can provide much cheaper phone service to private citizens and businesses, but it's hard to compete with multi-billion-dollar entities that can spend millions of dollars on advertising alone.

"For \$18 a month a household makes calls and get services, like call blocking, caller ID, conference call, music on hold and voice mail — all things most companies make you pay extra for," said Robert Kinnin,

AT A GLANCE ...

■ **WHAT HAPPENED:** A Troy startup firm has developed a simplified e-mail for the technology-challenged and displayed it at a telecommunications session Friday.

■ **WHAT'S NEXT:** The fax-like e-mail machine caught the eye of Sen. Hillary Clinton who asked the CEO of the firm what she could do to help it along.

COVER CREDIT:

Tom Killips — The Record

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton talks with area technology business people during a visit to the state University at Albany Friday. Looking on is Kermit Hall, president of UAlbany.



Tom Killips — The Record

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton chats with Andrew Gibson, CEO of Celery LLC, located on River Street in Troy. Looking on is Neil Grabowsky, a customer management officer with the new company that has developed a fax-like machine that will send e-mails for people who are not technology oriented, particularly senior citizens.

president of Calleveryone, located in Kingston.

"The only problem is the technology is so new to people they don't understand, and we also don't have the advertising dollars to compete with Time Warner and Vonage," he added.

Upstairs at UAlbany's Campus Center ballroom, hundreds of technology-based business executives gathered to hear Clinton speak about what an initiative (NewJobsNY) she helped create is doing to bring the companies and jobs of the 21st Century to upstate New York.

"We've been holding these meetings to showcase the cutting edge technology that is not just for the future but the here and now," said Clinton. "This

effort is driving economic growth and opening eyes and doors to what kind of investment is here."

Still, company leaders say they understand the reality that it's going to take time, money and plenty of imagination to transform upstate New York from a dying manufacturing hub to a true center of high tech innovation that can re-spark the economy.

Some also believe there's a disconnect these days between what's being written in the *Wall Street Journal* on how glowing the economy is and how that's effecting the pocket-books of middle class Americans.

On Friday, the Associated Press reported overall hiring

gains nationally of 243,000 in February, an unemployment rate of just 4.8 percent, but jobs losses in the manufacturing sector.

"I see a lot of hoopla and rhetoric, but to me it's a tougher business market than ever ... particularly in manufacturing," said Mark Sherwin, general manager of Composite Factory Inc, of Plattsburg. "It's supposed to trickle down, but I think there's a cork in the pipeline."

The Associated Press also reported Friday that, despite some of the brighter market prospects, consumer confidence dropped in early March due to people worrying over their personal finances and the economy's performance.

Celery[®]
...be included

Business Section March 11, 2006



LORI VAN BUREN/TIMES UNION

SEN. HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON speaks with Neil Grabowsky of Celery during a telecommunications conference Friday at UAlbany. The Troy firm has developed a device that allows people without computers to send and receive e-mail.

Clinton boosts telecom firms

Conference at UAlbany organized by nonprofit senator helped create

By LARRY RULISON
Business writer

ALBANY — U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton may have given Celery LLC of Troy — the developer of a machine designed to send and receive e-mail without owning a computer — the biggest endorsement of its young existence Friday.

Clinton was at the University at Albany for a telecommunications conference organized by a New York City nonprofit she helped create called NewJobsNY.

Before moderating a panel discussion about the telecom industry in front of roughly 300 local business and political leaders at a university ballroom, Clinton visited Celery and a small group of telecom firms exhibiting their products in a nearby room.

Clinton was fascinated by their device, which looks like a fax machine. It was the first time the company had shown its prototype to the public. The company expects to have the product to market within a month, selling for

Kevin O'Connor, CEO of Tech Valley Communications Inc., said the event was an opportunity for the region to showcase its seriousness about building advanced telecom infrastructure.

between \$100 and \$120. Clinton said it would be perfect for her mother.

"This is great, I love this idea," the senator told Andrew Gibson, Celery's CEO, and Neil Grabowsky, the firm's chief strategy officer. "This is so exciting, I'm serious. Sign me up."

Celery was just one of about 20 companies that were exhibitors at the conference, which was titled "Innovations & Opportunities in Telecommunications."

Robert Kinnin, president of a Kingston company named Callevryone.com, also met Clinton. He said he was attending the conference to bring more attention to voice over Internet protocol, otherwise known as VoIP, a telephone service that uses broadband Internet or cable TV connections instead of traditional copper telephone lines.

The technology is rapidly changing the way telephone companies sell their service, with companies like Vonage offering unlimited local and long-distance phone calls for \$24.99 a month and less.

Callevryone.com sells its service for \$7 a month, with calls anywhere in the United States costing an additional 3.9 cents per minute. He says that can be cheaper than traditional flat-fee VoIP plans, depending on how many calls people make.

"We think that people ought to save money," he said.

Kevin O'Connor, CEO of Tech Valley Communications Inc., an Albany-based telecom company, also was an exhibitor. He said the event was an opportunity for the region to showcase its seriousness about building advanced telecom infrastructure such as fiber optic and wireless Internet networks. Tech Valley was recently awarded a \$200,000 grant from the state to develop a wireless Internet network for the downtowns of Albany and Cohoes.

"This is a vital piece of the infrastructure of our state," O'Connor said. "Hopefully, businesses will see the benefits of what we are doing."

Please see **TELECOM B11** ▶

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TELECOM: Clinton backs industry

▶ CONTINUED FROM B10

Albany Mayor Jerry Jennings and UAlbany President Kermit Hall also attended the conference. Clinton moderated a panel discussion that included John Galanti, president of Hudson Valley DataNet of Newburgh; Bob Geiman, general partner of Polaris Venture Partners in Waltham, Mass.; Gary Grube, corporate vice president of technology at Motorola Labs, the research arm of Motorola Inc. based in Schaumburg, Ill., and William Kennard, a former chairman of the Federal Communications Commission who is now a managing director of Washington, D.C.-based The Carlyle Group.

A small group of war protesters gathered on the campus in anticipation of Clinton's visit, and at one point during the panel discussion, a man dressed in a business suit who had been standing near the ballroom's entrance shouted, "When are our troops coming back from Iraq?" Clinton politely declined to



LORI VAN BUREN/TIMES UNION

ROBERT KINNIN, president of Callevryone.com, speaks with Sen. Hillary Clinton at the Kingston company's booth on Friday.

discuss the issue, and the man was escorted out of the room without incident.

The Associated Press reported that the man was Steve Greenfield, one of her two anti-war opponents for the Democratic Senate nomination. Reached by

telephone at his home in New Paltz by the Times Union on Friday night, Greenfield confirmed this.

▶ Larry Rulison can be reached at 454-5504 or by e-mail at lrulison@timesunion.com.