Facility could employ 300



JOHN C. STEVENSON / St

Employees at the new St. Jude Medical manufacturing facility perform qua ity checks on the hybrid microelectronic circuits produced at the plant.

St. Jude Medical opens 2nd plant

Manufacturer already turning out components at new Liberty facility

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LIBERTY — Civic and political leaders came to Liberty Thursday morning to get their first peek at a new manufacturing facility that could employ as many as 300 people within the next five years.

St. Jude Medical Inc., which already has a plant in Liberty, celebrated the dedication of a new Liberty manufacturing facility, one that produces the tiny, electronic "brains" that control life-saving pacemakers.

U.S. Rep. Gresham Barrett, R-3rd District, stressed to the gathering, which included many of the 20 or so people the plant currently employs, how important the work there is.

"You save a life every three seconds of every day," he said, referring to the company's line of products, which includes heart valves, pacemak-

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St. Jude Medical's microelectronic circuits are used in pacemakers, like the one above.

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ers, implantable cardioverter defibrillators and heart-failure devices. "That's incredible."

Barrett also noted the economic importance of the plant for Pickens County.

"We need more companies like St. Jude," he said. "We need more public-private partnerships. If we're going to rebuild this country, it's going to have to be through the private sector."

The plant produced its first hybrid microelectronic component March 20 and is currently manufacturing 500 of the components a week. That number will grow to 2,500 a week by the end of the year, with the capacity to produce even greater quantities in the future, according to spokeswoman Amy Jo Meyer.

Dan Starks, president, chairman and CEO of St. Jude Medical, praised the Upstate work force, saying "the reason we're here is because of your quality as people, your quality as leaders," and that St. Jude Medical "will continue to expand our investment" in the area.

State Rep. B.R. Skelton, R-Six Mile, said St. Jude Medical is one example of the types of companies the area needs to attract.

"This is a high-tech business," he said. "It's the kind of economic development that represents high-paying jobs for our citizens."

Meyer declined to give a pay range for employees at the new plant but said wages at the new facility "are very competitive for the area and are in line with the wages" at the existing St. Jude facility, which manufactures capacitors for pacemakers.

State Sen. Larry Martin, R-Pickens, who also spoke at the plant's groundbreaking ceremony in 2006, said lawmakers need to continue to help businesses like St. Jude find homes in the Palmetto State.

"What we do in Columbia is try to enhance your ability to do business here," he said. "You have the tools, what we want to provide is the environment."

The Liberty plant becomes the second St. Jude Medical facility to manufacture the components, joining one in Scottsdale, Ariz.

The morning-long dedication ceremony included a tour of the facility, the dedication, and a luncheon.

The 60,000-square-foot plant is located adjacent to the first St. Jude Medical facility in the Pickens County Commerce Park.