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**GERMAN COMPANY ANNOUNCES
FIRST US MANUFACTURING LOCATION IN HICKORY**

HICKORY – Punker LLC, a European market leader in developing and producing fan wheels for the HVAC and exhaust industries, has chosen to locate their first US manufacturing operation in Hickory, Catawba County. The company will locate a manufacturing operation at 914 25th Street, SE in Hickory, investing \$4,584,000 and creating a minimum of 62 and up to 80 new jobs over the next 5 years. While the salaries will vary from position to position, the new jobs will have an overall average annual salary of over \$35,000, not including the additional benefits package. The location will allow the company to transfer all existing US business from Germany to the Hickory plant and to grow their market share in the United States.

The announcement was made possible, in part, by a \$78,100 grant from the One North Carolina Fund. Local incentives will be based on job creation and investment performance standards and will be considered in public session in coming weeks.

Punker, LLC, a subsidiary of Punker GmbH, is headquartered in Eckernförde, Germany and manufactures fan wheels and blowers for over 1,000 customers on every continent and for over 100 different market sectors. Punker manufactures a product line of cooling systems, roof fans, dust/smoke extraction and commercial ovens. Punker was founded in 1954 and currently employs over 300 people in Germany.

“We are looking forward to establishing our U.S. production facility in Hickory, North Carolina. The location is very pleasant and close to our customers,” said Dr. Henning Baehren, Chairman and CEO of Punker. “The state and county representatives did a great job presenting information about state and county and showing us around the city. They impressed us with their professionalism and attention to our needs. We are grateful we were able to work with them through the process of site selection and we are looking forward to continue to do so in the future.”

“We welcome Punker to our large family of German-owned companies in Catawba County,” said Kitty Barnes, Chair of the Catawba County Commissioners. “We thank Punker for choosing Hickory and Catawba County and appreciate that Punker’s automated process will offer another diversified manufacturing opportunity for our citizens.”

“Today we add another manufacturer to our long list of international industries,” commented Hickory Mayor Rudy Wright. “Punker is an industry leader in Europe and we look forward to watching them

grow and create new jobs in Hickory. Even more importantly, lives will be changed for a number of our hard-working citizens and their families.”

“We’ve been working with Punker since July as they scouted the southeast and Ohio for their first US manufacturing operation,” said Julie Pruett, Director of Recruitment for the Catawba County Economic Development Corporation. “Our workforce, transportation networks and low cost business environment makes Catawba County particularly attractive to manufacturing clients. Punker is going to be a great addition to our already established cluster of German-owned manufacturers in Catawba County.”

The first phase of hiring will begin in coming weeks. To apply for employment please contact the Catawba County office of the NC Department of Commerce Division of Employment Security, 828-466-5535, located at 3301 Hwy 70 SE, Newton, NC, 28658.

For more information about Punker, go to: <http://www.punker.com>.

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