

Charlotte.com

Tuesday, Jan 8, 2008

Posted on Tue, Jan. 08, 2008

**Transplants head south**

AMY BALDWIN

Goodbye, Michigan. Hello, North Carolina.

More people are bidding adieu to the Midwest and moving to the South, according to United Van Lines' 2007 Migration Study.

The South was the top migration spot last year, according to United, which has tracked the moving patterns of its clients annually since 1977. Last year, United analyzed nearly 213,000 interstate moves it handled. The results showed that North Carolina attracted a bigger share of newcomers and had fewer residents leave than any other state. Almost 62 percent of United's N.C.-related interstate moves were inbound.

For the second straight year, Michigan, struggling with job losses in the auto industry, captured the top spot among states people are leaving. Some 67.8 percent of United's interstate moves in that state were outbound.

For years, the South in general and Charlotte in particular have been increasingly popular destinations thanks to economic and job growth, lower costs of living compared with the Northeast or West Coast, and temperate climates.

"(It's) the fact that we are creating jobs," said Tony Crumbley, vice president of research for the Charlotte Chamber. "They are still losing jobs in those areas.

"And the quality of life, especially among the younger generation. They want a better quality of life and they need jobs."

Quality of life includes better weather, he said, adding, "They want to be away from shoveling snow."

South Carolina has been one of United's high inbound states for 14 years. In 2007, 57.8 percent of the company's South Carolina-related moves were going to the state.

Meanwhile, Charlotte's newcomer ranks have been swelling by about 80,000 a year.

Charlotte's newcomer trendsetters include Charlie Romines, who left his native Michigan for Charlotte in September 2005 after seeing too many people lose their jobs. He managed golf courses there and worried that he'd be out of work, too.

Soon after moving here, Romines, 31, started a newcomers-related business called Welcome Home Inc. that distributes welcome baskets to new residents in south Charlotte and Union County, the fastest-growing N.C. county.

"Working in the golf course business, people have to have expendable income. In the Midwest, even the ones who have jobs are scared of losing jobs," he said. "Rather than wait for something to happen, I decided to be proactive."

When Matt Hennessy, 29, and wife Laura, 30, were researching where in the South to move from their native Michigan, he said they were "blown away by the growth" in North Carolina, particularly Charlotte. They'd started off focusing on the South, in search of warmer weather.

In October 2006, they moved to Huntersville, where they bought their first house and Matt started his first chiropractic practice.

"Being a small business start-up, you obviously want to go where the growth is," he said. "We came down here to stay."

The Chamber's Crumbley periodically has staffers run reports on where the most inquiries from potential newcomers come from. Historically, New York and Florida have topped that list of prospective newcomers. In United's migration study, New York had more outbound moves -- 59.4 percent. Florida was practically evenly split between people coming and going -- 49.9 percent of them outbound.

The Western U.S. was also a popular destination spot for transplants last year. Second to North Carolina: Nevada, with 59.4 percent inbound.

**United Van Lines 2007 Migration Study: A Closer Look**

*The South was the most popular destination for transplants, while the Midwest saw the most residents leave. Here's a look which states in the South got the most newcomers and which states in the Midwest/Great Lakes lost the most residents.*

**The South:**

North Carolina, 61.6 percent of moves were inbound

Alabama, 57.9 percent inbound

South Carolina, 57.8 percent inbound

West Virginia, 55.7 percent inbound

Tennessee, 55.1 percent inbound

**Great Lakes Region:**

Michigan, 67.8 percent of moves were outbound

New York, 59.4 percent outbound

Illinois, 57.6 percent outbound

Ohio, 57 percent outbound

Indiana, 56.4 percent outbound

