

On a 'Mission to China'

Hugo businessmen to take part in overseas state delegation



PHOTO BY JENNIFER KERN

BROTHERS Joel and John Schwieters are among nearly 200 Minnesotans that will be traveling to China on Friday through a Minnesota-China Partnership.

JENNIFER KERN
STAFF WRITER

It has been dubbed the United States' largest state delegation to ever visit China, and this week the Minnesota-based "Mission to China" group will depart overseas.

The delegation consists of nearly 200 prominent Minnesotans that are visiting Asia through a Minnesota-China Partnership. The trip, which is scheduled from Nov. 11-19, is part of an ongoing effort to strengthen economic, government and business ties between the state and the country.

BUSINESS TRIP

Brothers John and Joel Schwieters are among those representing Minnesota on the trade mission. Both work in the building supply industry and both own companies located in Hugo.

John is the president/owner of JL Schwieters, which specializes in framing and supplying materials and labor for wood structure projects.

Schwieters Millwork & Finish Carpentry is owned by Joel, as he also serves as president. The company handles interior woodwork, prefinish options and installation.

The Schwieters brothers have operated their respective businesses for over two decades and in that time have developed business ties with China.

Earlier this year, the brothers applied to take part in the delegation, which is being led by Gov. Tim Pawlenty. He had met the Schwieters previously when Pawlenty had served as House Majority Leader in the Minnesota House of Representatives.

"The governor has been out to our facility," recalled Joel.

BUSY SCHEDULE

While in China, the brothers will tour manufacturing plants and have the opportunity to compare their companies' operations with leading Chinese

businesses.

Joel anticipates a busy schedule for the trip.

“We’re going to have an itinerary that we’re going to follow day and night,” he said.

The trade mission will be a whirlwind of activity for the entire delegation. A total of 93 meetings have been set up for various mission participants throughout the trip.

The trade mission will include visits to Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong.

STRENGTHENING TIES

From a business perspective, John and Joel Schwieter view the trade mission to be a smart move for Minnesota’s future.

“The Midwest has been a magnet for China to do business with,” explained Joel.

In the Schwieters’ line of work, China’s surging population numbers indicate a continuing growth trend in the housing industry.

“There is going to be a lot more need for housing around the world in the coming decades,” Joel mentioned.

They believe the trip will open doors for many new Minnesota-China business connections as well.

“It’s an extension of the global economy,” noted John.

Outside of garnering business ties, the brothers believe the trade mission will also provide culture and government relations lessons to everyone involved with the delegation.

And personally, the Schwieters hope to constantly learn while they are on the trip. Neither of the brothers has traveled to China before.

“It’s probably the best education we can get,” said Joel.

For more information on the “Mission to China” trip, visit www.minnesota-china.com