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Chilean tech execs shown LI possibilities

December 13, 2010 by JAMES BERNSTEIN / james.bernstein@newsday.com



The Chilean business executives smiled when Ray Donnelly, deputy director of the Long Island Forum for Technology, mentioned the dramatic rescue in October of 33 miners trapped for more than two months half a mile down in a mine.

The nail-biting release of the men has gained much favorable treatment for Chile, said Daniel Martínez, product manager for

the country's Trade Commission. "It showed the rest of the world that we can do well," Martínez said.

LIFT officials agree. On Thursday, LIFT invited Martínez and executives of two Chilean companies -- Surikat, a medical-device maker, and Wiseconn, an information-technology firm -- to the Morrelly Homeland Security Center in Bethpage. The agenda was to see whether the Chilean companies want to locate on Long Island.

Guillermo Valenzuela, sales manager for Wiseconn, a 6-year-old company with 22 employees, said Wiseconn is considering locations in California and Georgia, as well as Long Island.

Cristóbal Rivas, Wiseconn's chief executive, said a decision will be made next year.

Miguel San Martín, a business manager for Surikat, said the company is a young one with only a handful of employees, but would consider the New York area ideal because of the number of large medical facilities in the region. Surikat makes a disposable radiation shield. Manhattan rental rates, he said, would be too high.

LIFT is, partly at least, in the business of helping companies locate here, Donnelly said. The meeting Thursday was arranged "on short notice" after the Trade Commission found LIFT by searching out websites. There was a quick meeting in Manhattan Wednesday night between LIFT and Trade Commission officials.

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All the usual and appropriate diplomatic speeches were made at the Morrelly Center before a small gathering of business, political and civic officials. But, as usual, there were no guarantees the companies would select the Island as a place of business.

So what would it take to strike a deal?

The Chilean executives all looked at one another and smiled.

"That's a good question," said San Martín.

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