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NATIONAL AGENTS ALLIANCE TO HOLD FIRST CONFERENCE IN RALEIGH'S NEW CONVENTION CENTER

When the National Agents Alliance (NAA) saw media coverage in February of the grand opening celebration plans for Raleigh's new downtown convention center, the organization knew immediately it wanted to move its fall conference to the new facility.

The Burlington-based NAA just happened to be looking for a new site for its conference, which had been held in such cities as Dallas and Atlanta in past years. The Raleigh Convention Center was more than willing to accommodate the alliance. The NAA Leadership Conference, scheduled for Sept. 11-14, will be the first convention held in the new center. Because the conference is coming less than a week after the convention center's grand opening, the staff at the new facility had to move some grand opening events to accommodate the NAA event.

"We also had to be sure that our construction team was in sync with this early booking of the NAA Leadership Conference," said Laurie Okun, director of sales for the Raleigh Convention Center. "The process has been a great team effort. NAA came to us as a direct result of (the) media's positive coverage of our grand opening plans. Our sales team and construction team worked hard to ensure the validity of contracting such an early date to host such a large conference."

Also, Ms. Okun said, representatives at NAA "placed a lot of trust" in the convention center construction team and regular staff to have the 500,000-square-foot center ready so soon after its grand opening. Misty Thebeau, director of communications for NAA, said the Raleigh Convention Center "has met our expectations wonderfully."

"Andy Albright, president and CEO of NAA, and NAA staff are very proud to be the first to hold an event in the Raleigh Convention Center. NAA considers this to be history in the making!," said Ms. Thebeau, who pointed out that Mr. Albright is a 1986 graduate of North Carolina State University. "We think it's great for a North Carolina company to inaugurate a future North Carolina landmark. We are confident that the 2008

NAA Leadership Conference will benefit our community and give the Raleigh Convention Center and the City of Raleigh the support it needs to start things off with a bang."

Attendance for the NAA Leadership Conference is expected to be 1,600-1,800 people with about 1700 hotel nights. The conference's projected economic impact will be

about \$900,000, according to the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau (GRCVB).

NAA is the nation's top seller of mortgage protection insurance. It is one of the largest associations of agents and agencies of its kind, and last year was named the fastest growing organization in the Triad. With representatives in all 50 states, NAA's annual financial services sales are more than \$100 million.

NAA has two conferences annually. In addition to its Leadership Conference in September, the organization holds a conference every January. The Raleigh Convention Center is currently in final negotiations with NAA to host the January conference as well. Estimated attendance for this event is 2,500 with over 1800 hotel nights. The January conference's projected economic impact on the area would be \$1.2 million, according to the GRCVB.