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Jeff Gardner Says Windstream Well Positioned To Move Forward

By Mark Carter

11/3/2009 1:34:19 PM

Windstream CEO Jeff Gardner said Tuesday that his firm's acquisition of NuVox is a good strategic fit that advances its shift to business and broadband customers.

Gardner was the keynote speaker at the Commerce Arkansas Power Lunch, part of the second-annual business expo sponsored by Arkansas Business and the Little Rock Regional Chamber of Commerce and held all day Tuesday at the Statehouse Convention Center in downtown Little Rock.

Gardner's address came hours after [Windstream announced](#) that it had reached an agreement to acquire NuVox, a privately held local exchange carrier based in Greenville, S.C. Windstream is the publicly traded telecommunications firm based in Little Rock that spun off from Alltel in 2006. Alltel was acquired by Verizon earlier this year.

In addition to Gardner's address, Arkansas Business presented its 2009 CFO of the Year awards, presented by Crews & Associates and Legacy Capital Group. [Adam Kohler](#) of Welsco Inc., a North Little Rock welding supplies and industrial gases distributor, won the award in the small private-company category; [Greg Williams](#) of Nabholz Construction of Conway won in the large private-company category; and [Stephanie Smith](#) of Easter Seals in Little Rock was honored in the nonprofit category.

Windstream will add about 90,000 customers in 16 states with the NuVox acquisition, expanding its footprint in the Southeast and moving into Midwest markets. The \$643 million deal that is expected to be complete in early 2010 will bring roughly 1,700 employees under the Windstream umbrella.

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employees including 700 at its corporate headquarters near the intersection of Rodney Parham and Cantrell roads in west Little Rock.

BusinessWeek named Windstream No. 4 on its 2008 list of the 50 best performers. Once the NuVox deal is complete, Windstream will boast \$4 billion in revenue.

"We are really starting to become a serious player in the telecommunications industry in the southeast and the United States," Gardner said. "We are well positioned to succeed going forward."

Windstream maintains residential customers, but is shifting its focus to business and broadband. Once the deal is complete, Gardner said more than 50 percent of Windstream's revenue wil come from business and broadband.

NuVox is in the same kind of markets that Windstream is," he said. "The investment community likes this deal. It's a good strategic fit."

Commerce Arkansas continues throughout the day. Afternoon speakers include economist Kathy Deck with the University of Arkansas, Jon Harrison of Caterpillar and Greg Henderson of Arkansas Manufacturing Solutions.

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