

[back to article](#)



Printed on page B1

Firm to Print Lottery Tickets In Lakeland

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LAKELAND | Lakeland's next export: billions of lottery tickets.

GTech Printing Corp., an international producer of scratch-off lottery tickets, is expanding to Lakeland and will employ more than 200 people locally over the next few years, the company announced Monday.

Officials plan to spend more than \$45 million establishing a high-tech printing facility that will produce some 11 billion tickets each year, and expect to begin operating next spring.

"It's the most state-of-the-art lottery printing press ever imagined," said Ross Dalton, a senior vice president with GTech. "We'll be expanding quite a bit based on our volume over the next few years."

GTech Printing, based in Plant City, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Providence, R.I.-based GTech Corp., a lottery technology and services firm that makes software and ticket machines, among other products.

GTech will retain its Plant City facility and will relocate some existing staff members to Lakeland, Dalton said. The Lakeland plant will employ 100 people initially and will add more than 100 during the next three to five years.

GTech is currently readying its 100,000-square-foot facility at 4100 S. Frontage Road, Dalton said, and has awarded a "multi-million dollar" contract to Lakeland-based TriFactor to build part of the production line.

Steve Scruggs, director of the Lakeland Economic Development Council, said GTech qualified for local and state financial incentives (details were not available Monday) because the firm's salaries will average roughly \$40,000, exceeding local averages.

"We wanted to stay in the local area," Dalton said of the expansion. "Certainly Lakeland and Polk County got very aggressive with us to stay on this side of the county line."

Local efforts to woo GTech were assisted by the public-private group Enterprise Florida, a statewide economic development organization that has sought to develop Florida's information technology sector.

"Contributing to economic development and job creation in our state is a top priority, and we are accomplishing this through our partnership with GTech Printing Corporation," Gov. Charlie Crist said in a prepared statement.

GTech Printing's lottery customers include the states of Arizona, California, Oregon and New York, as well as the countries of Hungary, Morocco and Jamaica.

GTech and its parent company are subsidiaries of Italian firm Lottomatica, one of the world's largest commercial lottery operators with more than \$2 billion in annual revenue. Combined, the companies have more 5,900 employees in more than 50 countries.

Dalton said GTech will be posting local employment information on its Web site, www.gtech.com, under the "Careers" tab.

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This story appeared in print on page B1
