

VITAL IMAGES INC
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October 27, 2006

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Registration Statement No. 333-137237

PROSPECTUS

\$150,000,000

VITAL IMAGES, INC.

Common Stock

Preferred Stock

Debt Securities

Warrants

Units

We may offer and sell from time to time up to \$150,000,000 in the aggregate of shares of our common stock, shares of our preferred stock, debt securities, warrants to purchase shares of our common stock or preferred stock, warrants to purchase our debt securities or units consisting of any two or more of the foregoing securities.

We will provide specific terms of these securities in supplements to this prospectus for each offering of securities. Any prospectus supplement may also add, update or change information in this prospectus. This prospectus may not be used to offer or sell securities unless accompanied by a prospectus supplement.

Our common stock is listed on the Nasdaq Global Market under the symbol VTAL. On October 26, 2006, the last reported sale price of our common stock on the NASDAQ Global market was \$31.38 per share. Each prospectus supplement offering any securities other than our common stock will state whether those securities are listed or will be listed on any exchange, quotation system or market.

We may offer securities through underwriting syndicates managed or co-managed by one or more underwriters, dealers or agents or directly to purchasers. The prospectus supplement for each offering of securities will describe in detail the plan of distribution for that offering. For general information about the distribution of securities, see Plan of Distribution in this prospectus.

Unless the context otherwise requires, the terms we, our, us, the Company and Vital Images refer to Vital Images, Inc. and its consolidated subsidiaries.

This investment involves risk. See Risk Factors on page 2.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission nor any state securities commission has approved of anyone's investment in these securities or determined if this prospectus is truthful or complete. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The date of this prospectus is October 27, 2006.

ABOUT THIS PROSPECTUS

This prospectus is part of a registration statement that we filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, which we refer to as the SEC, utilizing a shelf registration process. Under this shelf process, we may, from time to time, sell any combination of the securities described in this prospectus in one or more offerings up to a total amount of \$150,000,000.

This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. Each time we offer securities, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will contain specific information about the terms of that offering. We will file each prospectus supplement with the SEC. The prospectus supplement may also add, update or change information contained in this prospectus. You should read both this prospectus and any prospectus supplement together with additional information described under the heading Where You Can Find More Information below.

You should rely only on the information contained in this prospectus and the accompanying prospectus supplement and information to which we have referred you, including the information incorporated by reference. We have not authorized anyone to provide you with different information. The information contained in this prospectus is complete and accurate only as of the date on the front cover, but the information may have changed since that date. You must not rely on any unauthorized information or representation. This prospectus is not an offer to sell, nor is it seeking an offer to buy, these securities in any jurisdiction where the offer or sale is not permitted.

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VITAL IMAGES, INC.

We are a leading provider of enterprise-wide advanced visualization and image analysis solutions for use by medical professionals in clinical analysis and therapy planning for medical conditions. We provide software, training, software maintenance, professional services and, on occasion, third-party hardware to our customers. Our technology rapidly transforms complex data generated by diagnostic imaging equipment into functional digital images that can be manipulated and analyzed using our specialized applications to better understand internal anatomy and pathology. We believe our solutions improve physician workflow and productivity, enhance the ability to make clinical decisions, and complement often significant capital investments in diagnostic imaging equipment made by our customers. Our software is compatible with equipment from all major manufacturers of diagnostic imaging equipment, such as computed tomography, or CT, magnetic resonance, or MR, and positron emission tomography, or PET, scanners, and can be integrated into picture archiving and communication systems, or PACS. Many hospitals use PACS to acquire, distribute and archive medical images and diagnostic reports, reducing the need for film and increasing reliance on advanced visualization solutions such as ours. We also offer a Web-based solution that provides physicians with anywhere, anytime access to medical images and visualization tools through any Internet-enabled computer.

*Vitre*a®[®], our flagship software product, is an easy-to-use, intuitive, high-speed volume rendering technology that creates interactive two-dimensional, or 2D, three-dimensional, or 3D, and four-dimensional, or 4D, images from information generated by standard CT, MR or PET scanners. *Vitre*a is most commonly deployed on standalone workstations, using standard computer hardware, and provides advanced visualization for radiological, cardiac, oncological and surgical applications. *Vitre*a renders vibrant, clear, color images at high speeds and enables users to interactively navigate within these images to visualize, measure and understand internal structures and disease conditions. We believe our user interfaces are intuitive, and they are specifically configured to assist physicians in optimizing their clinical workflow.

ViTALConnect®[®], our Web-based solution, allows multiple physicians to collaboratively use enterprise-wide advanced visualization in their medical practices. It provides radiologists and referring physicians anywhere, anytime access to interactive 2D, 3D and 4D medical images and the ability to measure, rotate, analyze and segment those images.

We were founded and incorporated in Iowa in September 1988, and we re-incorporated in Minnesota in March 1997. From May 24, 1994 through May 11, 1997, we were a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bio-Vascular, Inc., which is now known as Synovis Life Technologies, Inc. Our principal executive offices are located at 5850 Opus Parkway, Suite 300, Minnetonka, Minnesota 55343, telephone (952) 487-9500, facsimile (952) 487-9510, e-mail info@vitalimages.com. Our website is at <http://www.vitalimages.com>. The information found on or accessible through our website is not part of this prospectus.

RISK FACTORS

An investment in our common stock involves a high degree of risk and should be considered only by those persons who are able to afford a loss of their entire investment. There are important factors that could cause our actual results, level of activity, performance or achievements to differ materially from the results, level of activity, performance or achievements expressed or implied by any forward-looking statement. In particular, you should consider the numerous risks outlined under *Risk Factors* in our Annual Report on Form 10-K filed with the SEC on March 16, 2006 and in our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q filed with the SEC on May 10, 2006, which are incorporated into this prospectus by reference.

Those risk factors are not exhaustive. Other sections of this prospectus, any prospectus supplement and the documents incorporated by reference may include additional factors which could adversely impact our business and financial performance. Moreover, we operate in a very competitive and rapidly changing environment. New risk factors emerge from time to time, and it is not possible for our management to predict all risk factors, nor can we assess the impact of all factors on our business or the extent to which any factor, or combination of factors, may cause actual results to differ materially from those contained in any forward-looking statements. In evaluating our business, prospective investors should carefully consider the risk factors in addition to the other information included or incorporated by reference in this prospectus.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING FORWARD LOOKING STATEMENTS

All statements contained in this prospectus and in the documents we incorporate by reference that are not statements of historical fact are forward looking statements. Sometimes these statements contain words like believe, belief, plan, anticipate, expect, estimate, may, predicts or similar terms, which are intended to identify forward looking statements. Forward looking statements involve known or unknown uncertainties and other factors that could cause actual results to be materially different from historical results or from any future results expressed or implied by the forward looking statements. The Risk Factors section of this prospectus, on page 2, summarizes the material risks and uncertainties that could cause our actual results, performance or achievements to differ materially from what we have said in this prospectus and in the documents we incorporate by reference. The risk factors apply to all of our forward looking statements. Given these uncertainties, you should not place undue reliance on these forward looking statements, which speak only as of the date of this prospectus. We will not revise these forward looking statements to reflect events or circumstances after the date of this prospectus or to reflect the occurrence of unanticipated events.

INFORMATION WE HAVE INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE

The SEC allows us to incorporate by reference the information we file with the SEC, which means that we can disclose important information to you by referring you to those documents. The information incorporated by reference is considered to be part of this prospectus, and information that we file with the SEC after the date of this prospectus will automatically update and may supersede this information. We are incorporating by reference into this prospectus the documents listed below:

- The description of our common stock contained in our Registration Statement on Form 10, as amended;
- Our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2005;
- Our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended March 31, 2006;
- Our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the quarter ended June 30, 2006;
- Our Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q/A (Amendment No. 1) for the quarter ended June 30, 2006; and
- Our Current Reports on Form 8-K filed on February 28, 2006, March 10, 2006, April 21, 2006, April 27, 2006, May 2, 2006, May 9, 2006, June 13, 2006, August 1, 2006 and September 18, 2006.

All documents we file under Section 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act after the date of this prospectus and before the termination of the offering are also incorporated by reference and are an important part of this prospectus. Any statement contained in a document incorporated by reference in this prospectus shall be modified or superseded for purposes of this prospectus to the extent that a statement contained in this prospectus or in any other subsequently filed document which is incorporated by reference modifies or supersedes such statement.

We will provide without charge to each person to whom this prospectus is delivered, upon written or oral request, a copy of any or all documents that have been or may be incorporated by reference in the prospectus (other than exhibits to such documents that are not specifically incorporated by reference into such documents). Your requests should be directed to our Chief Financial Officer at our principal executive offices at:

5850 Opus Parkway, Suite 300
Minnetonka, Minnesota 55343
Telephone number: (952) 487-9500

WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION

We are subject to the reporting requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or the Exchange Act, and we file annual, quarterly and special reports, proxy statements and other information with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or the SEC. You may read and copy the reports, proxy statements and other information that we file at the Commission's public reference facilities at 100 F Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20549 at prescribed rates. Our filings are also available free of charge at the SEC's website at <http://www.sec.gov>. You may also obtain copies of such materials by calling the SEC at 1-800-SEC-0330, or by mail from the Public Reference Room at 100 F Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20549.

This prospectus is part of a Registration Statement on Form S-3, or the Registration Statement, we filed with the SEC under the Securities Act of 1933. This prospectus does not contain all of the information set forth in the Registration Statement. For more information about us and our common stock, you should read the Registration Statement and its exhibits and schedules. Copies of the Registration Statement, including its exhibits, may be inspected without charge at the offices of the SEC or obtained at prescribed rates from the Public Reference Section of the SEC at 100 F Street NE, Washington, D.C. 20549. Copies of the Registration Statement may be obtained without charge via the SEC's website.

RATIO OF EARNINGS TO FIXED CHARGES

Our ratio of earnings to fixed charges for each of the five most recently completed fiscal years and any required interim periods will each be specified in a prospectus supplement or in a document we file with the SEC and incorporate by reference pertaining to the issuance, if any, by us of debt securities in the future.

USE OF PROCEEDS

Unless otherwise indicated in the applicable prospectus supplement, we anticipate that the net proceeds, if any, from the sale of the securities that we may offer under this prospectus and any accompanying prospectus supplement will be used for general corporate purposes, including expanding our sales and marketing and customer service and training efforts internationally and investing in our product development resources. We also intend to use the net proceeds for the acquisition of or investment in businesses, products and technologies that are complementary to our current products, can enhance our market coverage or technical capabilities, or offer growth opportunities.

We have not yet determined the amount or timing of the expenditures for each of the categories listed above, and these expenditures may vary significantly depending on a variety of factors. As a result, we will retain broad discretion in the allocation and use of the net proceeds of this offering.

Pending application of the net proceeds for the purposes described above, we intend to invest the net proceeds in investment-grade, interest-bearing securities. We cannot predict whether the net proceeds will yield a favorable return.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SECURITIES WE MAY OFFER

We may offer shares of our common stock and preferred stock, various series of debt securities, units or warrants to purchase any of such securities, with a total value of up to \$150,000,000, from time to time under this prospectus at prices and on terms to be determined by market conditions at the time of the offering. This prospectus provides you with a general description of the securities we may offer. In connection with each offering, we will provide a prospectus supplement that will describe the specific amounts, prices and terms of the securities being offered.

The prospectus supplement also may add, update or change information contained in this prospectus or in documents we have incorporated by reference. However, no prospectus supplement will offer a security that is not included in the registration statement of which this prospectus is a part at the time of its effectiveness or offer a security of a type that is not described in this prospectus.

This prospectus may not be used to consummate a sale of securities unless it is accompanied by a prospectus supplement.

DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK

As of the date of this prospectus, we are authorized to issue up to 25,000,000 shares of capital stock that is divided into two classes designated as common stock and preferred stock. Of such shares authorized, 20,000,000 shares are designated as common stock, and 5,000,000 shares are designated as preferred stock.

The following is a summary of the material terms of our capital stock and certain provisions of our Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. It also summarizes some relevant provisions of the Minnesota Business Corporation Act, which we sometimes refer to as Minnesota law. Because the terms of our Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, and Minnesota law, are more detailed than the general information provided below, you should rely on only the actual provisions of those documents and Minnesota law. If you would like to read those documents, they are on file with the SEC, as described under the heading **Where You Can Find More Information** in this prospectus.

Common Stock

As of August 31, 2006, there were 13,276,249 shares of common stock outstanding that were held of record by approximately 630 shareholders of record. The holders of common stock are entitled to one vote for each share held of record on all matters submitted to a vote of the shareholders. Our shareholders do not have cumulative voting rights in the election of directors. Accordingly, holders of a majority of the shares voting are able to elect all of the directors. Subject to preferences that may be granted to any then outstanding preferred stock, holders of common stock are entitled to receive ratably only those dividends as may be declared by the board of directors out of funds legally available therefor, as well as any distributions to the shareholders. In the event of our liquidation, dissolution or winding up, holders of common stock are entitled to share ratably in all of our assets remaining after we pay our liabilities and distribute the liquidation preference of any then outstanding shares of preferred stock. Holders of common stock have no preemptive or other subscription or conversion rights. There are no redemption or sinking fund provisions applicable to the common stock.

Preferred Stock

Our board of directors has the authority, without further action by the shareholders, to issue up to 5,000,000 shares of preferred stock in one or more series and to fix the rights, preferences, privileges and restrictions thereof. These rights, preferences and privileges include dividend rights, conversion rights, voting rights, terms of redemption, liquidation preferences, sinking fund terms and the number of shares

constituting any series or the designation of such series, any or all of which may be greater than the rights of common stock. The issuance of preferred stock could adversely affect the voting power of holders of common stock and the likelihood that such holders will receive dividend payments and payments upon liquidation. In addition, the issuance of preferred stock could have the effect of delaying, deferring or preventing a change in control of Vital Images.

Shareholder Rights Plan, Anti-Takeover Provisions of Minnesota Law and Charter Provisions

Shareholder Rights Plan. We have adopted a shareholder rights plan designed to protect us against unsolicited attempts to acquire our company. The plan is described in Note 6 of the Notes to Consolidated Financial Statements incorporated by reference in this prospectus. The plan may deter or discourage takeover attempts and other changes in control that are not approved by our board of directors, and it may have a depressive effect on any market for our common stock. In addition, the rights plan may have the effect of permitting our current directors to retain their positions and place them in a better position to resist changes that shareholders may wish to make if they are dissatisfied with the conduct of our business.

Anti-Takeover Provisions. The provisions of Minnesota law described below could have an anti-takeover effect. These provisions are intended to provide management with flexibility and to enhance the likelihood of continuity and stability in the composition of our board of directors and in the policies formulated by our board and to discourage an unsolicited takeover of the company, if the board determines that such a takeover is not in our best interests or in the best interests of our shareholders. However, these provisions could have the effect of discouraging attempts to acquire us, which could deprive our shareholders of opportunities to sell their shares of common stock at prices higher than prevailing market prices.

Section 302A.671 of the Minnesota Business Corporation Act applies, with certain exceptions, to any acquisition of our voting stock from a person other than the company and other than in connection with certain mergers and exchanges to which the company is a party resulting in the acquiring person owning 20% or more of our voting stock then outstanding. Section 302A.671 requires approval of any such acquisitions by a majority vote of our shareholders before its consummation. In general, shares acquired in the absence of such approval are denied voting rights and are redeemable by us at their then fair market value within 30 days after the acquiring person has failed to give a timely information statement to us or the date the shareholders voted not to grant voting rights to the acquiring person's shares.

Section 302A.673 of the Minnesota Business Corporation Act generally prohibits us or any of our subsidiaries from entering into any transaction with a shareholder under which the shareholder purchases 10% or more of our voting shares (an interested shareholder) within four years following the date the person became an interested shareholder, unless the transaction is approved by a committee of all of the disinterested members of our board of directors serving as such before the interested shareholder acquires the shares.

Charter Provisions. In addition, the following provisions of our Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws may be deemed to have an anti-takeover effect and may delay or prevent a tender offer or takeover attempt that a shareholder might consider in its best interest, including those attempts that might result in a premium over the market price for the shares held by shareholders.

- *Cumulative Voting.* Our Articles of Incorporation expressly deny shareholders the right to cumulative voting in the election of directors.
- *Authorized But Unissued Shares.* Our authorized but unissued shares of common stock and preferred stock are available for future issuance without shareholder approval. These additional shares may be used for a variety of corporate purposes, including future public offerings to raise additional capital, corporate acquisitions and employee benefit plans. The existence of authorized

but unissued shares of common stock and preferred stock could render more difficult or discourage an attempt to obtain control of Vital Images by means of a proxy contest, tender offer, merger or otherwise.

Nasdaq Global Market Listing

Our common stock is listed on the Nasdaq Global Market under the symbol VTAL .

Transfer Agent And Registrar

The transfer agent and registrar for our common stock is American Stock Transfer & Trust. Its address is 59 Maiden Lane, Plaza Level, New York, NY, 10038, and its telephone number is (800) 937-5449.

DESCRIPTION OF DEBT SECURITIES

This prospectus describes certain general terms and provisions of our debt securities. When we offer to sell a particular series of debt securities, we will describe the specific terms of the series in a supplement to this prospectus. The following description of debt securities will apply to the debt securities offered by this prospectus unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement. The applicable prospectus supplement for a particular series of debt securities may specify different or additional terms.

We may offer under this prospectus up to \$150,000,000 aggregate principal amount of secured or unsecured debt securities, or if debt securities are issued at a discount, or in a foreign currency or composite currency, such principal amount as may be sold for an initial public offering price of up to \$150,000,000. The debt securities may be either senior debt securities, senior subordinated debt securities or subordinated debt securities.

The debt securities offered hereby will be issued under an indenture between us and a trustee. We have filed a copy of the form indenture as an exhibit to the registration statement and you should read the indenture for provisions that may be important to you. We have summarized select portions of the indenture below. The summary is not complete.

General

The terms of each series of debt securities will be established by or pursuant to a resolution of our board of directors and detailed or determined in the manner provided in a board of directors' resolution, an officers' certificate or by a supplemental indenture. The particular terms of each series of debt securities will be described in a prospectus supplement relating to the series, including any pricing supplement.

We can issue an unlimited amount of debt securities under the indenture that may be in one or more series with the same or various maturities, at par, at a premium or at a discount. We will set forth in a prospectus supplement (including any pricing supplement) relating to any series of debt securities being offered, the initial offering price, the aggregate principal amount and the following terms of the debt securities:

- the title of the debt securities;
- the price or prices (expressed as a percentage of the aggregate principal amount) at which we will sell the debt securities;
- any limit on the aggregate principal amount of the debt securities;
- the date or dates on which we will pay the principal on the debt securities;

- the rate or rates (which may be fixed or variable) per annum or the method used to determine the rate or rates (including any commodity, commodity index, stock exchange index or financial index) at which the debt securities will bear interest, the date or dates from which interest will accrue, the date or dates on which interest will commence and be payable and any regular record date for the interest payable on any interest payment date;
- the place or places where the principal of, premium, and interest on the debt securities will be payable;
- the terms and conditions upon which we may redeem the debt securities;
- any obligation we have to redeem or purchase the debt securities pursuant to any sinking fund or analogous provisions or at the option of a holder of debt securities;
- the dates on which and the price or prices at which we will repurchase the debt securities at the option of the holders of debt securities and other detailed terms and provisions of these repurchase obligations;
- the denominations in which the debt securities will be issued, if other than denominations of \$1,000 and any integral multiple thereof;
- whether the debt securities will be issued in the form of certificated debt securities or global debt securities;
- the portion of principal amount of the debt securities payable upon declaration of acceleration of the maturity date, if other than the principal amount;
- the currency of denomination of the debt securities;
- the designation of the currency, currencies or currency units in which payment of principal of, premium and interest on the debt securities will be made;
- if payments of principal of, premium or interest on the debt securities will be made in one or more currencies or currency units other than that or those in which the debt securities are denominated, the manner in which the exchange rate with respect to these payments will be determined;
- the manner in which the amounts of payment of principal of, premium or interest on the debt securities will be determined, if these amounts may be determined by reference to an index based on a currency or currencies other than that in which the debt securities are denominated or designated to be payable or by reference to a commodity, commodity index, stock exchange index or financial index;
- any provisions relating to any security provided for the debt securities;
- any addition to or change in the events of default described in this prospectus or in the indenture with respect to the debt securities and any change in the acceleration provisions described in this prospectus or in the indenture with respect to the debt securities;
- any addition to or change in the covenants described in this prospectus or in the indenture with respect to the debt securities;
- any other terms of the debt securities, which may modify or delete any provision of the indenture as it applies to that series; and

- any depositaries, interest rate calculation agents, exchange rate calculation agents or other agents with respect to the debt securities.

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We may issue debt securities that are exchangeable and/or convertible into shares of our common stock. The terms, if any, on which the debt securities may be exchanged for and/or converted will be set forth in the applicable prospectus supplement. Such terms may include provisions for conversion, either mandatory, at the option of the holder or at our option, in which case the number of shares of common stock or other securities to be received by the holders of debt securities would be calculated as of a time and in the manner stated in the prospectus supplement.

We may issue debt securities that provide for an amount less than their stated principal amount to be due and payable upon declaration of acceleration of their maturity pursuant to the terms of the indenture. We will provide you with information on the federal income tax considerations and other special considerations applicable to any of these debt securities in the applicable prospectus supplement.

If we denominate the purchase price of any of the debt securities in a foreign currency or currencies or a foreign currency unit or units, or if the principal of and any premium and interest on any series of debt securities is payable in a foreign currency or currencies or a foreign currency unit or units, we will provide you with information on the restrictions, elections, general tax considerations, specific terms and other information with respect to that issue of debt securities and such foreign currency or currencies or foreign currency unit or units in the applicable prospectus supplement.

Payment of Interest and Exchange

Each debt security will be represented by either one or more global securities registered in the name of The Depository Trust Company, as Depository, or a nominee of the Depository (we will refer to any debt security represented by a global debt security as a book-entry debt security), or a certificate issued in definitive registered form (we will refer to any debt security represented by a certificated security as a certificated debt security), as described in the applicable prospectus supplement. Except as described under Global Debt Securities and Book-Entry System below, book-entry debt securities will not be issuable in certificated form.

Certificated Debt Securities. You may transfer or exchange certificated debt securities at the trustee's office or paying agencies in accordance with the terms of the indenture. No service charge will be made for any transfer or exchange of certificated debt securities, but we may require payment of a sum sufficient to cover any tax or other governmental charge payable in connection with a transfer or exchange.

You may transfer certificated debt securities and the right to receive the principal of, premium and interest on certificated debt securities only by surrendering the old certificate representing those certificated debt securities and either we or the trustee will reissue the old certificate to the new holder or we or the trustee will issue a new certificate to the new holder.

Global Debt Securities and Book-Entry System. Each global debt security representing book-entry debt securities will be deposited with, or on behalf of, the Depository, and registered in the name of the Depository or a nominee of the Depository.

The Depository has indicated it intends to follow the following procedures with respect to book-entry debt securities.

Ownership of beneficial interests in book-entry debt securities will be limited to persons that have accounts with the Depository for the related global debt security, whom we refer to as participants, or persons that may hold interests through participants. Upon the issuance of a global debt security, the Depository will credit, on its book-entry registration and transfer system, the participants' accounts with the respective principal amounts of the book-entry debt securities represented by the global debt security beneficially owned by such participants. The accounts to be credited will be designated by any dealers, underwriters or agents participating in the distribution of the book-entry debt securities. Ownership of book-entry debt securities will be shown on, and the transfer of the ownership interests will be effected

only through, records maintained by the Depository for the related global debt security (with respect to interests of participants) and on the records of participants (with respect to interests of persons holding through participants). The laws of some states may require that certain purchasers of securities take physical delivery of such securities in definitive form. These laws may impair the ability to own, transfer or pledge beneficial interests in book-entry debt securities.

So long as the Depository for a global debt security, or its nominee, is the registered owner of that global debt security, the Depository or its nominee, as the case may be, will be considered the sole owner or holder of the book-entry debt securities represented by such global debt security for all purposes under the indenture. Except as described herein, beneficial owners of book-entry debt securities will not be entitled to have securities registered in their names, will not receive or be entitled to receive physical delivery of a certificate in definitive form representing securities and will not be considered the owners or holders of those securities under the indenture. Accordingly, to exercise any rights of a holder under the indenture, each person beneficially owning book-entry debt securities must rely on the procedures of the Depository for the related global debt security and, if that person is not a participant, on the procedures of the participant through which that person owns its interest.

We understand, however, that under existing industry practice, the Depository will authorize the persons on whose behalf it holds a global debt security to exercise certain rights of holders of debt securities, and the indenture provides that we, the trustee and our respective agents will treat as the holder of a debt security the persons specified in a written statement of the Depository with respect to that global debt security for purposes of obtaining any consents or directions required to be given by holders of the debt securities pursuant to the indenture.

We will make payments of principal of, and premium and interest on book-entry debt securities to the Depository or its nominee, as the case may be, as the registered holder of the related global debt security. We, the trustee and any other agent of ours or agent of the trustee will not have any responsibility or liability for any aspect of the records relating to or payments made on account of beneficial ownership interests in a global debt security or for maintaining, supervising or reviewing any records relating to such beneficial ownership interests.

We expect that the Depository, upon receipt of any payment of principal of, premium or interest on a global debt security, will immediately credit participants' accounts with payments in amounts proportionate to the respective amounts of book-entry debt securities held by each participant as shown on the records of the Depository. We also expect that payments by participants to owners of beneficial interests in book-entry debt securities held through those participants will be governed by standing customer instructions and customary practices, as is now the case with the securities held for the accounts of customers in bearer form or registered in street name, and will be the responsibility of those participants.

We will issue certificated debt securities in exchange for each global debt security if the Depository is at any time unwilling or unable to continue as Depository or ceases to be a clearing agency registered under the Exchange Act, and a successor Depository registered as a clearing agency under the Exchange Act is not appointed by us within 90 days. In addition, we may at any time and in our sole discretion determine not to have any of the book-entry debt securities of any series represented by one or more global debt securities and, in that event, we will issue certificated debt securities in exchange for the global debt securities of that series. Global debt securities will also be exchangeable by the holders for certificated debt securities if an event of default with respect to the book-entry debt securities represented by those global debt securities has occurred and is continuing. Any certificated debt securities issued in exchange for a global debt security will be registered in such name or names as the Depository shall instruct the trustee. We expect that such instructions will be based upon directions received by the Depository from participants with respect to ownership of book-entry debt securities relating to such global debt security.

We have obtained the foregoing information in this section concerning the Depositary and the Depositary's book-entry system from sources we believe to be reliable. We take no responsibility for the Depositary's performance of its obligations under the rules and regulations governing its operations.

No Protection in the Event of a Change in Control

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, the debt securities will not contain any provisions which may afford holders of the debt securities protection in the event we have a change in control or in the event of a highly leveraged transaction (whether or not such transaction results in a change in control).

Covenants

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, the debt securities will not contain any restrictive covenants, including covenants restricting us or any of our subsidiaries from incurring, issuing, assuming or guarantying any indebtedness secured by a lien on any of our or our subsidiaries' property or capital stock, or restricting us or any of our subsidiaries from entering into any sale and leaseback transactions.

Consolidation, Merger and Sale of Assets

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, we may not consolidate with or merge into, or convey, transfer or lease all or substantially all of our properties and assets to, any person (a successor person), and we may not permit any person to merge into, or convey, transfer or lease its properties and assets substantially as an entirety to us, unless:

- the successor person is a corporation, partnership, trust or other entity organized and validly existing under the laws of any United States domestic jurisdiction and expressly assumes our obligations on the debt securities and under the indenture;
- immediately after giving effect to the transaction, no event of default, and no event which, after notice or lapse of time, or both, would become an event of default, shall have occurred and be continuing under the indenture; and
- certain other conditions are met.

Events of Default

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, event of default means, with respect to any series of debt securities, any of the following:

- default in the payment of any interest upon any debt security of that series when it becomes due and payable, and continuance of that default for a period of 30 days (unless the entire amount of such payment is deposited by us with the trustee or with a paying agent before the expiration of the 30-day period);
- default in the payment of principal of or premium on any debt security of that series when due and payable;
- default in the deposit of any sinking fund payment, when and as due in respect of any debt security of that series;
- default in the performance or breach of any other covenant or warranty by us in the indenture (other than a covenant or warranty that has been included in the indenture solely for the benefit of a series of debt securities other than that series), which default continues uncured for a period of

60 days after we receive written notice from the trustee or we and the trustee receive written notice from the holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series as provided in the indenture;

- certain events of our bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization; and
- any other event of default provided with respect to debt securities of that series that is described in the applicable prospectus supplement accompanying this prospectus.

No event of default with respect to a particular series of debt securities (except as to certain events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization) necessarily constitutes an event of default with respect to any other series of debt securities. An event of default may also be an event of default under our bank credit agreements or other debt securities in existence from time to time and under certain guaranties by us of any subsidiary indebtedness. In addition, certain events of default or an acceleration under the indenture may also be an event of default under some of our other indebtedness outstanding from time to time.

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, if an event of default with respect to debt securities of any series at the time outstanding occurs and is continuing (other than certain events of our bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization), then the trustee or the holders of not less than 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series may, by written notice to us (and to the trustee if given by the holders), declare to be due and payable immediately the principal (or, if the debt securities of that series are discount securities, that portion of the principal amount as may be specified in the terms of that series) of and accrued and unpaid interest, if any, of all debt securities of that series. In the case of an event of default resulting from certain events of bankruptcy, insolvency or reorganization, the principal (or such specified amount) of and accrued and unpaid interest, if any, of all outstanding debt securities will become and be immediately due and payable without any declaration or other act by the trustee or any holder of outstanding debt securities. At any time after a declaration of acceleration with respect to debt securities of any series has been made, but before the trustee has obtained a judgment or decree for payment of the money due, the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series may, subject to our having paid or deposited with the trustee a sum sufficient to pay overdue interest and principal which has become due other than by acceleration and certain other conditions, rescind and annul such acceleration if all events of default, other than the non-payment of accelerated principal and interest, if any, with respect to debt securities of that series, have been cured or waived as provided in the indenture. For information as to waiver of defaults, see the discussion under the heading *Modification and Waiver* in this prospectus. We refer you to the prospectus supplement relating to any series of debt securities that are discount securities for the particular provisions relating to acceleration of a portion of the principal amount of the discount securities upon the occurrence of an event of default and the continuation of an event of default.

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, the indenture will provide that the trustee will be under no obligation to exercise any of its rights or powers under the indenture at the request of any holder of outstanding debt securities, unless the trustee receives indemnity satisfactory to it against any loss, liability or expense. Subject to certain rights of the trustee, the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series shall have the right to direct the time, method and place of conducting any proceeding for any remedy available to the trustee or exercising any trust or power conferred on the trustee with respect to the debt securities of that series.

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, no holder of any debt security of any series will have any right to institute any proceeding, judicial or otherwise, with respect to the indenture or for the appointment of a receiver or trustee, or for any remedy under the indenture, unless:

- that holder has previously given to the trustee written notice of a continuing event of default with respect to debt securities of that series; and

- the holders of at least 25% in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series have made written request, and offered reasonable indemnity, to the trustee to institute such proceeding as trustee, and the trustee shall not have received from the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of that series a direction inconsistent with that request and has failed to institute the proceeding within 60 days.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the holder of any debt security will have an absolute and unconditional right to receive payment of the principal of, premium and any interest on that debt security on or after the due dates expressed in that debt security and to institute suit for the enforcement of payment.

The indenture requires us, within 90 days after the end of our fiscal year, to furnish to the trustee a certificate as to compliance with the indenture. The indenture provides that the trustee may withhold notice to the holders of debt securities of any series of any default or event of default (except in payment on any debt securities of that series) with respect to debt securities of that series if it in good faith determines that withholding notice is in the interest of the holders of those debt securities.

Modification and Waiver

Unless we provide otherwise in the applicable prospectus supplement, we and the trustee may modify and amend the indenture with the consent of the holders of at least a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of each series affected by the modifications or amendments. We and the trustee may not make any modification or amendment without the consent of the holder of each affected debt security then outstanding if that amendment will:

- change the amount of debt securities whose holders must consent to an amendment or waiver;
- reduce the rate of or extend the time for payment of interest (including default interest) on any debt security;
- reduce the principal of or premium on or change the fixed maturity of any debt security or reduce the amount of, or postpone the date fixed for, the payment of any sinking fund or analogous obligation with respect to any series of debt securities;
- reduce the principal amount of discount securities payable upon acceleration of maturity;
- waive a default in the payment of the principal of, premium or interest on any debt security (except a rescission of acceleration of the debt securities of any series by the holders of at least a majority in aggregate principal amount of the then outstanding debt securities of that series and a waiver of the payment default that resulted from that acceleration);
- make the principal of or premium or interest on any debt security payable in currency other than that stated in the debt security;
- make any change to certain provisions of the indenture relating to, among other things, the right of holders of debt securities to receive payment of the principal of, premium and interest on those debt securities, the right of holders to institute suit for the enforcement of any payment or the right of holders to waive past defaults or to amend the limitations described in this bullet point; or
- waive a redemption payment with respect to any debt security or change any of the provisions with respect to the redemption of any debt securities.

Except for certain specified provisions, the holders of at least a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series may, on behalf of the holders of all debt securities of that series, waive our compliance with provisions of the indenture. The holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series may, on behalf of the holders of all the debt securities of that series, waive any past default under the indenture with respect to that series and its consequences, except a

default in the payment of the principal of, premium or any interest on any debt security of that series; provided, however, that the holders of a majority in principal amount of the outstanding debt securities of any series may rescind an acceleration and its consequences, including any related payment default that resulted from the acceleration.

Defeasance of Debt Securities and Certain Covenants in Certain Circumstances

Legal Defeasance. The indenture provides that, unless the terms of the applicable series of debt securities provide otherwise, we may be discharged from any and all obligations in respect of the debt securities of any series (except for certain obligations to register the transfer or exchange of debt securities of the series, to replace stolen, lost or mutilated debt securities of the series, and to maintain paying agencies and certain provisions relating to the treatment of funds held by paying agents). We will be so discharged upon the deposit with the trustee, in trust, of money and/or United States government obligations or, in the case of debt securities denominated in a single currency other than United States dollars, foreign government obligations (as described at the end of this section), that, through the payment of interest and principal in accordance with their terms, will provide money in an amount sufficient in the opinion of a nationally recognized firm of independent public accountants to pay and discharge each installment of principal, premium and interest on and any mandatory sinking fund payments in respect of the debt securities of that series on the stated maturity of such payments in accordance with the terms of the indenture and those debt securities.

This discharge may occur only if, among other things, we have delivered to the trustee an officers' certificate and an opinion of counsel stating that we have received from, or there has been published by, the United States Internal Revenue Service a ruling or, since the date of execution of the indenture, there has been a change in the applicable United States federal income tax law, in either case to the effect that holders of the debt securities of such series will not recognize income, gain or loss for United States federal income tax purposes as a result of the deposit, defeasance and discharge and will be subject to United States federal income tax on the same amount and in the same manner and at the same times as would have been the case if the deposit, defeasance and discharge had not occurred.

Defeasance of Certain Covenants. The indenture provides that, unless the terms of the applicable series of debt securities provide otherwise, upon compliance with certain conditions, we may omit to comply with the restrictive covenants contained in the indenture, as well as any additional covenants contained in a supplement to the indenture, a board resolution or an officers' certificate delivered pursuant to the indenture. The conditions include:

- depositing with the trustee money and/or United States government obligations or, in the case of debt securities denominated in a single currency other than United States dollars, foreign government obligations, that, through the payment of interest and principal in accordance with their terms, will provide money in an amount sufficient in the opinion of a nationally recognized firm of independent public accountants to pay principal, premium and interest on and any mandatory sinking fund payments in respect of the debt securities of that series on the stated maturity of those payments in accordance with the terms of the indenture and those debt securities; and
- delivering to the trustee an opinion of counsel to the effect that the holders of the debt securities of that series will not recognize income, gain or loss for United States federal income tax purposes as a result of the deposit and related covenant defeasance and will be subject to United States federal income tax in the same amount and in the same manner and at the same times as would have been the case if the deposit and related covenant defeasance had not occurred.

Covenant Defeasance and Events of Default. If we exercise our option, as described above, not to comply with certain covenants of the indenture with respect to any series of debt securities, and the debt

securities of that series are declared due and payable because of the occurrence of any event of default, the amount of money and/or United States government obligations or foreign government obligations on deposit with the trustee will be sufficient to pay amounts due on the debt securities of that series at the time of their stated maturity but may not be sufficient to pay amounts due on the debt securities of that series at the time of the acceleration resulting from the event of default. However, we will remain liable for those payments.

Foreign government obligations means, with respect to debt securities of any series that are denominated in a currency other than United States dollars:

- direct obligations of the government that issued or caused to be issued such currency for the payment of which obligations its full faith and credit is pledged, which are not callable or redeemable at the option of the issuer thereof; or
- obligations of a person controlled or supervised by or acting as an agency or instrumentality of that government, the timely payment of which is unconditionally guaranteed as a full faith and credit obligation by that government, which are not callable or redeemable at the option of the issuer thereof.

DESCRIPTION OF WARRANTS

We may issue warrants, including warrants to purchase preferred stock, common stock or other securities or any combination of the foregoing. Warrants may be issued independently or as part of a unit with any other securities and may be attached to or separate from the underlying securities. The warrants will be issued under warrant agreements to be entered into between us and a bank or trust company, as warrant agent, as detailed in the prospectus supplement relating to warrants being offered.

A prospectus supplement relating to any warrants being offered will include specific terms relating to the offering, including a description of any other securities sold together with the warrants. These items will include:

- the title of the warrants;
- the aggregate number of the warrants;
- the price or prices at which the warrants will be issued;
- the currencies in which the price or prices of the warrants may be payable;
- the designation, amount, and terms of the common stock, preferred stock or other securities or rights, including rights to receive payment in cash or securities based on the value, rate or price of one or more specified commodities, currencies or indices, purchasable upon exercise of the warrants and procedures by which those numbers may be adjusted;
- the designation and terms of the other offered securities, if any, with which the warrants are issued and the number of the warrants issued with each security;
- if applicable, the date on and after which the warrants and the offered securities purchasable upon exercise of the warrants will be separately transferable;
- the price or prices at which the offered securities purchasable upon exercise of the warrants may be purchased;
- the date on which the right to exercise the warrants shall commence and the date on which the right shall expire;

- the minimum or maximum amount of the warrants that may be exercised at any one time;
- any terms relating to the modification of the warrants;
- information with respect to book-entry procedures, if any;
- a discussion of any material federal income tax considerations; and
- any other material terms of the warrants, including terms, procedures, and limitations relating to the transferability, exchange, exercise or redemption of the warrants.

Warrants issued for securities other than common stock or preferred stock will not be exercisable until at least one year from the date of sale of the warrant.

The descriptions of the warrant agreements in this prospectus and in any prospectus supplement are summaries of the applicable provisions of the applicable agreements. These descriptions do not restate those agreements in their entirety and do not contain all of the information that you may find useful. We urge you to read the applicable agreements because they, and not the summaries, define your rights as holders of the warrants. For more information, please review the form of the relevant agreements, which will be filed with the SEC promptly after the offering of the warrants or warrant units and will be available as described under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information" in this prospectus.

DESCRIPTION OF UNITS

We may issue units comprised of one or more of the other securities described in this prospectus in any combination. Each unit will be issued so that the holder of the unit is also the holder of each security included in the unit. Thus, the holder of a unit will have the rights and obligations of a holder of each included security. The units may be issued under units agreements to be entered into between us and a bank or trust company, as unit agent, as detailed in the prospectus supplement relating to units being offered. The prospectus supplement will describe:

- the designation and terms of the units and of the securities comprising the units, including whether and under what circumstances the securities comprising the units may be held or transferred separately;
- a description of the terms of any unit agreement governing the units;
- a description of the provisions for the payment, settlement, transfer or exchange of the units;
- a discussion of material federal income tax considerations, if applicable; and
- whether the units will be issued in fully registered or global form.

The descriptions of the units in this prospectus and in any prospectus supplement are summaries of the material provisions of the applicable agreements. These descriptions do not restate those agreements in their entirety and may not contain all the information that you may find useful. We urge you to read the applicable agreements because they, and not the summaries, define your rights as holders of the units. For more information, please review the form of the relevant agreements, which will be filed with the SEC promptly after the offering of units and will be available as described under the heading "Where You Can Find More Information" in this prospectus.

PLAN OF DISTRIBUTION

We may sell any of the securities being offered pursuant to this prospectus:

- directly to purchasers;
- to or through underwriters;
- through dealers or agents; or
- through a combination of methods.

We may distribute the securities from time to time in one or more transactions at a fixed price or prices, which may be changed, at market prices prevailing at the time of sale, at prices related to the prevailing market prices or at negotiated prices. We may also determine the price or other terms of the securities offered under this prospectus by use of an electronic auction.

The prospectus supplement with respect to the securities being offered will set forth the terms of the offering, including the names of the underwriters, dealers or agents, if any, the purchase price of the securities, the net proceeds to us, any underwriting discounts and other items constituting underwriters' compensation, any discounts or concessions allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers and any securities exchanges on which the securities may be listed. Also, if applicable, we will describe in the prospectus supplement how any auction will determine the price or any other terms, how potential investors may participate in the auction and the nature of the underwriters' obligations with respect to the auction.

If underwriters are used in an offering, we will sign an underwriting agreement with the underwriters and will specify the name of each underwriter and the terms of the transaction (including any underwriting discounts and other terms constituting compensation of the underwriters and any dealers) in a prospectus supplement. If an underwriting syndicate is used, the managing underwriter(s) will be specified on the cover of the prospectus supplement. If underwriters are used in the sale, the offered securities will be acquired by the underwriters for their own accounts and may be resold from time to time in one or more transactions, including negotiated transactions, at a fixed public offering price or at varying prices determined at the time of sale. Any public offering price and any discounts or concessions allowed or reallocated or paid to dealers may be changed from time to time. Unless otherwise set forth in the prospectus supplement, the obligations of the underwriters to purchase the offered securities will be subject to conditions precedent, and the underwriters will be obligated to purchase all of the offered securities if any are purchased.

If dealers are used in an offering, we will sell the securities to the dealers as principals. The dealers then may resell the securities to the public at varying prices which they determine at the time of resale. The names of the dealers and the terms of the transaction will be specified in a prospectus supplement.

The securities may be sold directly by us or through agents we designate. If agents are used in an offering, the names of the agents and the terms of the agency will be specified in a prospectus supplement. Unless otherwise indicated in a prospectus supplement, the agents will act on a best-efforts basis for the period of their appointment.

Dealers and agents named in a prospectus supplement may be deemed to be underwriters (within the meaning of the Securities Act of 1933) of the securities described therein. In addition, we may sell the securities directly to institutional investors or others who may be deemed to be underwriters within the meaning of the Securities Act of 1933 with respect to any resales thereof.

Underwriters, dealers and agents may be entitled to indemnification by us against specific civil liabilities, including liabilities under the Securities Act of 1933 or to contribution with respect to payments which the underwriters or agents may be required to make in respect thereof, under underwriting or other

agreements. Certain underwriters, dealers or agents and their associates may engage in transactions with, and perform services for us in the ordinary course of business.

Each series of securities is expected to be a new issue of securities with no established trading market, other than the common stock which is listed on the Nasdaq Global Market. Any common stock sold pursuant to a prospectus supplement will be eligible for listing and trading on the Nasdaq Global Market, subject to official notice of issuance. Any underwriters to whom securities are sold by us for public offering and sale may make a market in the securities, but the underwriters will not be obligated to do so and may discontinue any market making at any time without notice. The securities, other than the common stock, may or may not be listed on a national securities exchange or eligible for quotation and trading on Nasdaq.

LEGAL MATTERS

Winthrop & Weinstine, P.A., Minneapolis, Minnesota, is giving an opinion on validity of the securities being offered by this prospectus.

EXPERTS

The consolidated financial statements and management's assessment of the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting (which is included in Management's Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting) incorporated in this prospectus by reference to the Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2005 have been so incorporated in reliance on the report of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, an independent registered public accounting firm, given on the authority of said firm as experts in auditing and accounting.