

County Strategic Planning June 3, 2008

Present: Earl Poleski, John Graves, Dan Phelan, Patty Kaufman, Linda Brian, Jan Seitz, Mary Deluca, Al Widner

Guest speaker: *Al Widner from the Keep Learning initiative* (www.learnforourfuture.org).

Al is heavily involved in the Keep Learning program, which is a tri-county coalition that began informally as an attempt to raise community awareness of the need for (and consequences of not having) college degrees in Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties. Early collaborators included Lansing Community College, the local I.S.D, and Community Works.

- Media is heavily involved through local papers, television, radio and billboards.
 - This is done on a shoestring budget. Billboards and TV/radio spots are all provided free of charge when they can't otherwise be rented or sold.
- The statement that regions with a higher education level have a higher earning level is statistically sound.
- In order to get ahead, we need to improve our education level, as it is the ticket to economic development.
 - Michigan has lost 200,000 manufacturing jobs over the last six years.
 - In a recent survey, only 27% of parents think that a quality education is important.
 - A higher education level is needed in order to bring in better paying jobs, which in turn will attract more highly skilled people. This also helps retain local college graduates.
- Beginning this year, all graduates in tri-county area received a job readiness certificate.
 - Not all employers are on board with this. Many prefer the "Job Fit" system.
 - The goal is to get more employers to buy into the certificate program so that it can be run state-wide.
- Research shows that the program is not branded yet. However, the program is growing and gaining partners.
 - Endorsed by Eaton County Commissioners, as well as Chamber of Commerce.
- A program such as Keep Learning would be great for Jackson.

Open discussion

- It sounds like everybody is on board with these types of programs, except for businesses. Maybe it would be a good idea to get some high-profile business people involved.
- Al will talk to the coalition to see if they are interested in expanding to include Jackson. Or, we could use the same principles to create a new brand for Jackson.
 - Would there be an economic advantage by joining the coalition? Could it bring employers to the community?
 - Al doesn't believe that joining would have any immediate impact on Jackson other than a possible increase in media coverage.
 - Al is willing to help regardless of whether or not we join the coalition. The goal is to get the message out to the largest possible audience.
- Potential partners to invite to the next meeting include Jackson Legacy Program, J.C.E.G (Jackson Citizens for Economic Growth), and Consumer's Energy.
- John distributed a copy of his draft report from his meeting with other area principals.
 - The report is not blessed by all Superintendents.
 - Is the report capturing what we are trying to do?
 - We don't want to recreate the wheel. Let's build on what is already available.

Next steps:

- Invite Nancy Miller to the next meeting. Nancy and The Jackson Legacy Program may have some valuable contacts. Let's see where she's going and what she's doing.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, June 26, 2008 at 12p at the MSU Extension. *Update: Nancy Miller cannot attend this meeting due to a scheduling conflict. A new date will be determined in the near future.*

*Respectfully submitted,
Scott Bailey*