



MASON COUNTY GROWTH ALLIANCE
STRENGTHENING OUR LOCAL ECONOMIES

NEWS IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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PROMOTING SUCCESS IN MASON COUNTY

The Mason County Growth Alliance is proud to announce that it has recently nominated the **Todd and Brad Reed Photo Gallery** for the 2009 Family-Owned Michigan Small Business of the Year Award.

The Family-Owned Small Business of the Year Award is one of several awards that will be presented by the 2009 Michigan Celebrates Small Business (MCSB) awards program – a premier annual event to recognize entrepreneurs and small business supporters in a variety of categories.

The recommendation was based upon the gallery's growth both financially and physically. There has been significant growth in sales from November 1, 2007 to November 1, 2008. In addition, the business has ex-

panded its number of personnel and physical size. The number of employees has increased from two to five people. In 2008, the downtown Ludington studio space doubled in size when the Reeds rented and renovated an adjacent store.

The Reed's have continually proven that they are exemplary candidates for the award with their visible presence within the community as well as their commitment to giving back. In 2008, the Reed's sponsored the "Jazz It Up" fundraiser, which raised more than \$11,000 for the Ludington Area Arts Council. Along with sponsoring events and fundraisers, they continue to donate thousands of dollars in books and photographs to area service groups.

The MCGA congratulates the Todd and Brad Reed Photo Gallery for their continued success and thanks them for their commitment to Mason County.

The Brownfield plan has already been approved by the Mason County and Pere Marquette Township governments to replace the former Slaggert Oil building, behind Family Video on Ludington Ave. with a new **Benedict-Shilander Collision Center**. This will allow the company to capture a portion of its future taxes on the property to be reimbursed for its payment to clean up contamination on the site.

ONE-STOP SHOP

Staff of the MCGA, SBTDC, Ludington & Scottville Chamber of Commerce, SCORE and the Ludington Area Convention & Visitors Bureau spent time with the West Shore Community College 'Principles of Management' students in December explaining the one-stop business services offered in the joint Mason County Airport office.

Julie Van Dyke spoke to this same class of students

in November about the importance of small businesses and entrepreneurs in rural Mason County. Dr. Amy Wojciechowski, Professor of Business with West Shore Community College, saw the value in this discussion and asked to take it a step further. Wojciechowski thought it would be a good idea to take the students on a field trip to tour the offices of the above mentioned organizations and gain a better un-

derstanding of the services offered to the businesses in the area.

Presentations were given by each organization with reference to their area of expertise and examples of how these organizations partner together for the benefit of small business owners in the region. An emphasis on networking opportunities and business resources were the focus of the discussion.

BILL KRATZ IS BACK

We are happy to announce that Bill Kratz with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) has changed territories to our advantage. In early 2008, Bill's territory had been realigned to cover the southwest side of the state beginning with Oceana County down to Allegan County.

We are pleased that Bill's territory has been realigned once again as of January 1st, and now Bill covers the county in which he lives, Mason County.

We commend the MEDC for making the decision to enable Bill to have responsibility for Mason County. Bill has excellent relationships with our business owners and has a lot of history and knowledge of the area.

Bill Kratz will be accompanying Julie in 2009 on retention visits to our local businesses to add input from a state perspective.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

JULIE VAN DYKE
MASON COUNTY
GROWTH ALLIANCE
5300 WEST U.S. 10
LUDINGTON, MI 49431
231.845.6646 OFFICE
231.845.6857 FAX
231.233.7010 CELL
JVANDYKE@MASONCOUNTYGROWTH.COM
WWW.MASONCOUNTYGROWTH.COM



BUSINESS START-UP CLASS FOR ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS

In 2008, 26 aspiring entrepreneurs took our Business Start-up class and, through continued counseling with SCORE and SBTDC counselors, many either started or enhanced an existing business in this region.

This year, the classes are taking place in February and March, with 20 participants meeting in the new WSCC Schoenherr Campus Center.

This training opportunity

has been made possible through regional collaboration between the Manistee-based Alliance for Economic Success, the Mason County Growth Alliance, West Shore Community College, MI Small Business & Technology Development Center and SCORE.

The workshops were developed and will be lead by Lynda Daugherty, a faculty member of West Shore Community College and

Director of Customer Service with the Lake Michigan Carferry. "This series of workshops is designed for anyone just beginning to think of starting their first business, or who has just recently started a business, without much entrepreneurial education", said Lynda. "With the right information and planning, our local entrepreneurs can take their business idea and make it a reality!"

WATCH FOR
UPCOMING
INFORMATION
ON A NEW
MARKETING
PLAN FOR
MASON COUNTY
THROUGH THE
COLLABORATION
OF THE
CHAMBER, CVB
AND MCGA.

ENTREPRENEUR PROGRAM UPDATE

In 2008, the MCGA partnered with Manistee's Alliance for Economic Success and received an \$80K USDA Grant to develop a regional system to support entrepreneurs and small business development.

Through a qualified proposal process, *Northern Initiatives* was chosen as the lead organization to develop the inventory of assets and best practices analysis to create a system to support the success of entrepreneurs.

At this time, staff of Northern Initiatives are continuing to work on identifying the best practices in entrepreneurial support globally and are developing plans for interaction and interviews with local entrepreneurs.

According to a study released by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, "more than 70 percent of voters surveyed say the health of the economy depends on the success of entrepreneurs, and a full 80 percent want to see the gov-

ernment use its resources to actively encourage entrepreneurship in America." In a survey of 816 registered voters, more than half of respondents said they trusted small businesses to save the economy.

Access the report of the Kauffman survey at: http://www.kauffman.org/pdf/Econ_Crisis_Survey_9_30_08.pdf

LEGISLATIVE FORUM

On Friday, January 23, the Ludington Daily News, Ludington & Scottville Chamber of Commerce and the Mason County Growth Alliance jointly sponsored a forum with local legislators.

Present were: Pete Hoekstra (R-Holland), U.S. Congressman representing the 2nd District; Gerald VanWoerkom (R-Norton Shores), State Senator; Geoff Hansen

(R-Hart), State Representative for the 100th District; and Dan Scripps (D-Leland), State Representative for the 101st District.

Moderating the event was Jeffrey Evans, publisher of the Ludington Daily News.

The meeting was held in the Community Room of the Ludington City Hall and was well attended with about 100 individuals filling

the facility.

The forum opened with comments from each of the legislators on their individual agendas and goals and then was followed by a question and answer period.

