



Photos courtesy of Geauga Growth Partnership

Entrepreneurs visit with the GGP Board of Directors

BY LAURI GROSS

Geauga Growth Partnership Aims for County-Wide Economic Growth

The best Geauga County has to offer is often described in terms of Mother Nature's bounty: beautiful, wide open spaces, hardwood forests, lakes, fields, farms, and rolling hills. While none of us who love Geauga would deny the appeal of those assets, there is a whole other reason to love the county: its businesses. Imagine Geauga without them. From the quaint shops in Burton Village and Chardon Square, to super markets and home-improvement stores, or banks, world-class hospital care and doctor's offices, car repair shops or trucking companies, as well as manufacturing and other industrial facilities, Geauga's businesses keep life humming and promise economic and other opportunities for those who own them, work there, shop there or use their services, not to mention providing a robust tax base that benefits all county residents.

Now, imagine Geauga County with no vacant storefronts and no unused industrial or manufacturing spaces, a Geauga with plenty of new job opportunities at new and established

businesses making the best use of existing office buildings, industrial space and zoning regulations. That is the vision of the newly formed Geauga Growth Partnership (GGP). Open for business since last September, Geauga Growth Partnership's aim is to be a leader in generating economic growth in the county by helping existing businesses grow and add jobs, as well as, helping to attract new businesses to the county.

Working alongside the county commissioners, the Community Improvement Corporation, Chambers of Commerce, and SCORE (a service of the Small Business Administration), Geauga Growth Partnership is seen as a vital addition to the current menu of county resources available to businesses seeking advice, ideas and resources. With a focus on existing industrial and manufacturing businesses, as well as start-ups, Geauga Growth Partnership is poised to connect businesses to others facing similar hurdles or optimizing similar opportunities.

"We recognize that immediate business growth and job retention comes from the

success of existing companies but we also know that start ups and entrepreneurs are the future so we have identified that sector as another area of our focus," said Frank Samuel, President of Geauga Growth Partnership.

Geauga Growth Partnership can help a company consolidate separate manufacturing and assembly facilities into one, or work with Kent State Geauga or other educational facilities to ensure Geauga's workforce is appropriately trained to help local businesses thrive. Also, the Partnership is ready to help facilitate infrastructure projects to benefit business sectors, can connect businesses to financial experts or help clients navigate zoning regulations.

Geauga Growth Partnership advisors are happy to meet at clients' facilities, or at the Geauga Growth Partnership offices, which are centrally located in the Newbury Business Park at the intersection of routes 44 and 87 (12373 Kinsman Road, suite 106).

The entire staff of the Partnership consists of Mr. Samuel and



geauga growth partnership, inc.
leading business growth in Geauga County

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GGP Vice Chair John Steigerwald celebrates with GGP Chairman John Epprecht at the September 2010 groundbreaking of the Great Lakes Cheese plant expansion project

administrative manager Leslie Bednar, under the direction of a volunteer board of directors, all of whom are current or former business owners or executives, representing a wide range of experience and expertise. The group has received a start-up grant from the Cleveland Foundation, as well as support from the county commissioners but most of its funding comes from its members. The Partnership provides services to clients free of charge.

Already, the Partnership's list of members includes 30 individuals and businesses including Arms Trucking, Geauga Credit Union, Hartville Lumber & Mill Works, Marsh Valley Forest Products, Middlefield Banking Co., Troy Chemical Industries, Mar-Bal Products, Fairmount Minerals, Middlefield Plastics, Mercury Plastics, Sheoga Hardwood, Federal Improvement Corporation, University Hospital Geauga Medical Center, Universal Disposal, FirstMerit, Kinetico, and White Management, which owns Newbury Business Park.

John Epprecht, the Partnership's Chairman and Executive Vice President of Great Lakes Cheese, said, "We feel the time is right for Geauga County business leaders to get behind job growth in the county. We need jobs for the graduates of our high schools and the best place to make them is right here at home."

John Steigerwald, of Etna Products, and GGP's Vice Chairman, added, "Existing businesses are key to our county's future but brand-new companies formed by Geauga entrepreneurs will also be essential job creators."

"We are finding out what our business community needs," said Mr. Samuel. "We don't intend to tell them what they need. They should tell us." Through outreach efforts, the Partnership is identifying opportunities to help businesses and, of course, the group encourages businesses to contact them directly.

Reach Geauga Growth Partnership at (440) 564-1060 or visit geaugagrowthpartnership.com



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