



EAU CLAIRE AREA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

2015 ANNUAL REPORT





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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



It is the mission of the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation to advance economic prosperity through business and job growth in Altoona, Augusta, Eau Claire, Fairchild, and Fall Creek.

Each year the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation (EDC) strives to continuously raise the bar for economic development in our community. This past year was no exception as the EDC excelled at both sustaining current initiatives, as well as introducing some new initiatives and events. EDC efforts this year resulted in over 250 new jobs created within our community, \$30.5 million in private sector project investment secured, and \$2.6 million in incentives obtained from state and regional sources for our local businesses.

Eau Claire's first ever Startup Weekend was a huge success. All the teams that were formed over the weekend are still moving towards their final product, and the EDC continues to assist them in making their idea a reality.

In addition to the startups generated from Startup Weekend, the ongoing Idea Challenge contest has kept the staff busy! The higher quality of Idea Challenge applicants this year was exciting, and the EDC continues to work with over a dozen applicants to help turn their ideas into market ready products. From the Idea Challenge, two products were launched into the marketplace.

Tenants at our local incubation center, the Chippewa Valley Innovation Center, are now enjoying the results of a \$160,000 renovation that the EDC facilitated. This renovation not only accounted for capital upgrades that were needed, but increased the overall capacity of the incubation center.

The Skills Gap Employer survey and the YourFutureChippewaValley.com website both

wrapped up their second year - highlighting the dedication that the EDC has to collaborate and work with other organizations to further the economic prosperity of our community.

This year also saw the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation move their office location for the first time in a decade. Now located with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) downtown, the EDC and SBDC now enjoy the convenience of sharing office space, as do their clients!

The EDC couldn't be the successful organization that it is without the Board of Directors, our committee members, and all the volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to strengthening our community's economic prosperity. I also wish to express our gratitude to the many EDC investors - the work accomplished because of the Eau Claire Area EDC is possible because of your investment.

A special thank you to our retiring board members Lynn Thompson and Dan Riebe - your dedication and expertise added significant value to this organization that will be missed. I would also like to welcome Joe Mirr and Gerald Bauer to our board - I am sure you will enjoy working with the EDC as much as I have!

This past year was filled with accomplishment and progress from the EDC. Looking toward the year ahead, I see the EDC continuing our momentum driven by the enthusiasm in watching our community thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Miriam Gehler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Miriam Gehler
2015 EDC Board President



ABOUT THE EAU CLAIRE AREA EDC

For over thirty years the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation has advanced the economic prosperity of Altoona, Augusta, Eau Claire, Fairchild, and Fall Creek. This mission is achieved by providing services that support business recruitment, business retention and expansion, education and development of the critical talent in our area, entrepreneurs, and startup businesses.

2015 IN REVIEW

- 250+ new jobs created through projects that the EDC assisted with
- \$30.5 million in private sector project investment secured
- 2 products launched into the marketplace via the Idea Challenge
- 15 entrepreneurs actively working towards advancing their product, process, or service into the marketplace
- \$2.6 million in incentives secured from state and regional sources
- \$80,000 grant facilitates to make capital improvements to the Chippewa Valley Innovation Center
- Hosted the first annual Startup Weekend program in Eau Claire

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2016

As outlined in the EDC's 3-Year Strategic Plan, we will continue to focus on the following:

- Entrepreneurial Services
- Business Recruitment
- Workforce Training Grants

- YourFutureChippewaValley.com
- The Skills Gap Employer Survey
- Business Retention Calls

EDC PROGRAMS & INITIATIVES

The Idea Challenge

As one of EDC's most successful programs, we will continue to work with entrepreneurs in all stages of their idea development to help bring new and innovative products, processes, and services to market.

Startup 48

Evolving from Eau Claire's first Startup Weekend, this event gives individuals hands-on experience on what it takes to create a Startup - from idea to Minimal Viable Product - over the course of 48 hours.

Economic Updates

Periodic breakfast events are held for local businesses to attend to learn about and discuss current, relevant events that impact our economy.



Industry Park Outreach

Outreach will be done to local real estate developers and brokers to make them aware of available industry park space in Altoona, Augusta, Eau Claire, and Fall Creek - including existing infrastructure and potential incentives for new companies.

Your Future Chippewa Valley

YourFutureChippewaValley.com is a free website that acts as a portal to connect high school students, educators, and businesses in the Chippewa Valley. Businesses post opportunities for work-based learning that students and educators can then explore, and select. This website is maintained by the EDC staff. Additional activities related to this site include marketing at conferences and expos, and being a point of contact for businesses and educators in the Chippewa Valley.

Additional EDC efforts include the formation of a CEO Leadership council, assisting local businesses by securing private sector investment and securing equity placement.

As the EDC moves forward in 2016, our focus will continue to be working with local business and entrepreneurs, strengthening and diversifying our community's economic profile, collecting and reporting local labor force data, assisting in workforce training grants to strengthen our local workforce, and marketing our area for potential new businesses.

PAT TROWBRIDGE, EDC OFFICE MANAGER RETIRES



The Eau Claire Area EDC is both delighted and disheartened to announce that Pat Trowbridge has retired. Her last day was December 23, 2015.

We wish Pat Trowbridge a very warm and heartfelt congratulations as she retires from her Office Manager position. Trowbridge has worked as the EDC Office Manager on and off since 1986, for a total of 24 years. During this time, she has played an important role not only as a team member of the EDC staff, but as an active and supportive individual in the community.

Trowbridge was responsible for many programs, events, and initiatives that have helped our communities - such as spearheading the Skills Gap Employer Survey, and being responsible for the YourFutureChippewaValley.org website. She cites meeting and developing relationships with individuals and businesses in the community as her favorite thing about working at the EDC.

Trowbridge will be taking advantage of warmer climates with an extended stay in Arizona. Luke Hanson, Executive Director of the EDC, stated "Pat was an exceptional employee that dedicated over 24 years to the EDC. Her knowledge, enthusiasm - and the wonderful individual that she is - will be greatly missed."



2015 PARAGON AWARD WINNER: DYNAMIC FITNESS & STRENGTH

The Paragon Award is presented annually to a local business that is a model of economic development excellence - through business expansion and development, job growth, community impact, workforce development, or innovations in the development of new technologies and products.

The Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation is thrilled to announce that the winner of the 2015 Paragon Award is Dynamic Fitness & Strength. The EDC presents the Paragon Award annually to a local business that is a model of economic excellence through business expansion and development, job creation, and innovation.

Founded in 2011, Dynamic was a startup that specialized in contract steel fabrication, primarily sheet cutting and welding. A few years later they began to develop and manufacture their own product line of fitness equipment. Today you can find Dynamic's strength and fitness products in the training facilities of the best professional and collegiate sports programs in the country.

In the past year, Dynamic Fitness and Strength has made a significant investment in both our community and their employees. In 2015, they began an expansion that will generate 75 new jobs in the upcoming three years. As part of this expansion, Dynamic began a multi-million renovation on their new Gateway Industrial Park location. Dynamic Fitness and Strength's investment in on-the-job training for their employees, and their use of cutting edge manufacturing technology, has and will continue to make a tremendous positive impact on our community.

Prior recipients of the Paragon Award include: JAMF Software; Indianhead Foodservice Distributor, Inc.; Hi-Crush Proppants, LLC; and Bush Brothers Co. The Paragon Award is sponsored by Royal Credit Union – the first recipient of the Paragon Award in 2001. Royal Credit Union continues to support the Paragon Award to honor the companies that have made a tremendous impact in our community.

"Recognizing companies that are making an impact in our communities is important. Good news is exciting and motivating," states Rudy Pereira, CEO of Royal Credit Union. "It's rewarding to know that several companies have been honored for the tremendous impact they have made in providing new quality jobs, new technologies, facility expansions, and building a better educated and trained workforce. Royal Credit Union is proud to sponsor this award."

Every year, members of the Eau Claire Area community nominate local businesses that have had a significant economic impact on our community. All received nominations are evaluated on the business's community impact. To submit a nomination, visit <http://www.eauclaire-wi.com/services/paragon-award/>

Thank you to Royal Credit Union, our generous sponsor of the Paragon Award!



EDC WELCOMES NEW TEAM MEMBERS!

The Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation hired two new team members in 2015. Patrick Gaetjens was hired in late February to fill the position of Program Manager that was made vacant by Luke Hanson's promotion to Executive Director in late 2014. Beryl Ouimette was hired in early December to fill the newly created full-time position of Office and Graphics Manager.

Patrick Gaetjens' previous experience includes working for New York City's Economic Development Corporation where he managed tax incentive projects for industrial companies as well as a sales tax exemption program for businesses recovering from Hurricane Sandy.



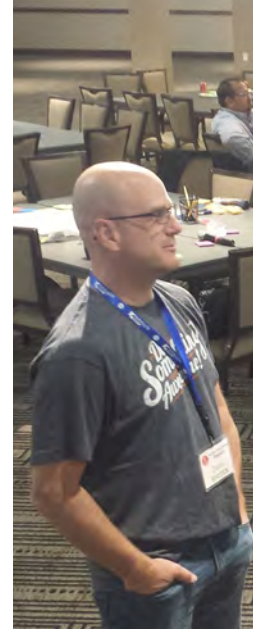
Gaetjens is excited to be assisting entrepreneurs in starting up their businesses and helping established companies expand.

Beryl Ouimette brings a wide range of experience in administrative support, event coordination, corporate design management, brand management, and promotion. Her previous experience includes Bosch Measuring Tools, General Growth Properties, and most recently the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce.



Ouimette looks forward to working with the community and taking over the YourFutureChippewaValley.com website, strengthening the work-based learning opportunities that are available in our area.





EAU CLAIRE'S FIRST STARTUP WEEKEND A SUCCESS!

Startup Weekends are 54-hour events where developers, designers, marketers, product managers and startup enthusiasts come together to share ideas, form teams, build products, and launch startups! Beginning with open mic pitches on Friday evening, attendees bring their best ideas and inspire others to join their team. Over Saturday and Sunday, teams focus on customer development, validating their ideas, practicing LEAN Startup Methodologies, and building a minimal viable product. On Sunday evening, teams demo their prototypes and receive valuable feedback from a panel of experts.

Eau Claire Startup Weekend's inaugural event was held over the first weekend of October 2015, at the newly renovated Lismore Hotel. Out of the 11 participants, 8 individuals pitched their ideas.

Pitches for the 2015 Startup Weekend ranged from travel apps to a GPS credit card tracker. All the participants voted for their favorite pitches, and teams formed around the three winning ideas:

- Rebel Traveler – an app for individuals, such as the handicapped, who are mobility challenged
- 15 Second Imaging – a 3D modeling integration systems that enables consumers to see more detail in retail products
- TenFor Team Matching – a trucking app that allows truckers to select their co-rider to increase productivity

Throughout the weekend, snacks and meals were provided by the following food sponsors: Burrachos, High Bridge Coffee, Mega CO-OP, Noodles & Co, Panara Bread, Pizza Plus, and Smiling Moose Deli.

On Sunday, the 3 teams rushed to get their Minimal Viable Product (MVP) prepared and presentations ready. Each team had 5 minutes to present, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A from the panel of judges. Prior to announcing the winning team of Startup Weekend, the judges made a point to mention that all three teams had viable ideas and shouldn't be discouraged from pursuing their projects after the weekend.

Reactions from the participants in Eau Claire's Startup Weekend were overwhelmingly positive.

"I came into the event not knowing what to expect and I left with a great team, winning first place, and had the basics of a business that we are continuing to work on." stated Brandon Cedarblade - one of the team members of 15 Second Imaging

Another participant, Justin Vajko, said that Startup Weekend was "the most fun you can legally have in 48 hours!"



The winning team of Eau Claire Startup Weekend was 15 Second Imaging: Eric Charles, Brandon Cedarblade, Nick Marzofka, Nicholas Scherrer, and John Kane (shown above, listed from left to right)! 15 Second Imaging was awarded the Prize Package – valued over \$17,000 – consisting of:

- Website and Hosting from JB Systems, LLC
- 3 Months of fully furnished office space, including utilities and cleaning service, from AnchorBank
- Printing Services from Image 360
- 5 Hours of legal consulting from Ruder Ware
- 1 hour Marketing Advice from Strategic Communications
- 1 hour consulting from CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP
- Logo development from Satellite Six, LLC



“The most fun you can legally have in 48 hours!”

Eau Claire Startup Weekend wouldn't have been possible without the event sponsors: BMO Harris Bank, JAMF Foundation, JB Systems, The Lismore, and Powertex Group.



After the event, the Eau Claire Area EDC continued to work with the groups. Each of the three groups are still working towards advancing their ideas, and are utilizing the EDC's services.

Planning for 2016's Startup event is already underway - Startup 48 is tentatively scheduled for October 14-16th, 2016.

For more details, or to sign up to be notified of updates, go to www.startup48.co



INCREASED BUSINESS INCUBATION CAPACITY AT THE CHIPPEWA VALLEY INNOVATION CENTER

The Chippewa Valley Innovation Center (CVIC) encourages new and emerging entrepreneurial businesses to utilize local community resources. Features and benefits of the CVIC include: warehouse/manufacturing space, managerial support, technical assistance, and access to a financial program. The EDC has been under contract to manage the facility since 2011.

After almost 30 years, the Chippewa Valley Innovation Center (CVIC) received upgrades to provide tenants a more secure and modern facility. These renovations, overseen by Hoefft Builders, will improve efficiencies for current business located in the CVIC and increase the overall capacity of the facility to provide additional space for startup businesses.

Major renovation projects included repairing the loading dock of the facility so that tenants are able to receive large shipments, and the construction of four new offices to meet the increasing demand of small businesses for professional office space. In addition to increasing the structural capacities of the building, other renovations have been completed to increase security, update the facility and achieve ADA compliance. Bathrooms, the break room, and offices were all renovated to make a more professional and comfortable facility.

The renovations of the CVIC were made possible with an \$80,000 grant for capital improvements from the Otto Bremer Foundation. These grants support work that help build healthy, vibrant communities where opportunities for economic, civic, and social participation are within everyone's reach.

Additional support from the community and local businesses ensured the CVIC received the \$160,000 total renovations that were needed, while under budget. These renovations would not have been possible without generous donations from companies such as Hoefft Builders Inc., American Express, Senn Blacktop Inc., Cherry Drywall, Eau Claire Roofing, Swanson's Commercial Flooring, Kjelstad Plumbing, Larson's Custom Cabinets, Michel's Electric, Cloverbelt Construction, Certified Plumbing and Heating, From the Ground Up Landscaping, and Master Drywall.

A 2015 study contacted 11 graduates of the CVIC and identified the following key economic impacts:

- Contributed over \$27 million in investment
- Created 330 jobs
- Generated a payroll of over \$12.7 million
- Paid \$116,000 in property taxes for 2015

The recently completed renovations have increased the capacity of CVIC to assist entrepreneurial businesses in the Chippewa Valley and ensure CVIC will be able to continue serving the region's entrepreneurs for years to come.

Prior to the renovations, the CVIC was filled to capacity. Currently, there are two offices available.

Current tenants of the CVIC include:

- Earthbound Environmental
- Eco Urban Timber, LLC
- CBR Designs, LLC
- Precision Die Systems
- Wood Duck Nation

"I was excited to see the renovations come together because the facility hadn't been updated in over 20 years." Patrick Gaetjens, EDC's Project Manager and CVIC's Facility Manager stated. "Tenants now have an ADA compliant facility with new restrooms, a break room, electric locks, a repaired loading dock and roof, as well as four new offices. Watching this project was fascinating, not just for how quickly CVIC was upgraded, but for how Hoefft Builders worked with other contractors to stretch CVIC's budget to complete every item CVIC needed, ensuring that our community would have a quality place for entrepreneurs to start or expand their businesses."





BUSINESS RECRUITMENT

As part of the EDC's mission, there are several initiatives that are aimed towards marketing the Eau Claire Area to potential businesses who are interested in either expansion or moving to a new location.

Luke Hanson, Executive Director of the Eau Claire Area EDC, went on several call trips to international shows to speak with company decision makers. This resulted in many new connections and relationships. The EDC is still currently working with businesses that Hanson connected with during these trips.

Utilizing the report builder feature on the EDC's website, we are able to respond to Request for Proposals (RFPs) from companies seeking additional information in a timely manner. This increased effectiveness benefits both the companies who are looking to expand as well as the EDC staff.

Based on an identified gap in the community, the EDC's Business Recruitment Committee is planning a new initiative for 2016 - Industrial Park informational lunch events. The goal of these short lunch presentations is to provide local brokers and realtors with current information on the available land within the Eau Claire Area's industrial parks. These events will have a short presentation on the industrial park, immediately followed by a Q&A where more specific questions can be addressed.



LOCAL FIREFIGHTER'S LIFE SAVING IDEA IS BECOMING REALITY

Northern Star Fire, winner of the 2014 Idea Challenge, has had a busy 2015. After winning the 2014 Idea Challenge, his product was named a semi-finalist for a Powerful Answers Award, a world-wide challenge ran by Verizon Wireless. This multi-million dollar challenge for entrepreneurs, companies and innovators supports innovative solutions in Transportation, Emergency Response and the Internet of Things.

"I am pleased to announce that my innovative idea, the Northern Star, has advanced to the semi-finals of Verizon's Powerful Answers Award contest. I continued to be encouraged by the support for the Northern Star both within the fire service and out." Jeff Dykes, Owner of Northern Star Fire states.

Jeff Dykes' idea, named the Northern Star, is entered in the Emergency Response category. The Northern Star utilizes micro technology that will allow firefighters to quickly re-orientate themselves in low or no visibility environments. The Northern Star concept has evolved from an idea that was kicked around at the firehouse dinner table to a prototype that is currently being developed.

Luke Hanson, Executive Director of the Eau Claire Area EDC sums up why he thinks Northern Star Fire has made it to the semi-finals:

"The story behind Northern Star Fire has such meaning – that alone will make you interested in their product. Northern Star Fire has developed a small/affordable product that can save lives

all throughout the world, not only in fire fighters but divers, hazmat, military and so on. This product while being first to market and with a small/simple design is revolutionary in its manner. I am proud and privileged to have worked with such a company."

Dykes' idea has the potential to save the lives of firefighters, and can have implications for other professions where the individual would need to re-orientate themselves quickly – such as scuba divers.

Northern Star didn't advance beyond the semi-finals, but that hasn't put a damper on Jeff Dykes' momentum. Currently he is looking at potential partners to continue moving forward with his idea. Northern Star Fire is currently undergoing development and testing and is expected to be made available to the public in 2016.

"Northern Star Fire has developed a small/affordable product that can save lives all throughout the world, not only in firefighters but divers, hazmat, military and so on."



GREENWOOD PACKAGING OPENS IN FALL CREEK

Greenwood Packaging, a new manufacturing and distribution business, has broken ground in Fall Creek. This 45,000-square-foot production and warehouse facility will be valued around \$4 million, and construction was due to be completed by December 2015.

"Greenwood Packaging will bring quality jobs to the area – a tremendous accomplishment for the Village of Fall Creek," explained Luke Hanson, Executive Director of the Eau Claire Area EDC.

Greenwood Packaging will be manufacturing and distributing cheese to national retailers and distributors. Once completed, Greenwood Packaging will generate 35-40 full-time jobs for the community.

The existing ground and infrastructure will receive enhancements thanks in part to a TEA grant. The \$225,000 TEA grant awarded to the Village of Fall Creek and Greenwood Packaging by the DOT will be used to build a new street, water, and

sewer to provide better access and amenities to Greenwood Packaging.

Hanson elaborates on the significance. "This project was crucial for the enhancements to the Fall Creek Business Park. Greenwood Packaging was first to help facilitate the infrastructure needed to host more businesses in the area."

Other enhancements to the infrastructure that will be completed as part of the project include: extending gravity sanitary sewer, fireman, and water main.

"This project was crucial for the enhancements to the Fall Creek Business Park. Greenwood Packaging was first to help facilitate the infrastructure needed to host more businesses in the area."



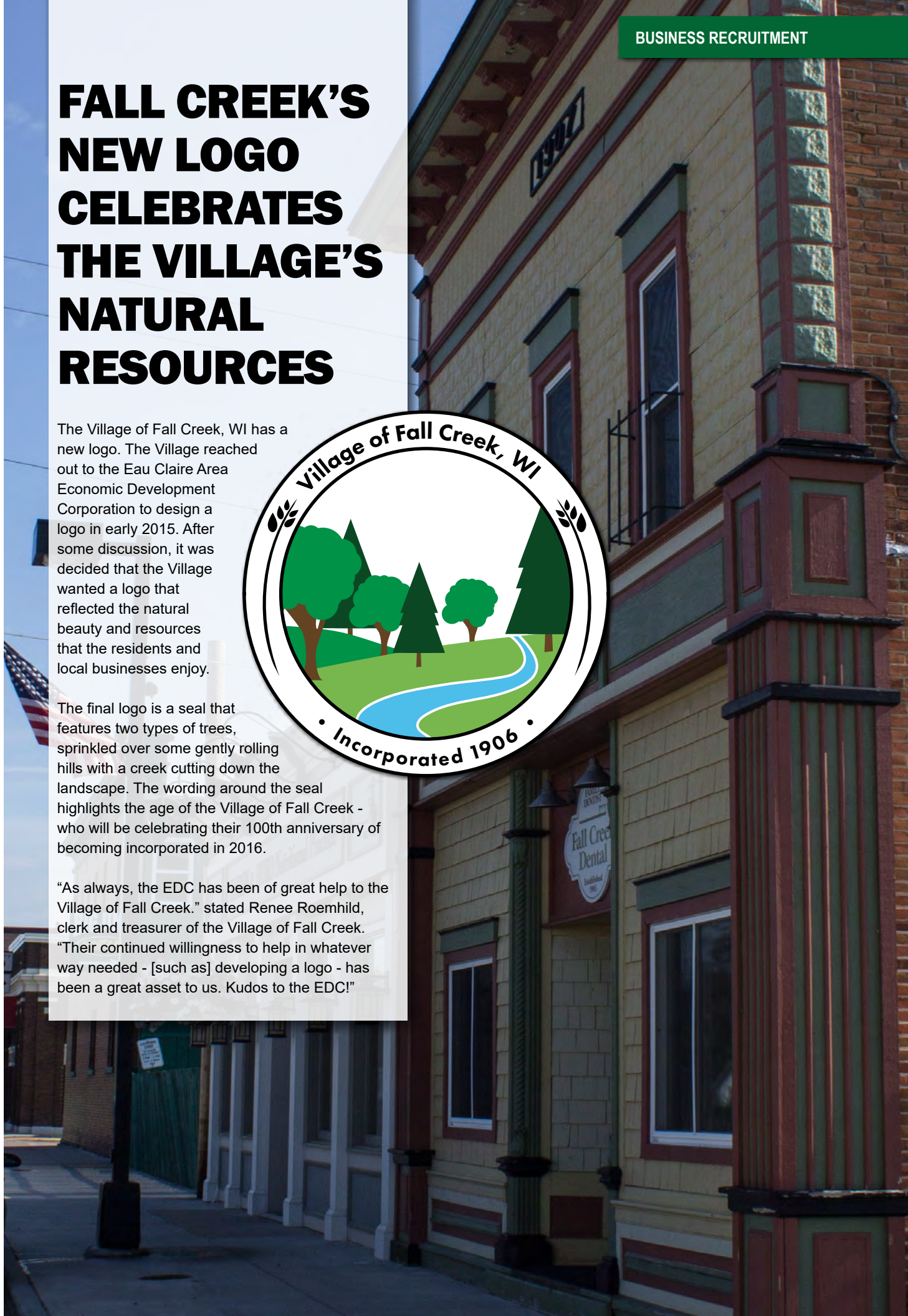
FALL CREEK'S NEW LOGO CELEBRATES THE VILLAGE'S NATURAL RESOURCES

The Village of Fall Creek, WI has a new logo. The Village reached out to the Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation to design a logo in early 2015. After some discussion, it was decided that the Village wanted a logo that reflected the natural beauty and resources that the residents and local businesses enjoy.



The final logo is a seal that features two types of trees, sprinkled over some gently rolling hills with a creek cutting down the landscape. The wording around the seal highlights the age of the Village of Fall Creek - who will be celebrating their 100th anniversary of becoming incorporated in 2016.

"As always, the EDC has been of great help to the Village of Fall Creek." stated Renee Roemhild, clerk and treasurer of the Village of Fall Creek. "Their continued willingness to help in whatever way needed - [such as] developing a logo - has been a great asset to us. Kudos to the EDC!"



YOUR FUTURE CHIPPEWA VALLEY WEBSITE CONNECTS STUDENTS WITH LOCAL EMPLOYERS

The free online portal that connects high school students to local employers in the Chippewa Valley, www.yourfuturechippewavalley.com, is continuing to grow and see success. In addition to all 16 schools in the region being on the site, over one hundred local employers have signed up on the site, allowing them to offer school-to-work learning opportunities.

Work-based learning opportunities provide students with the unique ability to experience career paths that are available to them in the Chippewa Valley. Potential opportunities include: classroom speaking, job shadowing, internships, and career fairs.

Students are able to browse opportunities posted by companies, categorized by the various career clusters, and select those that interest them. Once the student's interest in the opportunity is approved by the school, the company is notified.

Teachers are also able to search for companies that are willing to come into the classroom and discuss careers and jobs with students - or offer attendance at career fairs for employers to interact with their emerging workforce.

This initiative is a joint effort between Chippewa County, Dunn County, and Eau Claire Area EDCs; and is supported by private sector businesses and local Chambers of Commerce.

This website is available for students, educators, and businesses located in the Chippewa Valley for no cost. To learn more, visit www.yourfuturechippewavalley.com



CHIPPEWA VALLEY EMPLOYERS INDICATE GROWING CONCERN OVER RETIREMENT OF BABY BOOMERS

The Regional Skills Gap Initiative, started by the EDC in 2012, brought organizations across the public and private sectors together with the vision of building a stronger regional workforce. As part of this initiative for the Chippewa Valley, a labor survey is dispersed to area employers to ascertain the needs of our local labor market. The goal is to enhance the quality of employment and career data for students and teacher, and increase information about employment opportunities in the Chippewa Valley.

The next decade will see a shift in Chippewa Valley's labor force as the massive baby boomer demographic retires. This is a well cited statistic that is being heard nationally - but recent data directly represents what is on the horizon for our local businesses.

Over 60% of businesses surveyed indicated that they had some level of concern over upcoming retirements (Chart 1). Additional stress can be felt from businesses who are already having difficulty filling positions - a reality that is facing 70% of those who responded to the survey.

As explained by Scott Hodek, Regional Economist for the Office of Economic Advisors in the Department of Workforce Development, "The next decade will see an unprecedented tightening of the local labor force as the baby boomer generation retires – at a time where employers are already having trouble finding

skilled workers in high demand occupations." Most of the listed occupations that will need to be filled due to retirements - including production occupations, many positions in the medical fields, and skill specific occupations such as welding - were also listed as occupations that employers are already having issues filling (see Chart 2).

Summary of the full survey results will be communicated directly with K-12 educators and higher educational institutions to highlight which areas of study are being sought by area employers. Survey results may also allow for employers to apply for state training grants (Wisconsin Fast Forward) tied to their specific skill needs.

Completed results from the 2014 and 2015 survey can be viewed and downloaded from the Eau Claire Area Economic Development's website. Questions on the data can be sent to Scott Hodek via email at Scott.Hodek@dwd.wisconsin.gov

CHART 1: HOW CONCERNED ARE YOU OVER UPCOMING RETIREMENTS?

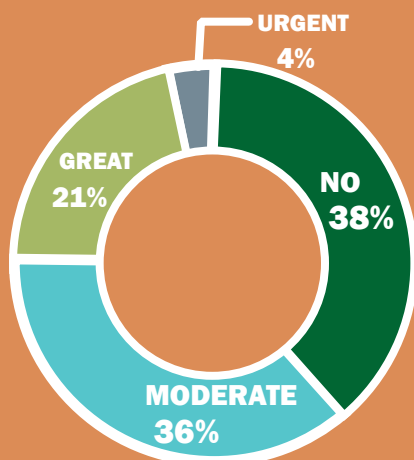
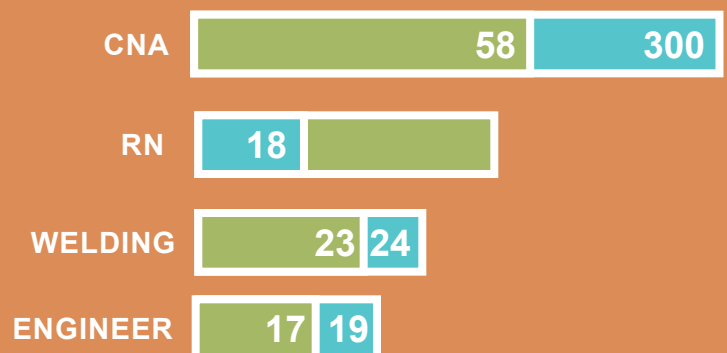


CHART 2: GREEN INDICATION # OF POSITIONS THAT WILL BE OPEN DUE TO UPCOMING RETIREMENTS AND BLUE IS THE # OF OPEN HARD-TO-FILL POSITIONS* (BLUE)



* Positions shown reflect projections over the next 2 years

GORILLA DUMPSTER BAGS WINS THE 2015 IDEA CHALLENGE GRAND PRIZE

Since 2008, the Idea Challenge has assisted entrepreneurs turn their innovative ideas into reality. Anyone with a new idea for a product, process, or service is eligible. Every idea is evaluated for market feasibility and receives free business guidance. Every idea that is viable receives additional support, and the top 5 ideas every year are eligible for prizes that range from \$500 in cash to the Grand Prize of \$5,000 in reimbursable business expenses.

Gorilla Dumpster Bag, an innovation in the dumpster industry, won the 2015 Idea Challenge Grand prize of \$5,000 towards reimbursable business expenses.

2015 IDEA CHALLENGE FINALISTS

The five Idea Challenge finalists that presented for the \$5000 Grand Prize, in alphabetical order, are as follows:

- Aunt K's Natural Healing Powders by Kay Widule: FDA approved, all-natural therapeutic powder for the treatment of various skin conditions including diaper rash and insect bites.
- Gorilla Dumpster Bag by Steve Faacks and Chris Hansen: the biggest, toughest, strongest dumpster bag anywhere in the U.S. – designed and engineered right here in Western Wisconsin.
- TenFour Team Trucking by Jonathan Summerford, Jordan Campbell, Justin Vajko, and Andy Albarado: an app that enables truckers to pick a co-rider based on specific traits to increase productivity during long-ride hauls.

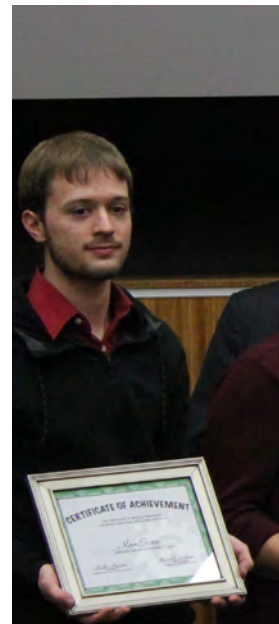
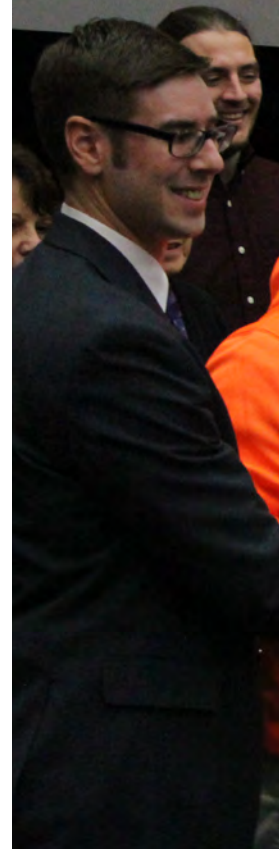
- Wave Stability Bar by Adam Shilts: a new and innovative technology in exercise that will improve the quality of life of everyone from beginners to well-seasoned athletes.
- XanScan by Nick Marzofka: Captures and catalogs physical collections in 3D, allowing museums and cities to preserve and share history digitally around the world.

Each of the finalists received a \$500 cash prize for being named a finalist, and presented in front of a panel of judges in early December. Each finalist had 15 minutes to present, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A from the judges.

This year's Idea Challenge saw an increase in the quality of submissions. As such, the judges faced a difficult decision this year – taking almost 30 minutes to determine a winner.

Applications are already coming in for the 2016 Idea Challenge. Submissions are taken year-round at www.theideachallenge.com

Thank you to our generous sponsor of the Idea Challenge: Northwestern Bank!







EDC RELOCATES WITH SBDC FOR BETTER ALIGNMENT OF SERVICES

The Eau Claire Area Economic Development Corporation (EDC) moved in 2015 to co-locate with the Wisconsin Small Business Development Center (SBDC), a business resource that is available through the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire.

The SBDC is part of a statewide network that supports entrepreneurs and business owners through no-cost, professional, confidential consulting, and targeted educational programs. Eau Claire's regional SBDC experts, Luke Kempen and Dave Kochendorfer, facilitate improvement and growth for small and emerging mid-size companies and help launch successful enterprises.

The move is a historic one for both the EDC, who had been co-located with the Chamber of Commerce for the past ten years, and the SBDC who had previously been located on the University campus. However, as noted by both organizations, being in two different locations was a hindrance to their shared clientele.

Luke Hanson, Executive Director of the EDC, notes the ease of working with clients now that

the two organizations are sharing an office. "Being able to have meetings on a moment's notice and in conjunction with the SBDC is a level of service for our clients that was previously unattainable."

This sentiment is echoed by Luke Kempen, Director of the SBDC. "Being together in one location gives clients convenient access to both. In addition, locating together allows us to leverage each other's resources, knowledge, and expertise to better and more efficiently serve clients and the community."

"... locating together allows us to leverage each other's resources, knowledge, and expertise to better and more efficiently serve clients and the community."

The Eau Claire Area EDC moved to their new location at 7 South Dewey Street in late October of 2015. The Small Business Development Center joined the EDC in their new space in November of 2015.

ECONOMIC UPDATES PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES TO LEARN ABOUT CHALLENGES

The EDC started hosting Economic Updates in 2015. These breakfast events allow local businesses to come together and learn more about a topic or issue that may affect our economy.

In Summer of 2015, Jennifer Owen and Lisa Wells from the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) of Eau Claire County spoke to the attendees on the impact of having an aging workforce. Baby Boomers make up to 33% of the current workforce in the Eau Claire area. This high percentage of aging workers presents a unique situation for businesses.

After a brief presentation, local businesses were able to ask questions and gain information about the resources that are available to them.

Scott Hodek, from Wisconsin's Department of Workforce Development, presented the preliminary results of the 2015 Employer Skills Gap Survey at the Fall 2015 Economic Update. This presentation gave local businesses

access to data about hard-to-fill job openings and upcoming retirements.

Having access to this information gives our region an advantage due to better understanding of our workforce and the challenges that will be facing it in the near future.

"This is going to chart the direction of the community for ... maybe the next five or ten years," stated Hodek when asked about the importance of the data.

After Hodek's presentation, local businesses asked him more specific questions about our regional needs. Additionally, they conversed among themselves - using the Economic Update as an opportunity to learn what their peers are facing and how they are dealing with issues.

A few of the specific issues that were mentioned included low wages, unmet transportation needs, and an overall smaller pool of specialized workforce.

FINANCIALS AND FUNDING SOURCES

REVENUE	ACTUAL	BUDGETED
Private Sector Funding	\$ 86,619	\$ 100,000
Public Sector Funding	\$ 197,400	\$ 198,400
Services	\$ 50,500	\$ 12,000
Misc.	\$ 29,610	\$ 23,000
Total Revenue	\$ 364,129	\$ 333,400
EXPENSES	ACTUAL	BUDGETED
Administrative *	\$ 209,001	\$ 258,252
Operations	\$ 57,863	\$ 56,380
Programs	\$ 37,450	\$ 45,700
Capital **	\$ 46,753	\$ 3,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 351,067	\$ 363,332

* Administrative expenses came in significantly under budget due to staffing changes experienced in 2015

** Capital Expense discrepancy is due to the office re-location

EDC LEADERSHIP & STAFF

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Larry Accola, Security Financial Bank
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Robert McCoy, Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce
Mike Schatz, City of Eau Claire

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Patrick Gaetjens, Project Manager
Beryl Ouimette, Office & Graphics Manager
Pat Trowbridge, Office Manager (retired)
Christina Wasson, Marketing Manager

INVESTORS OF THE EDC

DIAMOND INVESTORS



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GOLD INVESTORS



SILVER INVESTORS

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 Citizens Community Federal, N.A.
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 Indianhead Foodservice Distributor, Inc.
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 Keystone Financial
 Group Health Cooperative of Eau Claire
 Market & Johnson, Inc.
 Peoples Bank Midwest
 Realityworks, Inc.
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 Durand Builders Service
 Erv Smith Services, Inc.
 Impact Advertising
 JB Systems, LLC
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 Merchants Bank
 Nortrax, Inc.
 Peters Real Estate & Development LLC
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 Walmart

COPPER INVESTORS

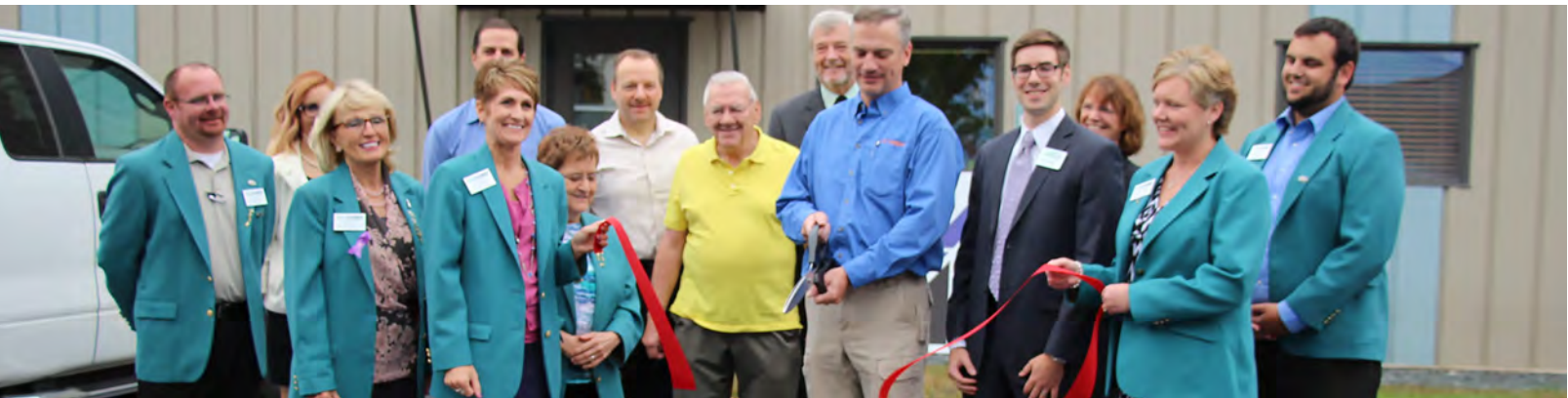
A.F.T. Real Estate, Inc.
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 Chippewa Valley Technical College
 Choice Products USA, LLC
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 Commonweal Development Corporation
 Documentation, LLC
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 Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce
 Eau Claire Co-Operative Oil Co.
 Express Employment Professionals
 Johnson Litho Graphics
 Johnson, Runkel & Anderson, Inc.
 KRM Information Services, Inc.
 Kurth Heating & Cooling
 L & M Mail Service
 L. E. Phillips Career Development Center
 Landmark Company
 Lasker Jewelers
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