

# DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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**RICHLAND CHAMBER & DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE**

## Public Relations and Resources

The majority of the work we do is helping visitors and businesses, answering referral questions, providing directions, navigating through regulations or identifying resources that people didn't know exist. There are many organizations, businesses and individuals who want to help, and we connect them with the folks who are looking for help.

RCDA sold tickets to the Making a Difference Banquet, and promoted a shop local campaign. We are developing marketing materials promoting the Industrial Park, and the EV charging stations being installed at the new Community Center.

Every year the GRABAAR group comes to town they donate

a box of bicycle helmets. We distributed those helmets to the City Police department to use in their bicycle safety training program.

We've recently enjoyed having an Ithaca High School student spend the day with us on a job shadow assignment. He is interested in opening a bicycle shop in the area following his college education.

Information about us and our recent activities are available to the public via monthly articles in the Richland Observer and Shopping News, monthly morning show spots on WRCO, Eblasts, Prosperity Southwest Wisconsin Newsletter, websites, and Facebook.



## Networking Opportunities

M & I Bank hosted a Business After 5 networking event where a presentation was given about the history of the banks in Richland Center.

Organic Valley and Schreiber Foods hosted the last 2 Business Outreach Tours. These were great opportunities to hear about each company and connect resources. Outreach Tours are scheduled out through June.

The Business Outreach tours have been very successful in gathering leaders in the community to get an in-depth look at what the businesses do, what assistance they may need and how the community can assist

them. The relationships that are formed as a direct result of these tours have been very beneficial in additional networking opportunities. The more we know about each other and talk to each other allows us to recognize and capitalize on opportunities.

We've contacted several new businesses about scheduling Ribbon Cuttings.

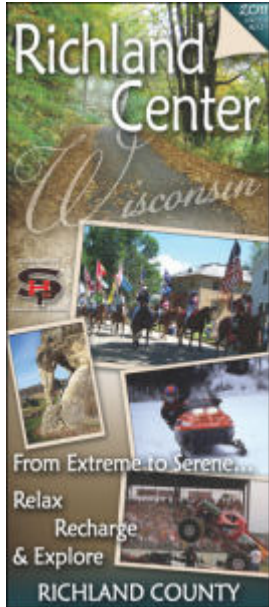
WI FI Hot Spot fliers have been distributed through town pointing out the locations with available connections.

UW-R Campus Foundation of-

fered us a tour of the Smart Farm where we gained valuable insight into the opportunities and resources available.

Our Spring Workshop focusing on Customer Service and the Importance of First Impressions is being coordinated with the UW-R communications class. This workshop will be Friday, April 13, 9:00 am.

## Tourism Promotions



Targeted Marketing Stay & Play package has been coordinated and promoted by RCDA staff. We've identified 572 snowmobile clubs in WI and we contacted 59% via email with the promotion. It received positive feedback. Unfortunately the trails aren't open, but the message was delivered and well received.

We will again be co-sponsoring the SW WI Chamber Golf outing. Dates are being considered.

We participated in spreading the message about the debate between WI and MI Tourism Agencies over the use of the Mitten in promotions. "There were 300 to 400 news stories about it.

Antique cars, motorcycle, canoe and bicycle, snowmobile, bird watching, geocaching, trout unlimited and RV clubs are being supplied with information about Richland Center activities and accommodations to bring outside dollars into the community to support our hospitality and services businesses.

The first recruited bus tour will be using the Scenic 60 Byway itinerary in May.

Richland Center Visitor Guides have been distributed to local and area hotels and Visitor Centers. Visitor survey cards have been developed and will be placed in the hotel rooms for feedback about their experience and activities.

The GRABAAR bicycle group will again be in town over the Star Spangled Celebration weekend. We are coordinating services with them.

R.C. feature articles are being submitted to On Wisconsin Outdoors by our very own "Little Bobber" journalist.

## Housing Opportunities

Employers continue to tell us about their challenges in recruiting middle to upper management due in part to the lack of modern, quality extended stay and permanent housing options.

We have networked with five developers encouraging development.

One developer is per-

forming a feasibility study on the current housing stock and the comparable market for rental units. We are coordinating meetings with the employers for them to gather practical data in conjunction with the demographic data available.

There seems to be genuine interest by this partic-

ular company. They have visited the community several times.



## Business Services



Four start-up businesses have asked about financial resources in the past few weeks. The good news is that people are interested in engaging in entrepreneurship, investing in the community and developing business. The bad news is that we don't have many resources for the small requests, which is the majority. We are assisting a

couple of phase two growth companies with expansions, which is exciting to see as well.

We are in contact with an average of 20 businesses per week. Some for very minor inquiries and others are challenged with downtown parking regulations. We've assisted nine businesses this month with in depth finan-

cial and development resources.

A growing business required our assistance in expediting and navigating their loan process.

## Industry Relations

Manufacturing has been the largest industry sector providing employment in Richland County for decades. The future continues to look favorable for expansion and growth in this sector. We continue to develop new programs and training opportunities to assist our largest employment base.

With the growth of the manufacturing sector have come challenges in filling the open positions with quality workforce. It seems there are applicants, but finding the right fit and soft skill set is a challenge. The RCDA, Prosperity Southwest Wisconsin, Southwest Wisconsin Workforce Development Board and Southwest Wisconsin Technical College are partnering to host a Job Fair on May 8 to attract qualified workers to the area and promote the job

openings in the area. We also had an opportunity to share Richland Center job openings with 120 veterans in Dodgeville.

The increased activity in this industry sector is due in part to the strength of our relationship with and the responsiveness of our workforce training partners. They have bolstered our ability to retain and attract additional manufacturing business.

At least five businesses have inquired about manufacturing space. The growth of our core industry sector has caught the attention of others looking for expansion opportunities. We currently have a shortage of industrial space available. It's a good problem to have, but we would really like to help these businesses start and grow in the Richland Center area.

Southwest Tech was able to secure a WAT grant to provide Lean, Supervisory Management, OSHA and NEC training for 85 Richland area employees. This grant offsets the costs to the employer and allows the training to take place at the SWTECH Richland Center Outreach Center versus sending their employees to Fenimore, which is more costly for the employer.

We will be participating in "ExporTech Lite" training sponsored by WMEP and WEDC. The training will provide us with the tools to effectively identify the companies in the region who are best suited to tap into new markets with a customized export expansion strategy. The readiness screening and

**Local manufacturing employers research and identify wage and benefit trends.**

prequalification serves to extend, expand, and accelerate access to the ExporTech program. This program is another example of the resources we are developing to assist our manufacturing employers.

We are researching ride share programs for commuter workforce options.



This regional economic development cooperative is creating a non-profit 501(c)(6) to allow additional opportunities. The website is under construction and scheduled for completion in March.

Discussions to regionalize the existing Revolving Loan Funds are underway. This should open more opportunities and provide more efficient services for area businesses.

The region will be educating the State legislators about our strengths and resources available for the advanced manufacturing, advanced agriculture and tourism industries in April at an event at the Capital.

Representatives from the region have been working with a brokerage firm to open up an export market for local food products.

This new export market creates an opportunity for branding the quality of SW WI food products to the global market.

A feasibility study is being conducted to evaluate the potential for an Innovation & Research Park at UW-Platteville. The focus of the park will be nanotechnology and Ag-research. This could draw considerable attention to the region

