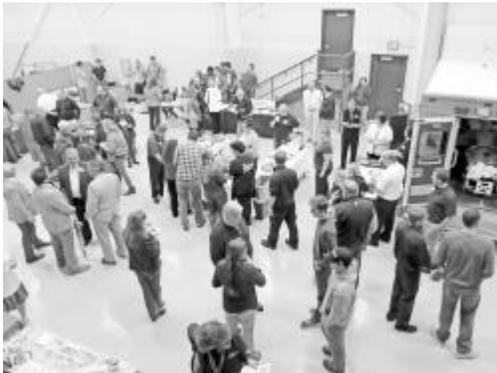




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Economic Development Corporation Open House Provides Networking Opportunities



At left: Visitors gather at the Economic Development Corporation of Sault Ste. Marie open house at the SMARTZONE facility on Meridian Street Wednesday, October 12. About 200 people attended the event to learn about local businesses and tour the facility. (Photographs courtesy Economic Development Corporation of Sault Ste. Marie)

to tours of the office and manufacturing space, received resources and giveaways, and dinner

The Economic Development Corporation of Sault Ste. Marie (EDC) held an open house Wednesday, October 12, inviting the public, business owners, students, and entrepreneurs to their SMARTZONE facility on Meridian Street, which serves as an incubator for start-up companies. The open house was the first event of its kind in the area, said EDC Director Jeff Holt.

"The event was threefold," Mr. Holt said. "Learn about how the EDC can help grow business, have the public see the improvements and available space, and last but not least, offer more than 20 resources via booths to anyone thinking about a start-up or expansion."

About 200 people attended the event and were treated



provided by The Wicked Sister. The vendors were happy with the turnout.

Members of the Mackinac Economic Alliance (MEA) attended the open house, as well, to see what the Sault Economic Development Corporation offers local businesses. MEA Chair Dean Reid said attending the event was a good networking opportunity and chance for economic developers in Mackinac County to learn what other EUP organizations are doing to help bolster local economies.

“The main reason was to network,” Mr. Reid said, “but it also gives you ideas of what somebody else in another county is doing.”

A similar event showcasing local businesses could be held in Mackinac County, Mr. Reid said, perhaps in a venue like Little Bear East Arena in St. Ignace. Having organizations from throughout the county gather in one location would showcase the variety of businesses and services available.

“I think highlighting some of our businesses wouldn’t be a bad idea,” he said.

The SMARTZONE facility and open house highlights the good working relationship among the EDC, City of Sault Ste. Marie, and Lake Superior State University (LSSU).

Sault Ste. Marie Mayor Tony Bosbous said, “The cooperation that exists today between the entities responsible for strengthening the economic climate in and around the city of Sault Ste. Marie has never been stronger. Growing wealth in our community continues to be a core goal of the city commission. It seems that we are aggressively moving ahead in meeting this goal with the help of these economic partners. [Organizers] Jeff Holt and Tracey Laitinen have been able to provide the leadership necessary, in a relatively short amount of time, to meet the challenges of the future. Jeff Holt and Tracey Laitinen have been able to provide the leadership necessary, in a relatively short amount of time, to meet the challenges of the future.”

Lake Superior State University President Dr. Thomas Pleger said the college is critical to the region’s economic development. The university employs the most advanced and research degree holders in the region and works to enhance the community, and each year, LSSU’s economic impact to the EUP is more than \$120 million.

The table of aerospace parts manufacturer R&B Electronics, Inc. of Sault Ste. Marie was filled with gadgets during the Economic Development Corporation of Sault Ste. Marie open house Wednesday, October 12. R&B was one of 20 businesses highlighted during the event.

More than 20 resources were available in a variety of areas, from business planning to financing. Presenters included: the Procurement Technical Assistance Center, Northern Initiatives, Small Business Development Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture/Rural Development, Old Mission Bank, Sault Area High School and Career Center Robotics, Cedarville High School Robotics, Michigan Manufacturing Technical Center, Michigan Certified Development Corporation, Upward Talent Council of Michigan Works, City of Sault Ste. Marie Development Department, City of Sault Ste. Marie Municipal Airport, Central Savings Bank, EUP Regional Planning and Development, LSSU's Product Development Center, SSMart, Lamar Advertising, R&B Electronics, Sault Area Chamber of Commerce, and Diversity Enterprise Solutions, which is housed at the Incubator on Easterday Avenue.

The EDC plans to hold another open house in the future to a larger venue in a local manufacturing space to highlight what they create in their facility.

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