

## **MACKINAC ECONOMIC ALLIANCE**

### **Directors Report**

**May 13, 2013**

Mackinac Economic Alliance continues to align its efforts with those organizations that embrace similar economic development goals for the purpose of developing sustainable partnerships. Over the past month MEA reached out to Joel Schultz, SBTDC Director of both the Upper Peninsula and the Northeast Region of the Lower Peninsula. Joel was quick to identify initiatives that presented collaborative opportunities regionally. As the host institution for SBTDC, MI Works is at the helm of some new models to address workforce development and education. With encouragement from Joel to take up a discussion with MI Works contact was made with Gwen Worley, Executive Director for the Eastern UP.

Gwen described their new sales force model and the role Mackinac Economic Alliance could take in advancing it. As the MI Works Business Service Team for Mackinac County MEA could be responsible for talking to businesses to identify needs and frustrations. This information will be useful to MI Works efforts to target appropriate solutions. A future meeting with Gwen has been planned to define this partnership arrangement further.

In discussing tuition assistance through MI Works Gwen revealed that funding for prospective students of a Liberty Truck Driving School in Spring/Summer would be limited. MEA was advised to take up further discussion of this topic with Gwen's assistant (Erin) to better understand the timing of funding in the coming months. A meeting with Erin has been scheduled for May 15th.

The meeting of North Central Michigan College, Mackinac Straits Hospital, Sault Tribe Health Center, MI Works, Sault Tribe Transportation Planning and Secondary school leaders in Mackinac County has been re-scheduled for June 17<sup>th</sup> in St. Ignace. The first meeting begins at 1:00 p.m. at the Hospital, followed by a second at 3:00 p.m. at the Mackinac County Airport.

In an effort to have a better understanding of transportation challenges prior to the June 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, MEA and EUPCAN are conducting meetings with Sault Tribe Transportation Planner, Wendy Hoffman. Together the three organizations will explore those potential transportation options that will best meet the needs of prospective vocational/trade school students.

Under its contract with Clark Township MEA is managing the Les Cheneaux Safe Routes to School Grant Application. A Core Team has been assembled, Parent Surveys have been distributed and a Student Homes Map was created. On May 8<sup>th</sup> Cedarville School conducted a Bike/Walk/Roll to School Day. With participation of more than one third of K-8 students, this program is off to a great start.

A separate initiative under the Clark Township contract involves identifying specific mechanisms to showcase and promote local Les Cheneaux artists. As a way to gauge artist interest and buy in around proposed ideas a survey has been developed. Based on the responses MEA will have the necessary information to complete this component of the Downtown Cedarville Visioning Plan.

MEA has been instrumental in catalyzing a Les Cheneaux Farmers Market in Hessel, MI. After numerous conversations with a variety of MI market masters, including those in Pickford and St. Ignace, MEA was able to create a Farmers Market work plan and budget and deliver guideline and application templates. MEA also searched out a qualified Market Master to manage the Les Cheneaux Market. With assistance from the Les Cheneaux Chamber of Commerce the proposed market has been introduced to the Les Cheneaux Community Foundation as a grant request. The intent is to launch the market in 2013.

Through the EUP Regional Planning and Development Commission MEA received the recently published Mackinac County Technology Action Plan. Released by Connect Michigan it contains an assessment of broadband and technology readiness, as well as priority projects and a list of recommended actions. With interest to support the advancement and improvement of broadband access in Mackinac County, MEA contacted Paula Ramelis, Community Champion for Michigan Connect. A meeting in Curtis has been arranged on May 17<sup>th</sup> to discuss specific ways that MEA can support various next steps (workshops, surveys etc.) that Michigan Connect plans to undertake.