Georgia Tech Hosts Business Incubator Kick-Off Meeting

On May 30, 2012, representatives from Georgia Tech’s Enterprise Innovation Institute hosted a kick-off meeting to talk about the feasibility of starting a business incubator in Whitfield County. At the meeting, Georgia Tech faculty members described different types of business incubators, potential benefits of business incubators, and concerns to be aware of when launching a business incubator. Georgia Tech then led community leaders in a facilitated discussion about the community’s current resources for entrepreneurs.

This meeting was the first public step in a Community Readiness Study that Georgia Tech is completing for the Dalton-Whitfield Community. The need for the study was prioritized last year by Archway’s Diverse, Forward-Thinking Economy work group chaired by Dalton Utilities CEO Don Cope. The study is made possible by a partnership between the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority and the University of Georgia Archway Partnership.

Over the summer, Georgia Tech will continue its work by contacting local entrepreneurs and innovators and discussing their needs and challenges.

Local participants at the meeting included:

- Carolyn Coburn – Northwest Georgia Regional Commission
- Tom Bojo – Georgia Northwestern Technical College
- Barbara Ward – Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority
- Celeste Creswell – Miller & Martin (law firm)
- David Apple – Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute
- David Aft – Northwest Georgia Community Foundation
- David Pennington – Mayor, City of Dalton
- Dustin Coker – Northwest Carpets
- Mark Buckner – Dalton Utilities
- Tangela Johnson – North Georgia Center for Educational Excellence
- Theo Lu – Minor Bell & Neal
- Veronica French – Dalton Downtown Development Authority
- Bob Kinard – Kinard Realty
- Kevin Harris – Arrowstar
- Linda Blackman – Archway Partnership Executive Committee
- Don Cope – Dalton Utilities
- Jim Hawkins – Dalton Public Schools
- Dixie Kinard – Kinard Realty; Archway Partnership Executive Committee
- Melissa Lu – University of Georgia Archway Partnership
- Ginger Mathis – Georgia Northwestern Technical College
- Dr. John Schwenn – Dalton State College
- Alex Stall – Dalton Whitfield Joint Development Authority

40 Students Graduate from Second Annual Design, Engineering, & Manufacturing Camp
From June 11 – 14, 40 local 5th through 8th grade students participated in the second annual Design, Engineering, and Manufacturing Camp at the Northwest Georgia College and Career Academy. At the camp, students had the opportunity to build model race cars using Auto CAD professional software, learn soldering and other skills to create a siren, work on Photoshop to design carpet, tour local manufacturing and power facilities, and build teamwork skills. At the camp’s graduation ceremony on June 14, students had an opportunity to show off the carpets they designed, reflect on their experiences touring facilities, and race their model cars. Students remarked at the diversity they saw in the carpet companies, the variety of opportunities that they didn’t know were available locally, and how much fun they had building their sirens.

The idea for the Design, Engineering & Manufacturing Camp emerged during Archway’s Higher Education Issue Work Group sessions in spring 2011. At the meetings, citizens talked about the need to expose students at an early age to the variety of career options available to them. A Leadership-Dalton Whitfield survey conducted during fall 2010 revealed that students had very low perceptions of local opportunities and did not understand the highly-skilled nature of many jobs.

The camp was sponsored by Shaw, Dalton Utilities, Mohawk, J&J, Georgia Northwestern Technical College, the Dalton-Whitfield County Joint Development Authority, Dalton Public Schools, Whitfield County Schools, the Boys and Girls Clubs, the Archway Partnership, the Greater Dalton Chamber of Commerce and Grow Greater Dalton. To learn more about DEM Camp, click on the following link: http://daltondailycitizen.com/local/x1291708188/Day-camp-draws-budding-engineers-designers.

University of Georgia Students Continue Work at Prater’s Mill

On June 6, 2012, UGA Masters in Landscape Architecture students Drew Cutright and Rachel Johnson, UGA Bachelors in Landscape Architecture student David Lucey, and UGA Masters in Historic Preservation student Nicholas Patrick met with representatives from Whitfield County, the Prater’s Mill Foundation, and the Conasauga River Alliance to discuss plans for the future of Prater’s Mill. At the meeting, local representatives discussed the need for a plan that draws modern day visitors and produces revenue while at the same time respecting the history and the environmental integrity of the site.

The students will spend the next month developing multiple concepts for the area. In July, they will present their work to local stakeholders. The students’ work will build upon the historical structure report developed over the last several months by student Nicholas Patrick.

UGA Student Presents Research on Successful Arts & Culture Councils

On June 6, 2012, UGA Masters in Public Administration student Megan Miller presented research to the Archway Partnership Executive Committee about the best practices of successful arts and culture councils. The request for Megan’s research came from the Archway Arts and Culture Issue Work Group, which prioritized forming some type of collaborative or consortium to better market the arts.

Megan’s research revealed that successful arts and culture councils use best practices commonly accepted by successful non-profits. She noted that their boards are not made up of artists and art groups because these individuals have an inherent conflict of interest. Instead, they are made up of successful, diverse business people with an interest and passion for advancing the arts for economic development. She noted that the legal structure of arts and culture councils reflects their mission. Most had 501(c)(3) status but some only did advocacy. Those who were mostly involved in advocacy had office space; those who were involved in service delivery had an arts center. Megan’s primary advice for the Executive Committee was to reframe the purpose of an arts council from “doing arts better” to using the arts to advance economic development.