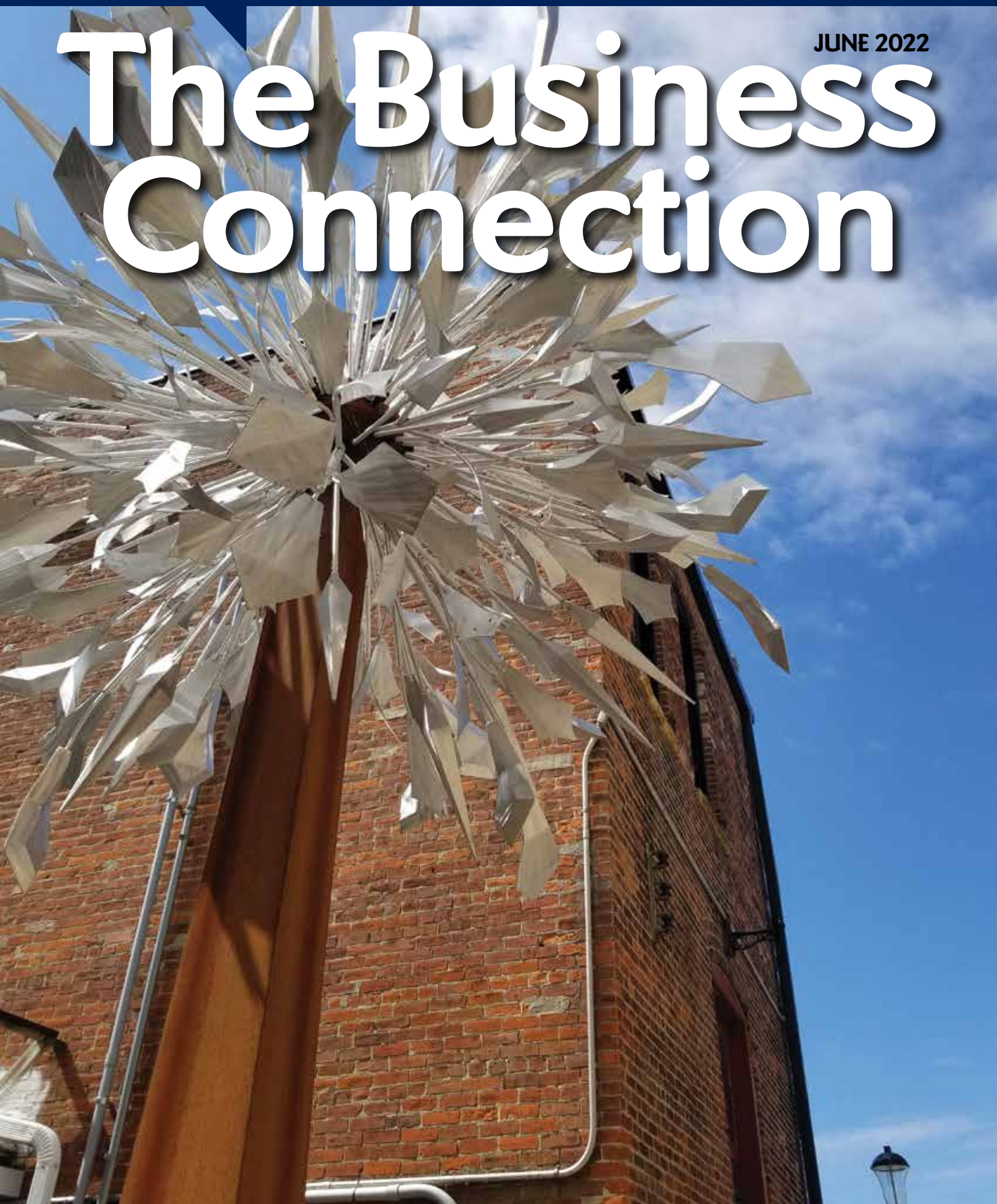


A NEWS JOURNAL OF THE
Marion Chamber of Commerce, Uptown Marion, and Marion Economic Development Corp.

JUNE 2022

The Business Connection





Paul & Jeanne Matthews
honored with Marion
Leadership Award

Uptown Marion Wins State Award for Streetscape Business Support Initiatives

Main Street Iowa hosted the annual Main Street Iowa Development Awards celebration on April 22, 2022 at Community Choice Credit Union Convention Center in Des Moines. The program honored the efforts of those who work tirelessly to revitalize Iowa's downtowns – the heart and soul of communities across the state. The awards honor outstanding accomplishments, activities and people making a difference in the state's Main Street districts.

Uptown Marion received the Main Street Business Support Award for the Streetscape Business Support Initiative. This joint initiative between the Uptown Marion Main Street Program and the City of Marion was created to support small businesses through the hardships of the 7th Avenue streetscape reconstruction project.

Local building and business owners Jeanne and Paul Matthews were honored with the Marion Leadership Award presented by Governor Kim Reynolds and Debi Durham, executive director of the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) and Iowa Finance Authority.

"The Main Street Iowa program is a powerful economic development tool that has stood the test of time since its introduction in 1985," said Durham. "We continue to see significant growth in business, jobs, and investment in communities of all sizes because of the program. As a result, these districts serve as inspiring examples of what's possible for Iowa's downtowns."

"Main Street is grassroots economic development," said Michael Wagler, Main Street Iowa State Coordinator. "It is inspiring to witness the impactful work of local Main Street program staff, volunteers, and community partners."

Marion Projects that also received nomination include:

- ▶ The Marion Business Investment Guide – Nominated for the Main Street Business Recruitment Award

- ▶ The Monuments Building/Frydae – Nominated for the Main Street Rehabilitation Award
- ▶ Marion Winter Lights Program – Nominated for the Main Street Placemaking Project Award

A full list of award winners can be found at the Iowa Economic Development Authority website.



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EAT. DRINK. & BE MARION.

Food & Pub Crawl Fundraiser

Thursday | July 14 | 5:30pm | Uptown Marion
Tickets at www.UptownMarion.com

Uptown Marion will host the eighth annual Eat. Drink. & Be Marion: Pub Crawl Fundraiser on Thursday, July 14, 2022, from 5:30 – 9:30PM.

Enjoy a night out on the town for a good cause! With your ticket, you will receive a complementary glass, event exclusive RAYGUN t-shirt, and exclusive deals from participating businesses in the Uptown Marion District. Also, enjoy live entertainment, \$1 bar specials, food samples, and extended shopping hours as you walk to each participating establishment. "This year we'll have some new areas to explore," said Uptown Director, Brooke Prouty. "The north plaza will be open, new businesses will be participating, and new experiences will be available to bid on for the online auction." Ticket proceeds benefit the ongoing revitalization and beautification efforts of Uptown Marion – A Main Street Iowa District. Must be 21 years or older to participate. Tickets are \$40 per person and can be purchased at UptownMarion.com.



Cindy Shipley, AFSP
Owner



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888 10th St., Suite 2
Marion, IA 52302

www.ClassicTax.net
Ph: 319 447 4429
Fax: 319 447 4434



Uptown Streetscape Update

Rain and some complicated underground work with historic limestone foundations were a challenge to the construction crew in May but crews are on track to finish 10th Street between 7th Avenue and 8th Avenue mid-June. Once North 10th Street is open, the South part of 10th Street (between 6th and 7th avenues) will be closed for phase #3. Reconstruction of this block

stretching from Zoey's to the Draper Building is expected to take a couple of months, weather dependent before moving on to phase #4.

Decorative features such as benches, bike racks, flower pots, hanging baskets, and garden plantings will take place in June on completed portions of the project.



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Thoughtful Features of the Uptown Streetscape Project



Curb-less Streets enhance the festival experience allowing for the street to be closed for large events and easy pedestrian and ADA access to the park and businesses!

Expanded sidewalk areas allow businesses to utilize café zones during warm weather months and create vibrancy along the street front.



Unique gathering places with artistic seating and fire tables for year-round activity.

Brad McDonough with Rustic Roots Wood Co. in Solon created this bench out of a Derecho tree. The bench symbolizes a storm that destroyed and splintered many parts of the community but Marion came together to make something beautiful and rebuild even stronger out of the storm. Included are three small wooden hearts for you to find hidden in the bench.

Evening Lighting, for ambiance and safety, is incorporated into decorative piers and benches. The yellow pier tops were created by local Uptown artist Cara Briggs-Farmer.



Inlaid leaf pavers reflect the City's Tree City USA status since 1993 and shape of the Klopfenstein Amphitheater at Lowe Park.



Features honoring the past such as festoon lighting over 7th Avenue.



Board Approved Offers Insightful Reads

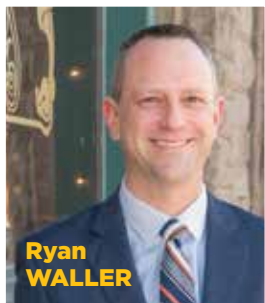


Matt
SKOGMAN

In March, the Chamber debuted a monthly column titled Board Approved. These quick reads are featured in e-updates and on social media. They include book, podcast, or article recommendations that members of the Board of Directors found insightful and worthy of sharing. Here's a look at what they have recommended. Watch the weekly e-update for more!

Matt Skogman, Vice President of Sales at Skogman Homes, currently serves as Marion Chamber Board Chair. Here's what he says about *Never Split The Difference*, by Chris Voss.

"The book is written by FBI hostage negotiator Chris Voss. Chris believes everything in life is a negotiation. He challenges old-school thought and helps you look at conversations with peers and family differently. I've learned a lot of really good tips from this book on how to communicate more effectively with people around me."



Ryan
WALLER

City Manager **Ryan Waller** invites you to check out *"The Splendid and the Vile"* by Erik Larson.

"This book is about Winston Churchill's experience as a newly appointed Prime Minister of Great Britain during WWII, right after France's surrender and prior to the United States of America joining in the war. There are challenges in leadership, but when one compares Churchill's challenges (and eventual achievements) to those we may be currently facing in our own respective positions, they don't seem so challenging and/or impossible after all."

Paul Phelan, President & CEO of Phelan's, had this to say about *"The Slight Edge"* by Jeff Olson.

"I usually feel the best book I read is the last book I read, that is until I picked up *The Slight Edge* over a year ago. The book is full of eye-opening thoughts and principles that can be used daily. It shares a view on how small changes or actions done repeatedly can change your personal, family, and business life. An amazing simple strategy anyone can apply, if they are willing".



Paul
PHELAN



Live Music Returns to City Square in August

After being displaced by construction and the pandemic the past two years, live music will return to City Square Park with Uptown Getdown! This free community event is held each Thursday night in August from 6-9pm and features some of the area's greatest bands. Food will be available to purchase, or you can carry out from one of the Uptown restaurants. Bring your chairs and friends. Coolers welcome but leave pets at home.

2022 Schedule:


August 4 - Flatland Ridge

August 11 - Trophy Dads

August 18 - Schmidt Brothers

August 25 - The Ice Breakers

Uptown Getdown is sponsored by Marion Chamber Platinum Community Partners Farmers State Bank, ImOn Communications, MercyCare Community Physicians, Summit Pointe Senior Living, and Z102.9 and supported in part by the Marion Hotel/Motel Program.



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Welcome

New Chamber Members

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Marion, IA 52302
319-552-4288
ascent-therapy.com

Basepoint Wealth LLC

4144 Golf Street NE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52402
319-826-1898
basepointwealth.com

Boulevard Apartments

640 Marion Boulevard
Marion, IA 52302
605-274-7373

Dubuque Bank & Trust

320 3rd Street SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401
319-382-3577

The Family Room

143 Marion Blvd
Marion, IA 52302
319-310-8020

Frydae

743 10th St
Marion, IA 52302
319-200-4550
finallyfrydae.com

Heritage Area Agency on Aging

6301 Kirkwood Blvd SW
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404
319-398-7697
heritageaaa.org

House of Colour

319-329-80268
facebook.com/
houseofcolourcedarapids

The Marion Merchant

1090 7th Ave
Marion, IA 52302
319-899-4926
themarionmerchant.com

MIX Sushi & Kitchen

1138 7th Ave
Marion, IA 52302
319-200-1028
mixsushikitchen.com

Premier Power & Pressure Wash

595 62nd St, Ste 127
Marion, IA 52302
3196-450-7075
prwash.com

State Farm, Lindsay Lange

1003 50th St, Ste 2
Marion, IA 52302
319-289-6202
marionsf.com

Time Capsule Studios LLC

119 Marion Blvd
Marion, IA 52302
319-535-3686
timecapsulestudios.net



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Marion Independent School District, 777 S 15th St, celebrated two ground breakings for the next step in the district's future. Students representing various activities helped break ground on a new multi-activity stadium to be located east of the high school.



Students at **Francis Marion Intermediate School**, 2301 3rd St, are joined by district superintendent Janelle Brouwer. The project includes renovations and additions that will add classroom space, a secure entrance, and new music & art rooms.



Stork Vision, 1195 East Post Rd, Unit 2, celebrated the opening of their first location in the Cedar Rapids/Marion area. The company provides a relaxed and comfortable environment for expectant parents and their family and friends to get to know their baby prenatally through the amazing experience of ultrasound technology.



T&C Landscape, 3415 3rd Ave, celebrated their move to a new location last week. The business specializes in custom, luxury landscape services for both residential and commercial customers including design and installation, retaining walls, patios, grading, drainage, and landscape lighting.

Culver's Garden Center & Greenhouse, 1682 Dubuque Rd, celebrated 25 years of growing and 40 years in business in Marion. They now employ over 200 people.



Premier Power & Pressure Wash, 595 62nd St, celebrated their opening in Marion! The business offers pressure washing for concrete, driveways, garage floors, pavement, houses including vinyl, wood and brick as well as wood fencing, patios and decks. Servicing Cedar Rapids, Marion, and surrounding areas.

Talon, LLC broke ground on Boulevard Apartments, 640 Marion Boulevard. The project includes construction of a four-story, 90 -plus-unit apartment building on the former Hames Homes site at 640 Marion Boulevard.

Green Park Apartment Living, broke ground on a project that will transform the form YMCA site at the corner of 31st St and 10th Avenue. It will include a 69-unit building along 10th Avenue and a 78-unit building along 31st Street.



Ascent Therapy Group, 295 Tower Terrace Rd, Ste B, celebrated the opening of their office in north Marion. The office is strategically located in a large growth area of Marion to provide important mental health services.

Dr Alex and Courtney Riniker and the entire team at **Revive Family Chiropractic**, 295 Tower Terrace Rd, Ste A, cut the ribbon at their new location. This new location will position the practice for an additional chiropractor and expanded services in the future.





Pictured front row: Destiny Hastings, Terra Heaton, Dorothy Back, Cydeny Lovell. Back row: Amanda Zhorne, Mayor AbouAssaly, Jill Ackerman, Tiffany Hermesen, Tara Widdel, Daniel Morgan, Richard Luth, Seth Staashelm, Lara Moellers, Melanie Klose, Seth Moomey, Kyle Low, and Julie Albert. Not pictured, Ursula Lamphear

Marion
LEADERSHIP in Action

More information at
marioncc.org/leadership-in-action
or email Jill@marioncc.org.

Marion Leadership in Action Graduates

The 11th class of Marion Leadership in Action celebrated their achievements and service to the Marion Community at a recent ceremony. This marks 150 graduates through the program since beginning in 2011. This year's class volunteered at the Marion Arts Festival and raised money to purchase a new 30 ft Peace Tree for their class project. The tree will be debuted at Christmas in the Park & Peppermint this coming December.

Applications are currently open for the next cohort beginning in September. The program consists of the 10 half-day sessions from September - May and will include leadership assessments, one-on-one meetings with local government officials, curriculum-based training, hands-on developmental experiences, networking and volunteering. Sessions cover everything from history and culture to economic and community development. Class size is limited.

This program supported by Small Business Champions



SUMMER FIESTA!

BLOCK PARTY 2022

Please join us for our **25th annual Chamber BizMix, July 21** from 5-7pm in the **Marion Uptown Artway** behind Brick Alley Pub and Uptown Snug (the alley between 10th and 11th Streets). Free entry, margaritas, beer, salsa music, and catering by Carlos O Kelly's! Visit www.marioncc.org for details! **RAIN DATE:** July 28



Nick Glew
 MEDCO President
 319-743-4724
nick@medcoiowa.org

We're groundbreaking.

With construction season literally in full swing, we've been honored to partner with the City of Marion, the Marion Chamber, and our private developers to stick shovels in the ground and move some dirt. At the beginning of the year, the MEDCO Board of Directors adopted a strategic plan directing us to "aggressively market land and building assets that lead to big groundbreakings."

Since April 26, we've celebrated five big groundbreakings that represent \$53M of new investment in the Marion community. As inflationary, supply chain, and labor shortages remain, we are honored that investors continue to focus their dollars in our community.

Please join me together with our community partners as we say thank you to these developers who are choosing Marion as their place to grow!



DMFA LLC broke ground on May 26 for a new 52,300 square foot distribution and warehouse facility in the Marion Enterprise Center. The estimated project cost is \$3.6M.



Twenty 40 Building Concepts broke ground on April 26 for a new 40,000 square foot office and warehouse facility in the Marion Enterprise Center. The estimated project cost is \$4.2M.



Talon Development broke ground on June 10 for a new 4-story, 93-unit apartment building located at 610 Marion Boulevard. The estimated project cost is \$11.5M.



Community Housing Initiatives broke ground on June 10 for a new 40-unit affordable housing apartment building for seniors ages 55 and older (image is a rendering of the project). The estimated project cost is \$8.7M.



Green Park Apartment Living broke ground on May 11 for a new 147-unit residential development on the former location of the Marion YMCA. The estimated project cost is \$25M.



High school CNA student shares her experiences completing the Patient Care Academy and beginning work at Mercy Medical Center through a partnership formed between Community Promise, Marion Independent High School and Kirkwood Community College.



Looks to The Future During Annual Luncheon

The Business Connection

Marion Economic Development Corp. (MEDCO) hosted its 36th Annual Luncheon at Prospect Meadows in early May. More than 400 attendees enjoyed the sunshine on a beautiful afternoon at the ballpark as community leaders shared stories of business and community wins.

“Marion gained 20 percent growth in the 2010s,” said keynote speaker and Trees Forever CEO, Kiley Miller. “Over the same period, 68 of Iowa’s 99 counties lost population.” The key driver to continued growth in Marion has a lot to do with leaders committed to making Marion the best place to grow a business and raise a family.

Some highlights from the luncheon included:

- › MEDCO is now supported by 191 local and regional businesses, an all-time high for the organization.
- › Development in Marion remains strong with a focus on multifamily housing and speculative warehouse space now under construction.
- › New programming like the Business Leadership Series, Business Founders, The Story Of, and Startup Spotlight are equipping existing leaders and investment in the next generation of entrepreneurs. Learn more at medcoiowa.org/events.
- › We’ve intentionally fostered work-based learning opportunities within both Linn-Mar Community School District and Marion Independent School District. Community Promise (communitypromise.org), Marion Community Build (medcoiowa.org/communitybuild), and Venture Academics (medcoiowa.org/venture) are examples of opportunities students can get involved in while learning alongside industry professionals.
- › The newly developed Marion Community Index was published in April. This document is a quarterly survey that provides a timely snapshot of challenges

and trends facing local industry. Read the first one at medcoiowa.org/quarterlyindex.

- › The State of Iowa launched two grant programs last year to support investments in Manufacturing 4.0 technology. Woodcrafters in Marion was one of the first companies in the state to be awarded these dollars to support adoption and integration of new technology in their manufacturing process. Attendees heard from Woodcrafters President Dan Sanderson. To date, MEDCO has worked on applications from seven other Marion companies. Learn more by going to medcoiowa.org/manufacturingplan.
- › In September, MEDCO will be relocating to the new Broad and Main building along 7th avenue in Marion. The office will be on the second floor overlooking City Square Park. A 30-person training facility will be part of the office space, allowing the MEDCO team to offer Coworking and gathering space to the community.

Attendees were encouraged to stay and participate in a Charitable Home Run Derby to benefit the Miracle League at Prospect Meadows. \$2,000 was raised to purchase permanent seating for the Miracle Field.



MEDCO Luncheon attendees eat lunch while listening to the program.

New MEDCO Investors

The Restoration Project
Twenty 40 Concepts
Talon Development
St. Luke’s Health
Care Foundation

Eagle View Partners
Finish Tower
McGrath Family
of Dealerships
CR Signs

Dubuque Bank & Trust
Julin Printing Company
Community Housing
Initiatives



Questions or to learn more
Brady Quinn
brady@medcoiowa.org

To learn more about
ELPLAST, visit
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ELPLAST America Celebrates Milestone Through Workforce Innovation

Early in 2021, the leadership team at ELPLAST America found themselves in the same challenging situation as other growing companies. The company had experienced new business growth, and that growth provided the opportunity to install new production lines. The challenge was those lines required new talent. New hires were hard to find and retaining those hires in a competitive marketplace was just as difficult. So, with a new Human Resources Manager, they began making small changes to their hiring process both internally and externally.

"It has taken a great deal of teamwork by all members. Everyone worked hard at getting us to where we are regarding our growth plan," said Sheila Schmidt, Human Resources Manager.

ELPLAST America is a leading manufacturer of press-to-close zipper products for the flexible packaging industry. The Poland based company broke ground on their North American headquarters in 2014 with the goal of supporting aggressive growth plans.

Fast forward to the year 2020 and news headlines begin to shed light on workforce shortages due to the ever-evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. The leadership team very intentionally evaluated their hiring strategies and job descriptions to better align with feedback from the marketplace. Their success has led the company to running multiple shift configurations allowing them to run production 7 days a week 24 hours a day beginning in early May. It's the first time in the history of their North American operations that they've been able to achieve this goal. Getting to this 24/7 schedule would not be possible without several changes to their hiring practices.

"Our business continues to grow and Elplast is looking at future opportunities to add production to the Marion facility," said Jakub Wronka, Plant Manager for ELPLAST America.

The team at ELPLAST recently shared these small changes that were made to their hiring process:

1 | Focus on job descriptions and job titles. "We realized the job title itself sounded too much like a role that could not be obtained by someone new to our industry,"

said Schmidt. By making sure the company intentions are clearly stated in a job description and the job title reflects those intentions, the ELPLAST team saw an uptick in interest.

2 | List pay in job descriptions. Listing the intended pay for available roles saves not only the candidate's time but also the time and effort of the hiring committee.

3 | Efficient application process. "We know applicants could decide to accept other job offers if our process isn't smooth and efficient. We must follow up with candidates in a timely manner," said Schmidt.

4 | Utilize New Jobs Training 260E dollars. The company was able to use 260E dollars to train new employees on the job while paying the wages of other staff facilitating the training. This program was made available to assist businesses that are creating new positions that require new employee training.

5 | Be flexible and creative. Members of the management team at ELPLAST can be seen working and training alongside new employees. The company feels it is essential to prioritize teamwork, morale, and internal culture by creating an environment that exudes all hands-on deck.

6 | Ensure employee growth paths are transparent. Upon interviewing at ELPLAST, candidates are made aware of where they can go within the company to continue growing their skills and pay.

By making small and intentional changes, the company has been able to make big strides on staffing needs and don't plan to stop.

Interested in making similar shifts in your workplace?

Marion Economic Development Corporation (MEDCO) strives to bring resources and connections to companies that provide solutions and value. Companies can utilize multiple resources online that MEDCO has developed, such as the MEDCO Workforce Toolkit for Employers that includes strategies to be best positioned for talent attraction and retention, how to hire people with barriers to independence and more at medcoiowa.org/hiringemploymentresources.



PHOTO CREDIT: IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY'S CENTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH AND SERVICE (CIRAS)

Learn more about the matching grants at medcoiowa.org/manufacturingplan that are still available for Manufacturing 4.0 technology investment or contact Brady Quinn at brady@medcoiowa.org or 319-551-3763.

Digital Manufacturing Lab Encourages Exploration in Industry 4.0 Technologies

The Digital Manufacturing Lab Powered by Alliant Energy is a partnership between Alliant Energy and Iowa State University's Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS). The lab is designed to help Iowa manufacturers gain advice on using technology that addresses workforce or productivity issues. It also offers the opportunity to test and refine solutions in a risk averse way before investing in them. Chris Hill, director of the CIRAS Technology Assistance Program says, "The lab and its partners are the key to success in helping companies de-risk technology adoption. We can demonstrate how technologies like robotics could be used for various applications and help companies understand the advantages and limitations of the various lab technologies."

The focus of the lab is to serve those who are struggling to make the right choices in an ever-changing landscape and companies that feel stuck because the labor shortage is preventing them from growing the way they would like. CIRAS works with a lot of small to medium-sized manufacturers that could benefit from technology adoption. The lab allows CIRAS to educate manufacturers on the technology with the goal of trying to reduce the fear of the unknown.

One robot based in the lab is called a SCARA, which stands for Selective Compliance Assembly Robot Arm. It's designed to automate processes on a production floor. The machine can complete repetitive tasks, like assembly operations, giving employers the flexibility to use workers for tasks that are more challenging and require problem-solving skills. CIRAS works within the lab to familiarize visitors with new technologies and how they can be leveraged for specific tasks.

The lab also features other tools including a vision system for inspections, smart sensors for vibration and temperature mapping, smart tower lights for remote



monitoring, and additional 3D printers. CIRAS has also added wearable sensors from Iowa-based MakuSafe. CIRAS has worked with several companies on the use of the wearable sensors in their plants, which led to the adoption of the technology.

For more information on the lab or partnering with CIRAS contact Chris Hill at chill@iastate.edu or 515-313-8251.

Learn more about the Digital Manufacturing Lab Powered by Alliant Energy here: www.alliantenergy.com/more/contentpages/digitalmanufacturinglab

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STAFF

Dr. Alex and Courtney Riniker gather around the big red scissors with their family after celebrating the ground opening of Revive Family Chiropractic's new location.



Attendees at the May Ambassador Large Group meeting at Goldfinch Tap+Eatery gather for a selfie, the largest Ambassador selfie to date!

MEDCO launched a new professional development series earlier this spring called Team Advantage. Each of the three sessions focuses on empowering team members to build and deliver competitive advantage using each person's unique abilities. Learn more at medcoiowa.org/teamadvantage.



Uptown business owners gather at Uptown Coffee to hear about construction updates from City Engineer Jacob Hahn and Uptown Director Brooke Prouty

PHOTO CREDIT: PHIL HIGH



Marion and Linn-Mar Seniors who have worked on the Community Build home were recently recognized for their work throughout the school year.

This year's project included significant structural improvements, floor leveling, and wall removals. While the inside of the home is nearing completion, crews will work throughout the summer on significant site excavation to make way for a new garage that will be constructed in the fall.



Students from Marion Independent School District recently began orientation at Mercy Medical Center. Throughout the third quarter of the school year, these students successfully completed the Certified Nurse Assistant training program through Kirkwood Community College and have transitioned to working at the hospital. We are so excited to watch their journey!



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