



COMMUNITY NEWS

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THEME: Creative Communities and Economic Innovation

Vision + Determination Builds “Hipsilanti”

Jennifer J. Albaum

Jennifer Albaum, owner of Ypsilanti boutique henrietta fahrenheit, made the following presentation at the Michigan Council for Arts & Cultural Affairs' 9th Annual Conference, titled "Creating Cool," in Lansing on December 11, 2003.

I was asked to speak to you today because my business is seen as one that captures not only the vision for Ypsilanti, but the personality of the city as well. Therefore, I will be telling you the story of *henrietta fahrenheit* – what it is and what it stands for, why I chose to open *henrietta fahrenheit* in Ypsilanti, and, for what it’s worth, my outlook and opinion on the emergence of “cool,” so that you have some ideas, and possibly actions, to take back to your own communities.

henrietta fahrenheit, at first glance, seems to be a nice, well-put together boutique. There is a wide merchandise assortment that includes clothing (mainly for women, but some unisex items), accessories (like handbags and jewelry), and gifts. But, *henrietta fahrenheit* reaches far beyond the conceived “boutique.” It is literally a creative business venture, one that is integrated within a creative community and one that fosters and supports creative relationships across many segments: with our designers (or vendors), with our customers, with local artists and musicians, with other businesses, and even within our own company.

The most distinguishing feature of the store, because it’s what you see when you walk in, is the merchandise. All of it is made by **independent** designers. For the most part, they don’t go to trade



Henrietta Fahrenheit owner Jennifer Albaum

shows, some don’t even have websites, yet they are all well connected. Their business is based on being a part of a wider community of like-minded designers, who operate within a do-it-yourself ethic and have established small businesses from their creative output. So, even though the designers we carry are located all across the United States – from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon - many of them personally know or know of one another. Their network is so vast and has so much internal support, that I, as the store buyer, rarely have to seek out new designers – they are sent to me.

I am often asked, “who are your customers?” Most people are looking for a simplified, demographic description – one that they try to guess for themselves. College students? Young people? They are surprised when I tell them that my store’s regular customers include: Florence, a sweet, soft-

ALBAUM, continued on next page

spoken, black lady who works part-time at TJ Maxx; Andrea, a college graduate who has just finished designing and making her own faux-fur coat; Toula, a Spanish teacher at an under-privileged middle school, and Andy, a married, boy, computer-nerd. What my customers seem to have in common is a mentality, not a demographic. That mentality is an appreciation for things that are different and unexpected. They are explorers, looking for something that can't be found all over the place, not even in the average independent retail store. They are thrilled with the discovery of unique things – whether it be a new restaurant, a book, a movie, a new part of town, a building, and they are willing to share their discovery with others. Many of them are creative types themselves, or they're like me – someone who appreciates and admires creativity, but can't make anything with their own hands. The bottom line is that we all support and respect what others are making.

As an extension of filling the store with the items of independent designers, we wanted to acknowledge and involve the local art and music communities. So we've created a space on our walls where local artists show their work. We also sponsor music festivals or events and sell fee-free concert tickets normally offered by large ticket agencies that routinely add a service charge to the price of the ticket. These acts connect customers, artists, musicians, - us – so that we're all involved in our own, little support system and network of creativity.

We also have built a support system with other businesses. Because I received so much help from established business people when I was planning my business, it is important for me to return the favor by offering my knowledge and encouragement to others planning their own start-ups and by connecting with those already in business. We're all in it together, so why not share ideas, be one another's sounding boards, help each other.

Most of this support and community-building occurs on a very natural and casual basis, so casual that it really can't be viewed as something deliberate. It grows organically and is a self-regenerating system,



Merchandise display at henrietta fahrenheit in Ypsilanti

constantly evolving and building more and more on itself. I believe this has occurred because creative people are open to new ideas, willing to share their discoveries, are eager to show their creativity, and take notice when others show theirs.

So, how does the entire *henrietta fahrenheit* concept fit into a town like Ypsilanti? Better yet, why is Ypsilanti the perfect place for a creative business venture? My first reason for locating in Ypsilanti was a practical one. When I moved to Michigan 6 and 1/2 years ago, Ypsilanti's downtown was what I refer to as "blown-out." It was

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Creative Communities and Success in the Global Economy

Rex LaMore

Our nation has rapidly transitioned from the age of industry and services to an information age. Today, our economy is based heavily on knowledge and its application, not the production of materials or products. In other words, ideas and information have become the goods of our society. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, “Knowledge is now recognized as the driver of productivity and economic growth. As a result, there is a new focus on the role of information, technology and learning in economic performance.”

A knowledge economy depends upon a creative and intelligent workforce, advanced scientific and technological industries, and rapidly evolving information and communication systems. All of this is occurring in the context of a highly dynamic global economy. According to the research of Dr. Richard Florida, this highly educated, creative, and mobile workforce (and their employers) chooses locales beneficial to their lifestyles and values.

The publication of Florida’s book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, reminded people that local quality of life and creativity are key to survival in the new global knowledge economy. Paradoxically, the game of global competitiveness seems to have become a very local or at least regional issue. For example, recognizing and developing the unique and stimulating assets of our communities has become more important than ever before.

The Michigan State University Community & Economic Development Program has over thirty years of experience in addressing the economic problems of communities throughout Michigan and seeks to help communities find their creative strengths. Recognizing that the role of technology is increasingly important to a healthy economy, the MSU-CEDP University Center seeks to help communities and industry, particularly those most economically vulnerable, to take an active role in preparing for this knowledge economy and overcoming the barriers to creating higher-skilled higher wage jobs. Technology is strongly linked to the creation of higher-skilled higher paying jobs. While some communities are poised to respond to the global knowledge economy, other are ill-prepared to move forward. Yet, to succeed as regions, we must learn new ways to involve the diversity, creativity, and capacity of ALL citizens.

This edition of Community News and Views is being produced in conjunction with the 17th annual Summer Institute conference, “Creative Communities and Economic Innovation.” The articles contained in this newsletter can provide our readers with some insights and suggestions about how their communities might succeed in the global economy. Readers are also encouraged to visit our web site at www.cedp.msu.edu for other materials on this topic, including the newly released Creative Community Handbook, prepared by LeRoy Harvey and John Victory.

Yours in creativity and innovation,



Rex LaMore, Director
Community and Economic Development Program
Michigan State University

vacant, impoverished, and void of any retail or service establishment. That meant that every time I wanted to do anything, be it buy a cup of coffee, buy a greeting card, or go to a movie, I had to drive out-of-town to do it. So here we have a city, a surrounding township, and no downtown? Everyone has to leave the area to make a purchase? That simply didn't make sense to me. Without considering whether Ypsilantians would even like what I had to offer in my store, my first thought was these people – we – are desperate to have a place to shop. So, by default there was a built-in, untapped customer base.

In addition to the permanent residents, there are 20,000+ students at Eastern Michigan University who have NO PLACE TO SHOP. Another built-in, yet ignored, customer base.



henrietta fahrenheit storefront in downtown Ypsilanti

Ypsilanti was like the hole of a doughnut, surrounded by cities with downtowns that were developed, occupied, serving their customer base. Ypsilanti presented a void in the marketplace, offering plenty of customers and plenty of vacant space for new business development.

But, my decision to put *henrietta fahrenheit* in downtown Ypsilanti was not simply to reach an untapped customer. For my type of business, I had to be sure that my TYPE of customer would be nearby and that those who weren't would make the trip.

Quite honestly, when I was planning my business, people advised me against locating in Ypsilanti. They were remembering that "blown-out" look of downtown and thought that I'd never be able to survive in

that location. Why put a start-up business in a start-up downtown? But, I knew that my core customer wanted to discover the unexpected. Whether they live in Ypsilanti or in another town, they like being in a place that offers plenty of discoveries.

And Ypsilanti veers from the obvious – as more and more are learning. Ypsilanti's creative scene is quickly filling with artists who are renting studio space, musicians renting practice space, writers, graphic designers, – all choosing Ypsilanti to live and work.

By nature, Ypsilantians are very open and friendly people. They go out of their way to be supportive and create a sense of community and pride in much the same way that the creative community does. For example, just the other day I received a "You're wonderful" greeting card from my neighbor across the street after they read in the newspaper that I'd be speaking at this conference. That is how Ypsilanti is. Ypsilanti's personality is just like that support-network I spoke of earlier – a casual, natural regenerating support system. And since my business parallels that personality or vibe, I wanted to locate it in Ypsilanti.

Up to this point, I've given you this "touchy-feely" kind of insight to my business decisions, so you're probably wanting something a little more concrete to take home with you.

If you are a business owner, get involved with other businesses and form a merchant's association. Most successful downtowns have one that is dynamic and one that isn't shy about letting people know they exist. That boldness can generate attention and interest from both city officials and from customers. If you're part of a city experiencing revitalization, you will run into obstacles. It is much easier to address those issues as a group than as a lone individual.

If you are a city or government official, be sure your regulations, incentives, and requirements reinforce your vision for your downtown. One of our major obstacles in downtown Ypsilanti is that many of the streets are one-way – OUT - of downtown. There is an effort underway to remedy that, but until then, residents and customers have a difficult time finding and staying downtown.

Spotlight on the Oasis Café

Paul W. Metler



Since we opened in February 2001, *Oasis Café* has made an effort to cross cultural boundaries created by economic differences. Restaurants typically offer a place where people from all walks of life can gather across cultural, political, religious, or economic lines. However those who cannot afford to eat out often cannot receive the services or quality of food enjoyed by those with means. Often the poor are given leftovers, or worse, in an effort to feed them economically.

Oasis was originally envisioned as a free or at cost Café providing food which was donated or purchased at a discount from the local Food bank. In our case it is Food Gatherers in Ann Arbor. The original concept came from a news article I read about of *Sisters of the Road Café* in Portland, Oregon, *Degage* in Grand Rapids and *Café 458* in Atlanta, Georgia. Each one of these are located in a lower income neighborhood and provide lower income patrons with free or affordable meals. Locally *Degage* in Grand Rapids, Michigan located in the Heartside district and provides both lunch and an evening coffee house while offering other entertainment options such as movie night and services aimed at serving the less fortunate.

Oasis Café was developed by Hope Medical Clinic, a free Christian medical and dental clinic in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Hope offers a variety of services designed to ease the burden of lower income individuals and families. During the planning stages of *Oasis*, Hope was able to purchase a restaurant building downtown. By locating downtown as opposed to a location on the outskirts, Hope was faced with a dilemma. To have *Oasis* become a full service restaurant, with a chef, kitchen staff and service staff would make it unavailable to lower

MELTER, continued on page 12

ALBAUM, continued from page 4

For everyone, business owners, city officials, planners, designers, developers, artists, residents, *everyone*... I have a few words of caution. Think carefully about jumping on the bandwagon of “cool” blindly. Doing so may alienate exactly those who are vital to economic development – the artists, explorers, and pioneers. Following a prescription created by outsiders makes a “vision” short-sighted.

What is *uncool* is creating a different kind of suburb in a different part of town – a manufactured downtown suburb. NOT COOL. Remember the goal here is to attract young people – to keep them in Michigan cities and towns. Not all young people are the same. Not all young people are driven by similar appeals. So why would you want to follow any singular plan state-wide, county-wide, or even *within* your own community.

Variety is key. Independent businesses are vital to keeping downtowns from being replications of one another. Collectively a variety of independent

businesses can satisfy different populations and their interests.

So I wonder if your idea of “cool” is somewhat limiting. Personally I think the artistic or “hipster” cool is just one of many attractive characteristics that Michigan cities can offer. I ask you to instead think about the attributes that make your town unique and different. Automotive heritage? Historic buildings? A concentration of a certain ethnic group? A grittiness? A park, river? Whatever those characteristics are, focus on them, because what is really cool is when a place has something different, something that is noticeably different to offer residents and visitors. What makes a place “cool” is the unexpected, not a manufactured replica. So keep your community, *your* community. And keep Ypsi, *Ypsi*.

Jennifer Albaum maintains a hectic schedule running her store, henrietta fahrenheit, continuing to work in the retail location research industry, serving on the Board of Directors for the Ypsilanti Downtown Development Authority and the Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation, and performing in a rock band.

Barn Raising in the City: Building Blocks of Kalamazoo

Kim Cummings

Each year the MSU EDA University Center presents awards for Community and Economic Development practice and scholarship. The 2004 recipient of the award for Best Practice in Community Economic Development is Building Blocks of Kalamazoo. Professor Kim Cummings of Kalamazoo College nominated the group for its work in Kalamazoo neighborhoods, and is eager to speak with anyone interested in replicating Building Blocks in their city. Dr. Cummings provided the following overview of Building Blocks.

Building Blocks of Kalamazoo is an innovative, highly replicable tool for regenerating social capital in low-income neighborhoods. Based on the presumption of scarcity, Building Blocks combines traditional principles of cooperative self-help with the creative use of college students, operating in unusually small street-level target sites. The program carries promise for replication anywhere that a partnership might be established between local neighborhoods and a nearby institution of higher learning.

Organizational Structure

Building Blocks' board of directors, which includes representatives from each participating neighborhood, Kalamazoo College, and a variable number of area-wide housing organizations, operates without paid central-office staff and without any physical facility of its own. Board members carry out all basic administrative tasks for the organization, including fund-raising (almost \$80,000 this past year). Our broad range of funders (community foundations, United Way, churches, corporations, and realtors) appreciate that the great bulk of their donations flows directly into projects.

Basic Plan of Action

Building Blocks allocates \$6,000 to each target site (ten sites in all in 2004, including at least one in each of the seven targeted neighborhoods). The sites, which are selected by the participating neighborhoods, are distinctively small (just 2-3 blocks of a street), but large enough to generate 7-12 participating households. The \$6,000 supports a supervisor (in

most cases a former Building Blocks resident participant), who typically oversees three student organizers trained in a course taught at Kalamazoo College, a project fund of some \$4,500 for the purchase of materials and tools, and \$500 in indirect expenses (for copying, phone, postage, etc) paid to the neighborhood association.

Building Blocks is reminiscent of traditional barn-raising techniques still employed in some rural communities.

The students intensively canvass their assigned neighborhood, going door-to-door to recruit the project participants, their goal being to draw together *enough* people to support a network capable of defending the interests of the street over time. Income property owners also are invited to participate.

Participants initially respond to the possibility of getting a small project stipend to finance exterior fix-up and beautification projects. But once together, they meet their neighbors (often for the first time), discover how much they all have in common, and, with the help of the supervisor and students, go about planning their project activities.

In perhaps the third or fourth meeting together, participants set priorities and allocate the money, sometimes dividing it equally, sometimes acknowledging different levels of personal need. Materials are purchased and, working together on each others' homes, the residents carry out the work projects themselves on three to six weekend workdays in May.

The projects themselves, all focused on the exteriors of homes, typically include a broad mix of landscaping, lot clean-ups, driveway repairs, painting, and small construction projects such as porch repairs, new steps or walkways, gutters, and storm doors. Although not extremely technical, the work still requires a broad range of skills, opening up marvel-

ous opportunities for each neighbor to make his or her distinctive contribution and creating sufficient challenges to bring the residents together in the overall effort.

Residents also seek donations from area businesses in the name of the group, prepare food, and in some sites even plan the workdays themselves. We follow the principle that residents must do *whatever they themselves have the capacity to do*. Extra workday help comes from various sources (church groups, school honor societies, probationers, and Kalamazoo College students), but the main burden of the work falls on the neighbors themselves. The in-kind value of work invested in the eight primary sites supported in 2003 totaled some \$59,000 (7,380 hours at \$8.00 per hour). Building Blocks' ability to make constructive use of free labor, combined with a minimum of cash outlays, is reminiscent of traditional barn-raising techniques still employed in some rural communities.

Outcomes

Just two years ago an independent evaluator appraised the effects of Building Blocks projects upon residents in the participating sites. He found that the communal activities dramatically raised (a) the number of other people on the street that participants knew, (b) the pride that participants took in their street, and (c) the degree of *connectedness* between participants and their neighborhood association. Building Blocks thus succeeds in regenerating the linkages, the *social capital* that researchers have found so critical to successful communities all over the world.

Although the visible physical improvements stemming from Building Blocks are often impressive, the projects' most critical pay-offs thus remain *social* and *organizational*. Socially, residents from diverse ethnic and class backgrounds come to recognize their



Residents and volunteers work on a home on Clarence Street in the Edison Neighborhood.

essentially common interests and come together in pursuit of the shared goal of improving the quality of life on their street. In our diverse central-city neighborhoods, *nothing* could be more important. Organizationally, the substantial burdens entailed in planning and implementing these work projects weld the residents together, creating a group capable of address-

ing *other needs* felt by people on the street: traffic problems, crime problems, city service problems, youth problems, the whole gamut. Absent cooperation, there is no way residents can cope with such challenges. Together, there is little they cannot do.

Keeping It Going

Building Blocks seeks to sustain these resident networks, awarding "continuation grants" of up to \$1,300 to groups ready to undertake some subsequent project, whether it be planting flower bulbs, installing post lights, or fixing up a couple more properties. Nine continuation sites were awarded in 2003. Additional grants are facilitated by the Kalamazoo Community Foundation.

That the neighborhood associations, which represent Building Blocks' *organizational core*, have held together over ten years demonstrates their remarkable loyalty for the program. Building Blocks represents a key tool by which associations can support the homeowners who



Volunteers help build new flower beds

Profile in Community Innovation: C. Kurt Dewhurst

Bette Downs

C. Kurt Dewhurst's passion for traditional arts erupted, ironically, because of their absence. When he and his wife, Marsha MacDowell, attended an exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, they saw an abundance of items from eastern and western states but nothing from the Midwest. En route home, they discussed this deficiency in detail and decided to do something about it.

Following a successful quest for funds, they toured the State of Michigan, visiting small museums as well as large ones. This comprehensive survey led to two significant actions: 1. Creation of a folk art exhibition covering its beginnings to 1941 and 2. Development of a folk art program.

Today, Dr. Dewhurst and Marsha MacDowell engage in multiple activities. Among them, Dr. Dewhurst is director and co-curator of folk arts of the Michigan State University Museum and Marsha MacDowell is curator of folk arts at the Museum and professor, MSU's department of art and art history. And the Museum's collection has grown to 2.5 million items from around the world.

Dr. Dewhurst's June schedule includes a trip to South Africa. He will return to Michigan in time to deliver a keynote address, "Looking Back to Look Forward," at the 17th annual Summer Institute of MSU's Community and Economic Development Program on June 30. In Washington D.C. over the Memorial Day weekend, Dr. Dewhurst interviewed artists, professionals, and others associated with the new World War II Memorial.

Dr. Dewhurst coordinated Cultural Heritage Training in South Africa. This program, in the last five years, has prepared 300 people who travel to local communities to teach a wide range of needed skills, among them photography and oral history techniques. South African museums have not covered black history so scholars now document pertinent information to overcome this void.

As director of another program, the Center for Great Lakes Culture, Dr. Dewhurst oversees an organization comprised of the upper Midwestern

states plus Ontario. The Center features an awards program. Its current agenda includes work with a film maker. Also, a program on the islands of the Great Lakes is under consideration. Participation in activities goes beyond museums. MSU faculty, the library, and the Technical Center are involved.

In 1999, the National Folk Festival began its three year stint in East Lansing, with Dr. Dewhurst as coordinator. Each summer, thousands of visitors came to enjoy special music, sample ethnic foods, and observe talented crafts people demonstrate their skills. Success of this national endeavor has led to an ongoing regional event, the Great lakes Folk Festival, to be held this year Friday, August 13 through Sunday August 15.

Determination to continue despite Michigan's money problems has resulted in organization of a support group, Friends of the Festival. Enthusiastic volunteers also help with finances by forming a bucket brigade to stroll the Festival grounds seeking contributions.

Always creative, Dr. Dewhurst says, "we want the Festival to keep changing." New last year, "Passing on Traditions" featured demonstrations and performances by Michigan Heritage Award winners and by Michigan Traditional Arts Apprentices. Although the Festival emphasizes the Great Lakes, sponsors welcome participants from the entire United States and from other countries.

Author and co-author of a range of works on traditional arts, Dr. Dewhurst, with Linda O. Stanford, has recently written MSU Campus: Buildings, Places, Spaces, a departure from his earlier work. Dr. Dewhurst reports robust sales of the book. Indicative of his continuing search for new and better ways of interpreting existing programs and practices, he would like to see a handy, concise edition of the book for those who wish to explore the campus.

This handsome volume examines 125 campus building, but it does much more. It defines the ways the buildings relate to space. And, with sensitivity, it



*C. Kurt Dewhurst
Director of MSU Museum*

looks at aesthetic and stylistic qualities of the building and grounds.

Founded in 1855 as the Agricultural College of the State of Michigan, the fledgling institution had, by 1856, built College Hall with space for an agricultural museum. This early beginning positioned the College in the vanguard of

institutions which could benefit from the Justin Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862.

The legislation allocated public land to states to be sold in support of “at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies, ...to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, ... in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes.”

In 1863, a grant of 240,000 acres of public land supported the College which became Michigan State University in 1964. Key words in the Act implied openness and acceptance and, from them, the land-grant philosophy has evolved.

MSU Campus: Buildings, Places, Spaces states, ...”this is a public university, created in the land-grant tradition, where access prevails. Providing multiple entrances...sends this message emphatically. All are welcome and each part of the campus is important.” This new book in its entirety expresses the land-grant philosophy. By describing, along with buildings, open-areas-gardens and special places-the authors have conveyed a sense of inclusion that reflects the spirit of the Morrill Act. One such spot is the “sacred space” off Circle Drive where construction of buildings is prohibited.

In discussion, Dr. Dewhurst expands this concept of acceptance. He points to MSU’s history of statewide services and exhibitions as examples of

fulfillment of the land-grant mission. But, Dr. Dewhurst says, “In responding to the community, the University has to be innovative and understanding.”

Asked if he believes that traditional arts such as quilting, which has a permanent niche at the MSU Museum, are expanding, Dr. Dewhurst says, “Absolutely.” Further, a more complex dimension exists. He cites music as an example. A generation ago young people collected just one genre. Today, they reveal a deeper interest. “You see many types of music in each collection,” he says. This broader interest could be described as a window into different cultures.

Under Dr. Dewhurst’s direction, the MSU Museum, as described in its informative brochure, “...is committed to understanding, interpreting, and respecting natural and cultural diversity. As Michigan’s land-grant museum, this commitment to society is met through education, exhibitions, research, and the building and stewardship of collections that focus on Michigan and its relationship to the Great Lakes and the world beyond.”

Enter the MSU Museum and you will experience a serene environment where examples of traditional arts join displays depicting early life in the Great Lakes area. Or wander through the “Fascination with Fiber” exhibition to find today’s vibrant designs compatible with earlier examples of the weaver’s art. Learn about the Museum’s collection of over 500 historic and contemporary quilts. The weaver’s art and the quilter’s art exemplify Dr. Dewhurst’s observation that the traditional arts do, indeed, change.

The MSU Museum relies on dedicated volunteers for many of its activities and Dr. Dewhurst maintains a personal relationship with them. Eunice Schloemer, a former docent, treasures this association. “I admire him and I respect him,” she says. “I’ve observed his devotion to the Museum and all it represents. Working with him has been a rewarding experience.”

Bette Downs lives in East Lansing and is a regular contributor to Community News & Views.

Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways

Opens in Mt. Pleasant

Todd Williamson

The opening of the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways marks a special time in the history of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe and the mid-Michigan community. The center's opening is the culmination of years of preparation by the people of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe. "Our members have been discussing the need for such a place to tell our story for decades" said Dustin Davis, Assistant Director of the Ziibiwing Center. "The center is a celebration of beauty, ingenuity, and truth and it continues the dreams of many," Davis said.

Director of the Ziibiwing Center. "We are very excited about the opportunity we have to share the story of our survival, our spirit of sovereignty, and our message of hope for all people of the world," she said.

Our history has oftentimes been relegated to two paragraphs in a thousand page textbook; consequently, very few people are familiar with our history, teachings, or worldview.

- Bonnie Ekdahl



Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways

The 9,000 square foot permanent exhibit, entitled *Diba Jimooyung*, which means *Telling Our Story*, is the showpiece of the center. Through the use of artifacts, language, historical documents, computer technology, contemporary and traditional art, dioramas, multi-media presentations, and video productions, this exhibit will provide visitors with an Anishinabek perspective on the past, present and future. The tour will take visitors through different eras of Anishinabek existence on Turtle Island (North America) beginning with the Anishinabe creation story and continuing on to today and what the prophecies tell us about the future. "Our history has oftentimes been relegated to two paragraphs in a one-thousand page history textbook; consequently, very few people are familiar with our history, teachings, or worldview" said Bonnie Ekdahl,

The Ziibiwing Center will also feature changing exhibits, the first of which is a collection of unique and rare North American Indian art and artifacts from the Caleb E. Calkins Collection. The late Caleb E. Calkins, a self-made businessman and entrepreneur, thoughtfully collected these pieces during his lifetime. A member of the Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, Mr. Calkins made provisions to leave the entire collection to his tribe for the sole purpose of educating people about North American Indians. This exhibition will be open through September 24, 2004.

In addition to the permanent and changing exhibits, the Ziibiwing Center houses a research center, meeting & conference facilities, a retail store, and a café. The research center called Nindakenjigewinoong (the place where you find things out at) is a repository of archives, books, treaties and other documents pertaining to the Anishinabek of the Great Lakes. The store, Meshtoonigewinoong (the place where we trade at), offers a wide variety of Great Lakes Anishinabe art along with Ziibiwing Logo and other Native American clothing lines, books, and music. The Shangewigamig Café (the place where we get nourished) serves classic deli and café favorites.

The Ziibiwing Center will offer a series of workshops, lectures, and films on a weekly basis at

the center. The educational curriculum has been synchronized with the four seasons. For example, workshops about making maple sugar are scheduled when the sap is running in the early spring and a snowshoe making workshop is scheduled for the winter. These programs will enable young and old alike to learn about the original people of the Great Lakes through hands-on interactive learning. Workshops vary in cost and space is limited. All events are open to the public and lectures, films, and discussions are free.



Store at Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways

“The Ziibiwing Center is where the vision and dreams of our ancestors are offered to the world, through the work and dedication of our tribal nation. Those of us who were given the opportunity to directly contribute to the development of the Ziibiwing Center feel very privileged and honored to have been able to do this work. We believe that the Ziibiwing Center embodies the spirit of our nation and it is our hope that the teachings shared here will be a source of inspiration to all,” said Bonnie Ekdahl, Director of the Ziibiwing Center. The Ziibiwing Center is open daily. For further information please call 1-800-225-8172 ext. 54750 or reference our website at www.sagchip.org/ziibiwing.

Todd Williamson is the editor and publications specialist with the Ziibiwing Center of Anishinabe Culture & Lifeways

represent the future of their neighborhoods. Out of the ranks of Building Blocks participants, moreover, comes a steady stream of new board members and contributors to the associations themselves.

Although tight budgets increasingly limit their ability to provide direct financial assistance, city commissioners also remain strong defenders of Building Blocks. The needs of the city’s homeless may get more attention from the media, but those of its low-income homeowners must also be respected if the city (its tax base as well as its social base) is to be sustained. As the experience of its homeowners goes, it might be said, so goes the future of the city.

Building Blocks as Civic Education

Finally, as the students’ professor, it behooves me to speak of Building Blocks’ educational importance. Even as they labor to draw their residents out of isolation into the public life of their street and neighborhood, the students themselves are drawn into public life. They learn first hand about the forces that complicate and frustrate the lives of central-city neighborhood residents; they cross over the barriers of class, race, and age; and they learn the arts of citizenship: listening skills, organizing skills, the ability to deal with conflict, the arts of building community. Building Blocks makes citizens of students as well as residents, and each process is dependent upon the other.

It has often been said that students are too immature and inexperienced to be good community organizers—and under ordinary circumstances this is certainly true. One of Building Blocks’ key innovations is to structure the organizing work sufficiently, even within the tight constraints of a ten-week term, *to make students truly effective*. A whole new resource is thus opened up. Building Blocks can be replicated wherever colleges or universities are located in urban settings, creating partnerships of great mutual advantage.

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income patrons. To make Oasis a free or at-cost restaurant such as Degage would not serve the downtown business community which at that time was struggling to regain business and patrons to the downtown shopping district.

Oasis Café wants to operate in the spirit of Matthew 25:35 – “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.”

We arrived on a middle ground: we hired a chef from the Mission Point resort on Mackinac Island and began to solicit volunteer wait staff from local churches, Universities, and colleges in the county. We approached several of the local social service agencies and asked them to offer the *Oasis Café* discount card as a benefit to their clients. The requirements being proof of income (based upon family size) lower than 150% of the federal poverty guidelines. The discount card is a gold plastic card resembling a credit card so guests who have them can present them as a full paying guest presents a credit card. The card automatically gives them a 70% discount on their meal, which is less expensive than most fast food establishments, as well as covers the normal food cost.

This results in a diverse mix of patrons such as students, faculty and staff from Eastern Michigan University, and local attorneys, business people, city employees, and families, eating alongside the homeless, single moms with their children, and just about every other assortment of individual. Our location near the hub of the Ann Arbor bus line offers easy access to all our guests.

Philosophy and Approach

Currently in the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti area, low-income people can receive free or reduced cost food primarily through soup kitchen events or food cupboard organizations. Sometimes this is coupled with other social services, but often is standalone. Sometimes it is centralized at a homeless shelter, sometimes it is at a church facility. At least one area

restaurant has a Saturday morning free breakfast event twice a month in their own dining space, staffed by volunteers.

While we realize the need for those types of services, and applaud the generosity of the individuals and organizations involved, *Oasis Café* is not intended to duplicate any of those efforts, but instead provide a unique offering. *Oasis Café* is meant to be a restaurant where the different economic groups can enjoy exactly the same good level of cuisine, ambiance and service simultaneously, mingled together in the same dining rooms. If we are successful in our service and discretion, there will be no stigma attached to using the Oasis Gold Card to receive a reduced cost meal, and indeed it should not be readily apparent to any patrons whether a customer is a full-paying customer or not.

This is an attempt to put into practice the principle of James 2:3. *Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*

The Results

Through grants and cash donations we have purchased custom tables and chairs, restaurant equipment, and the building. A local artist donated a collection of original watercolors to hang on the open brick walls. We are able to purchase fresh cut flowers for the tables and foyer because of regular donations of fresh flowers or money to purchase them from a florist. Several local farmers donate their excess produce later in the summer. A group of retired businessmen purchased a sound system and the city provided fresh herbs for our herb garden planter directly in front of the restaurant. Another local businessman pays for the DSL and installed a wireless router. Donated I-Mac computers provide free Internet for our guests to

access email or for job searches. There are two weekly bible studies held in the evenings and a group of retired businessmen meet for coffee every weekday morning. We have held nutrition classes with the Michigan State Cooperative Extension Service to help guests cook surplus food, food sanitation, and nutritional cooking. The gratuities from the volunteer servers roll right back into *Oasis* to cover the cost of the discount.

The two main complaints from the local business community were, first, that we would be undercutting menu prices because of our nonprofit status. The menu was planned so that our price point was well above local competition. The second was that we would detract from the business climate. Instead we have become one of the nicer restaurants in the community and several government and community groups hold their meetings in the Café .

It is rewarding to see people from all walks of life serving people from all walks of life.

Matt 25:35. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,

36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

For more information on the organizations mentioned please visit the following websites:

<http://www.degageministries.org/>

<http://www.sistersoftheroadCafé.org/>

<http://www.samhouse.org>

<http://www.oasisCafé ypsi.com/>

<http://travel.state.gov/povert.html>

Paul W. Metler is Director of the Oasis Cafe in Ypsilanti.

Michigan Launches Cool Cities Website



Governor Granholm recently announced that 20 Cool Cities pilot projects will receive catalyst grants of up to \$100,000 and will have access to more than \$100 million in state grants, loans, and other resources. The initiative, designed to help foster the development of vibrant, attractive cities and urban centers, is part of the Governor's economic development plan for Michigan.

Detailed information about each catalyst project is available at www.coolcities.com, a website launched as a resource and tool for Michigan cities and communities. The site is filled with concept summaries and case studies, such as the "art hop" in Kalamazoo and youth entrepreneurship training, and concepts to improve tolerance and diversity in Michigan's communities. The website also offers access to the Michigan Cool Cities survey findings that will help cities attract and retain the 21st century workforce.

Transformation of the Detroit Riverfront Under Way

Betsy Hemming

The City of Detroit is moving forward these days from an economic development standpoint, and one contributor to the progress is the transformation of the Detroit Riverfront, now under way.

The vision for a transformed Detroit riverfront solidified in December 2002, when Detroit Mayor Kwame M. Kilpatrick unveiled the results of a 90-day study by a team of Riverfront stakeholders. Early in 2003, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, Inc. (DRFC) was formed, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization charged with undertaking the establishment, improvement, operation, maintenance, security and programming of the Detroit Riverfront, including the creation of a RiverWalk and all of the parks and green spaces along the shoreline.

“When we started this process, we identified non-negotiables to getting the job done: The vision to make it happen; the money to make it happen; the will to make it happen, and the people to make it happen. We now have all of those in place,” said Matthew P. Cullen, Co-Chairman of the DRFC and General Motors (GM) General Manager of Economic Development and Enterprise Services. “Detroit’s Riverfront will make an unparalleled contribution to the image of Detroit as a destination, as our home, and as host to global-reaching events like Super Bowl XL, NCAA Final Four and the All Stars.”

A key element of the riverfront transformation is the plan for a RiverWalk, ultimately extending from the MacArthur Bridge at Belle Isle to the Ambassador Bridge, a distance of about five miles. The RiverWalk is envisioned to be an average of 62-feet wide where permitted. That pathway will include a pedestrian section, a bike path and landscaping. From walking to jogging, biking or rollerblading, to fishing, recreation, art and music, the RiverWalk will be a magnet of activity. Fishing and other natural elements will be preserved. The RiverWalk and surrounding green spaces will be designed to support activities such as outdoor dining, children’s playscapes, art fairs, a skate board park for youth, and fishing areas. Concessions will be located along

the pathway and restrooms at three to four pavilions along the RiverWalk. Detroit’s history dating back to the early 1700s will be shared in a series of interpretive plazas, focusing on the many rich historical aspects of the city and the river. The RiverWalk has been designed for the possibility of water taxis to shuttle people by boat between popular stops, making the riverfront more accessible to all ages.

SmithGroup, a national architecture, engineering and planning firm headquartered in downtown Detroit, was selected in May 2003 to serve as lead architect for the RiverWalk. SmithGroup leads a team that includes Somat Engineering, Wade-Trim, Inc., Tucker, Young, Jackson, Tull, Inc., Greenburg Consultants and Madison & Madison, along with Hines, L.S. Brinker and Multi-Solutions to round out the team. “We have hired the best of the best – a convergence of people who have done international riverfront work along with the best local skills and talents. The first few months were filled with workshops and public meetings to get as much feedback on design concepts as possible,” said Faye Alexander Nelson, DRFC President and CEO. “The last few months have focused on design development and the creation of construction documents.”

“All of this is intended to be part of setting the stage for economic development,” said Derrick Miller, chief administrative officer for the City of Detroit and DRFC co-chair. “We want to send a clear signal to potential investors that our overall vision of a busy urban waterfront is really going to occur.”

Construction begins this fall on phase one of the RiverWalk. Half of the RiverWalk will open by December 2005 and that the entire pathway will be open by December 2006.

Other elements of the transformation include the creation of Michigan’s first urban state park, the Tri-Centennial Park & Harbor, along the Detroit River. The first phase of the park opened May 20, with Michigan Governor Granholm and Detroit Mayor Kwame M. Kilpatrick cutting the ceremonial nautical flags to the newly-renovated harbor. “We are

extremely pleased with the creation of the Tri-Centennial State Park and Harbor as it is a major achievement for the City of Detroit and the State of Michigan,” Nelson said. “We are making significant strides at the Conservancy and are on target to transform the public spaces along the Detroit riverfront.” The harbor now is officially open as a safe harbor to public use on a first-come, first-served basis, and was added to the DNR’s harbor reservation system beginning May 25.



RiverWalk in Detroit, Michigan

In addition, a ground-breaking ceremony for a new Port Authority building between Hart Plaza and the Renaissance Center takes place June 21 and the GM Plaza and Promenade, behind the GM Renaissance Center along the river, will open this fall. GM also has issued an RFP for development of River East, a parcel adjacent to the Renaissance Center. All of these initiatives signal progress along the river.

A vision for the West Riverfront has also been developed. The Conservancy hired Chan Krieger & Associates from Boston to work on the visioning. Chan Krieger’s team includes Detroit-based firms of Yamasaki Associates, Inc., Mark English Associates and Tucker, Young, Jackson, Tull, Inc. After four public meetings and a design charrette put on the University of Michigan, a vision was rolled out earlier this year, with the next step to secure partners and funding.

Yet another river-related project taken on by the DRFC is a feasibility study to determine whether it is possible to refurbish and return a Detroit treasure,

The Columbia, fondly remembered as one of the Bob-Lo boats, to the River. An advisory team has been put in place to conduct the study, which should be done by the end of summer. If the feasibility study outcome is positive, the DRFC will move forward with construction documents and a fundraising plan for the restoration. The Columbia was built in 1902 in Wyandotte and was one of two Bob-lo Boats. The other boat, the St. Claire, is in Cleveland where it is intended to be refurbished into a restaurant. The Columbia is 216 feet long and 45 feet wide. Originally, it was certified to carry approximately 2500 passengers; if refurbished, it could be recertified to carry 1200 to 1500 passengers.

The significant progress made to date has been enabled by the diverse public-private partnership that is the cornerstone of the Conservancy. The DRFC Board of Directors is comprised of 44 key stakeholders, representing the City of Detroit, Wayne County, State of Michigan, Port Authority, U.S. Coast Guard, investors, community organizations, economic development organizations, educational institutions and property owners and residents.

The DRFC also has raised significant commitments to fund the construction of the RiverWalk and an endowment for maintaining and programming of the walk and green spaces into perpetuity. This total includes the full \$50 million series of grants offered by the Kresge Foundation, contingent on the Conservancy achieving significant milestones in the development of the RiverWalk and other financial commitments. To that end, the DRFC has nearly \$18 million in commitments to date to meet the Kresge challenge of \$25 million. Other major contributors to date include the Community Foundation, Detroit Renaissance Companies, the Hudson-Webber Foundation and the McGregor Fund.

“We’re definitely in the midst of changing the conversation about Detroit and the Detroit Riverfront is a significant component of this change,” Nelson said. “It’s a wonderful project, with great support from a strong public-private partnership.”

Betsy Hemming is Director of Communication s for the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy.



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