

AGTECH CONNECT: SPEARHEADING INNOVATION IN AGRICULTURE

The AgTech Connect event, hosted by the Greater Peoria EDC alongside partners like Distillery Labs, Bradley, ICC, the Morton EDC and the Ag Lab, brought together farmers, innovators and service providers to continue the discussion around how to make Greater Peoria a center of agricultural technology. Highlighted by Todd Ward of the USDA National Center for Agricultural Utilization and Research (the "Ag Lab"), the event spotlighted the center's groundbreaking research, with four innovative projects promising to transform agricultural production and sustainability. Discussions led by leaders from the Illinois Corn Growers Association Marquis Energy delved into crucial topics like carbon reduction in ethanol production and advanced biofuel technologies, reflecting the industry's shift towards environmental stewardship. The event successfully fostered a dialogue on advancing agricultural technology and sustainability, promising exciting developments for the future.



BRIDGING GAPS: CAREER SUMMIT UNITES STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND EMPLOYERS

In March Jeffrey Inman and Sara Kupperschmid from the Workforce Solutions team played key roles at the Central Illinois Special Education Association Career Summit. This event created a dynamic space for students with mild disabilities to connect directly with local employers, leveraging technology like QR codes to simplify the job application process. With GPEDC facilitating, the summit not only fostered meaningful discussions and networking but also showcased strong community partnerships with leading organizations such as AMT, Carle Health, Peoria Park District, and Precision Planting. This initiative exemplifies our commitment to inclusivity and workforce development, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from our growing economy.

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QUARTERLY REPORT

January - March 2024

INTRODUCING ECONOMIC RECOVERY CORPS FELLOW: A NEW VENTURE IN BUSINESS OUTREACH

In February, Dorsey Hill joined the team as our Economic Recovery Corps Fellow. The fellowship is a program funded by our friends at the US Economic Development Administration and coordinated by the International Economic Development Council. Dorsey is working in partnership with GPEDC and Lincoln Economic Advancement and Development (LEAD) on a business outreach program targeting businesses in our rural communities for the next two and a half years. This is part of GPEDC's expanded emphasis on business outreach. When we can connect with our existing businesses, we not only put ourselves in a position to help them grow but also learn about the issues impacting success and spot opportunities for wider assistance. Dorsey will help ensure that our reach is as broad as possible.



MANUFACTURING NETWORK ADDRESSES WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

The Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network's Quarterly Meeting, held at Peoria Next Innovation Center on March 14, centered on "Workforce Solutions" for the manufacturing sector. The session zeroed in on the challenge of building a skilled workforce. The meeting featured Rich Oakes from GigSmart who detailed the gig economy's potential in manufacturing. Alongside Rich, local entities like Pekin Community High School and ICC's IT Workforce Accelerator shared strategies on recruitment and retention, providing actionable insights for the industry's pressing labor needs.



NEW FACES JOIN TEAM GP

It has been a busy start to the year as we expand our team to better serve our region. In early February, Sara Kopperschmid joined as our Workforce Solutions Partner and will help Jeffrey manage our increasing role in developing our talent pipeline. Just days later, Courtney Moore joined as our Talent Concierge. This new position was developed in partnership with the Choose Greater Peoria initiative, and Courtney will help potential transplants find jobs at the region's major employers. Almost concurrently, Dorsey Hill started her 30-month fellowship with us through the Economic Recovery Corps (read more below). Rounding out the team, Kirsten Montgomery joined in March as our new Research & Insights Manager. This is another newly created position that will help us keep on top of all the data that fuels our work. Welcome to Team GP.

BARTONVILLE'S VISION: CRAFTING A FUTURE-READY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Village of Bartonville, in collaboration with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, embarked on an initiative to revamp its Comprehensive Plan, last updated in 2006. In January, Kathie and Sally from GPEDC were entrusted with leading a community and economic development session during the Planning Committee meeting. This session brought together representatives from Bartonville, Bellevue, and Limestone Township. The duo delivered insights on a range of topics such as the port, industrial park, business incubation, economic development strategies, TIF districts, and broadband access. Their presentation transitioned into an interactive Q&A and brainstorming session, laying the groundwork for identifying progressive strategies to incorporate into the comprehensive plan.

