

## CAREERSPARK INSPIRES OVER 4,000 STUDENTS

At the end of the quarter we helped host the 7th iteration of CareerSpark, a significant event that immerses 8th graders in hands-on career simulations spanning various sectors. The initiative aims to ignite passion, offering students a roadmap of courses and experiences as they transition to high school. A collaborative endeavor between GPEDC and Junior Achievement, CareerSpark provides an additional benefit in fulfilling state-mandated career exploration activities at the 8th-grade level without incurring costs for schools. With participation from over 4,000 students and the assistance of more than 500 volunteers, this year's rendition stands out as one of the biggest CareerSpark events to date.



## ENGAGING INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS

Before her departure, Lenora Fisher helped plan and organize business visits from the Osnabrück Chamber of Commerce and Edgecom Energy, both scheduled for the next quarter. The Osnabrück Chamber of Industry Commerce will introduce eleven business leaders from the northwest German region to the assets and opportunities in Greater Peoria. Their primary aim is to facilitate an exchange of knowledge and exemplary practices with our local businesses while laying the groundwork for potential trade collaborations in the future. The following week, Edgecom Energy, an energy efficiency startup from Canada, is set to visit Greater Peoria to gain a deeper understanding of the American market and identify prospective business ventures within the US. While the visits are more networking and market validation focused, they are lead generators because business attraction is often a result of customer and supplier relationships. These networking trips are a foundational step in that direction.

[www.greaterpeoriaedc.org](http://www.greaterpeoriaedc.org)



 **GREATER PEORIA**  
Economic Development Council

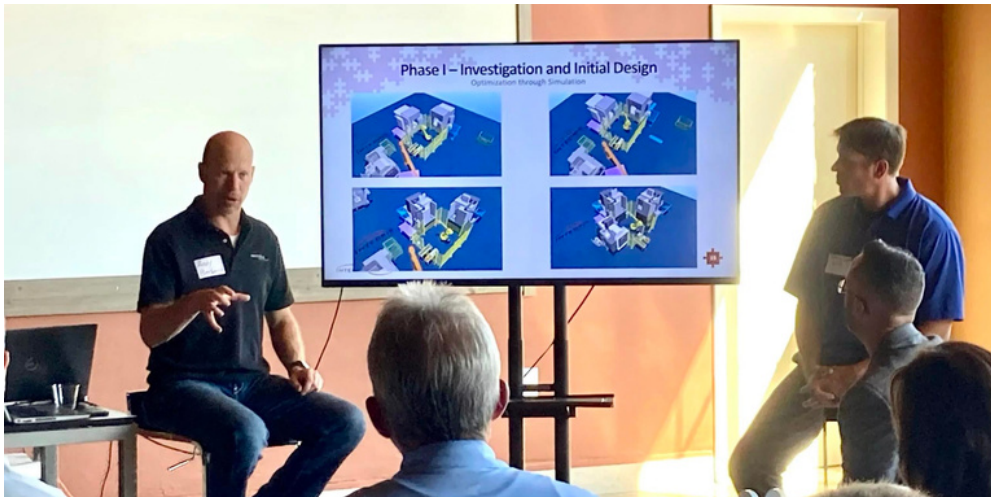
 **QUARTERLY  
REPORT**

**July -September 2023**



## SHOWING OFF A COLLABORATION SUCCESS STORY

The Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network convened its quarterly meeting in September at Integris Group. Central to the agenda was the theme of automation and robotics in manufacturing. Andy Berberich of Integris Group, joined by Jeremy Casper of Quality Metal Products, shared their year-long robotics project - a collaboration between the two network members - from its initial problem definition through design to its eventual installation. The participants expressed interest in the entire process, the surge in productivity, and the tangible return on investment. The meeting also included representatives from FANUC showcasing a live actuation of a fully functional Collaborative Robot (COBOT), hinting at its potential for future automation endeavors.



## SHOWCASING THE REGION'S BEST

On August 14, Peoria's riverfront was the backdrop to a splendid event organized by the Choose Greater Peoria team. The highlight of this celebration was a live, four-hour broadcast by the ESPN Chicago 1000 team, showcasing the many amenities of our community. This collaboration with Bears radio, complemented by commercials promoting Choose Greater Peoria, will resonate throughout the season. The ads will also be featured on local broadcasts via WMBD 1470. This shines a light on our region and highlights our efforts at talent attraction while promoting our region as an attractive place for talent.



## DISTILLERY LABS BEGINS CONSTRUCTION

In August we celebrated the start of construction on Distillery Labs, signaling a pivotal moment in a critical economic initiative. The event convened a wide variety of stakeholders, including community and business leaders, members of the region's startup ecosystem, financial contributors from both the Illinois Capital Development Board and the US Economic Development Administration, and delegates from the Illinois Innovation Network, the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, and the University of Illinois Springfield. The highlight, however, was the dynamic ensemble of entrepreneurs and potential tenants. Beyond its symbolic importance, the groundbreaking ceremony epitomized the spirit of unity, innovation, and collaborative aspirations in Greater Peoria.

## PLANNING FOR BROADBAND EXPANSION

In September, in partnership with Peoria County and Design Nine, we organized public presentations on the outcomes of the countywide broadband feasibility survey that began in May. These sessions were held at Illinois Central College's North Peoria Campus, providing a platform for stakeholders to discuss the survey's implications on broadband expansion. Jack Maytum, Senior Business Analyst at Design Nine, presented findings that identified areas primed for broadband infrastructure development, especially in rural regions. This project, led by GPEDC and Peoria County and financed by the Just Transition Fund pilot program and the Peoria County American Rescue Plan Act funds, seeks to improve connectivity and promote economic growth. Feedback from these sessions, marked by detailed discussions, will be integrated into the final report by Design Nine.

## CELEBRATING WATERBORNE COMMERCE

In August the Peoria Riverfront Museum was the location for the first annual meeting of the Illinois Waterway Ports, attracting over 50 stakeholders from Greater Peoria and throughout Illinois. This meeting comes off the heels of the State's recognition of the Illinois Waterway Ports Commission Act, a designation which Sally Hanley played a pivotal role in securing. This gathering showcased insights from a myriad of partners at local, regional, and national levels, all centered on augmenting waterborne trade on the Illinois and Mississippi rivers. Together these partners are advocating for greater investment in the Illinois River that will result in expanded economic opportunities.

