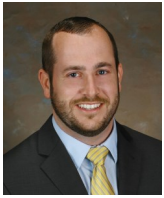


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## From the President's Desk

By Joe Sobieralski  
President & CEO



BCU hosted its annual Economic Outlook on February 21 at Kellogg Arena. The event, which was attended by over 250 area stakeholders, featured a lineup of industry experts speaking on the status of their respective fields and organizations. Additionally, the

breakfast was a chance for BCU to update the community about its ongoing projects and overall initiatives.

I kicked things off by calling attention to BCU's new five-year strategic plan, adopted by our Board of Directors in August 2018. I then presented a snapshot of the previous year's major job announcements and business investments. Highlights included activity in the Fort Custer Industrial Park, but also the renewed commitment to downtown Battle Creek – and related community developments.

Jim Robey, Director of Regional Economic Planning Services for the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, spoke next about recent economic trends, both on a macro level and the implications they have for southwest Michigan. In a similar vein, Dennis West, President of Northern Initiatives, later discussed how his organization's small-business finance is helping to grow companies here in Battle Creek.

Education was another focus of this year's outlook, with a presentation by Arelis Diaz, Director, Office of

See "President's Desk" on page 4

## Supporting English Learners on the Job: A Creative Solution to Long-Term Success

By Josh Dunn  
Executive Director, Voces

As a nonprofit serving the Hispanic/Latino population of Battle Creek, we at Voces are accustomed to the challenges faced by newcomers to our country. One of the most common is finding the time to both support a family and learn English. We have provided English as Second Language (ESL) classes to our community members for over a decade, though we also provide many other services. When a client comes to our office seeking assistance with a job application or to help their child in school, we often find out that the main thing stopping them from pursuing English classes to be able to tackle these issues themselves is lack of time. Keeping a job was always the highest priority.

In 2018, Voces approached two employer partners with an idea that could solve this issue: providing ESL classes at work. This is certainly great for the employee; it eliminates barriers such as transportation, childcare, and time. But the most exciting aspect was that it was just as beneficial for the employer. Research conducted by McGraw-Hill, the Migration Policy Institute, and the Brookings Institute have all shown that higher productivity, higher earnings, better educational outcomes and reduced spending on public assistance are all linked to investment in adult ESL immigration – waiting for them to 'pick up' the language just isn't enough.

See "Supporting English" on page 3

## Call for Restaurant Proposals

BCU's call for brewery proposals in late 2017 was a great success. New Holland Brewing is finalizing their design and expects construction to begin soon. Meanwhile, Restore (269)'s historic tax credit was recently approved, clearing the way for work to begin on the Record Box project.

In late December, BCU announced a \$200,000 incentive for a new restaurant to be in or near downtown Battle Creek. The request for proposals (RFP) seeks an experienced restaurateur interested in establishing a new location which will serve lunch and dinner.

BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski remarked, "We are doubling and tripling down with this RFP to continue the momentum that has been established on revitalizing downtown Battle Creek. This RFP is intended to complement not only our already established businesses but also offer more options, which is feedback we regularly hear from the greater Battle Creek business community and residents."

Proposals are due by March 22, 2019. The full RFP is available on BCU's website (<https://bit.ly/2ED9tt9>). Contact Adam Reid at [reid@bcunlimited.org](mailto:reid@bcunlimited.org) for more details.

## Join the Battle Creek Manufacturing Consortium

BCU coordinates the Battle Creek Manufacturing Consortium, a group of manufacturing-related companies operating in Battle Creek. The core focus of the group is to support the Battle Creek-area manufacturing ecosystem, identify and help resolve issues that are important to the strength of area manufacturing and manufacturing support businesses, and support the long-term health and growth of existing and future companies in the Battle Creek area.

The Consortium is made up of senior company management with a high degree of decision making or influence within their company. The group has a steering committee with sub-committees that are focused on specific topics that are of importance to the companies including, talent and HR-related issues, training, and promoting manufacturing in Battle Creek. The Consortium also acts as a liaison for the manufacturing community to support community efforts such as Battle Creek Central High School's Ford NGL initiative.

To participate, a company should be a manufacturer or in a business that directly supports manufacturing. The steering committee meets monthly, with all members meeting quarterly. The sub-committees meet as necessary to progress the work on their topic.

For more information on the Battle Creek Manufacturing Consortium, please contact Shabaka Gibson at [gibson@bcunlimited.org](mailto:gibson@bcunlimited.org).

## New DIF Guidelines

The Battle Creek Direct Investment Fund (DIF) committee recently unveiled new guidelines and parameters for the fund. The DIF was created to help stimulate economic growth and support direct job creation/retention in Battle Creek.

The DIF exists to provide gap financing to eligible businesses, especially those that may not otherwise have access to traditional financing resources. It provides money in the form of a loan, as opposed to an equity investment or grants. The DIF is designed to supplement, not compete, with private, nonprofit and public sector financial support. Approval for DIF loans requires collateral as well as the personal guaranty of the primary owner. The maximum loan amount is \$750,000.

In recent years, the DIF has loaned money to support the renovation of Heritage Tower and the McCamly Plaza Hotel. Most recently, the DIF made loans to Snackwerks and Record Box LLC.

More information on the DIF program, including the new guidelines and parameters, is available on the BCU website. <https://bit.ly/2BSRlcD>

## Battle Creek Companies Awarded Over \$750,000 in Training Grants

In December, Michigan Department of Talent and Economic Development (TED) announced the recipients of the 2019 Going PRO Talent Fund grants. Battle Creek companies were awarded more than \$750,000 for workforce training efforts. In total, TED announced \$29 million in grants statewide.

The Going PRO Talent Fund, formerly known as the Skilled Trades Training Fund, awards competitive grants to companies to assist in training, developing and retaining current and newly hired employees. The program is implemented locally by Michigan Works!

TED Chief of Staff Jeremy Hendges said, "As Michigan works to close its talent gap, programs like the Going PRO Talent Fund provide resources for employers and their employees to keep up with an ever-changing, high-tech global economy. This fund is part of Michigan's comprehensive approach to ensuring it can compete in the global race for the most and best talent while ensuring our companies can continue to invest in homegrown talent."

Battle Creek companies awarded Going Pro Talent Fund grants include:

Bleistahl North America	\$12,917	Post Consumer Brands	\$52,923
Cosma Casting Michigan	\$147,635	Rosler Metal Finishing	\$16,894
DENSO	\$125,310	Senior Care Partners P.A.C.E.	\$192,476
Duncan Aviation	\$90,000	Stewart Industries	\$12,175
Grace Health	\$66,000	TC Transcontinental Michigan	\$4,500
II Stanley Co, Inc.	\$35,850		

For more details the Going PRO program, visit [www.Going-PRO.com](http://www.Going-PRO.com).

## Save the Date: A Night at the Museum - Friday, March 8

Ignite BC's first event in its Spotlight Series will be held at the Kingman Museum on Friday, March 8. This series will showcase Battle Creek's unique assets while providing a fun venue for attendees to network.



The Kingman event will be called "A Night At The Museum." Admission is free and will include light appetizers. There will be a cash bar with beer provided by Territorial Brewing. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Kingman Museum and Ignite BC.

The event will run from 5:30-7:30 PM. To register, visit [www.ignitebc.org](http://www.ignitebc.org).

## Air National Guard To Add New Jobs

Congratulations to Battle Creek's Air National Guard, which announced the addition of 34 new jobs in December. These personnel will support a new Air Force Joint Task Force, which will provide high level logistics planning for the Defense Department. Base Commander Col. Bryan Teff said this decision was a "direct result of our highly-skilled Airmen, their perseverance, commitment and ability to capitalize on opportunity." BCU looks forward to welcoming the new personnel to Battle Creek.

## Company Spotlight: Torishima Service Solutions of Michigan

Battle Creek's cluster of Japanese companies in the Fort Custer Industrial Park just got bigger! In October, Torishima Service Solutions of Michigan (TSS of MI), a subsidiary of Torishima Pump, opened a new facility at 4600 W. Dickman Road.

TSS of MI chose Battle Creek because of its central location, the availability of skilled employees, and the existing base of Japanese companies. The company, which previously had a sales office in downtown Kalamazoo, will be led by Mark Vogel, Vice President of Service.

Established in 1919 in Osaka, Torishima Pump operates in three business segments: Power, Industrial and Water markets. Torishima has equipment installed in factories, power plants, municipal waste facilities, oil refineries, and public universities all over the world. TSS of MI will operate as the company's Midwest service center, supporting the installation, maintenance and repair of customers' equipment nationwide.

Mr. Vogel explained that TSS of MI is different from other repair centers because they work closely with customers to understand their issues and improve the reliability of their pump systems, not just replace parts. TSS of MI is equipped to provide comprehensive services, including field service, shop repairs, parts, reverse engineering, maintenance agreements, and full-service machine

shop. Mr. Vogel noted that TSS of MI has the knowledge and capability to work on all manufacturer's pumps, not just Torishima's products.

TSS of MI already has 11 employees and expects to hire three to five additional mechanics and engineers in 2019. Mr. Vogel said the company will also make significant investments in equipment and its facility over the next year. Torishima employs more than 1,500 people worldwide and has sales offices in Massachusetts and Virginia.

Mr. Vogel is optimistic about the potential for growth here. He said the company was able to get up and running in Battle Creek in record time, due in large part to the support provided by local partners like Shouldice Brothers and Hackett. He added that business had been busy since operations began in Battle Creek. He noted that BCU had been very supportive of TSS of MI's efforts to locate in Battle Creek, and especially helpful in connecting with the community. He remarked that Torishima is invested in TSS of MI for the long term and expects to see significant growth moving forward.

To learn more about TSS of MI and their services, contact Mark Vogel at [mark.vogel@torishimapump.com](mailto:mark.vogel@torishimapump.com).



### Supporting English Learners on the Job...cont'd

Right here in Battle Creek, those findings held true. Through an initial eight-week course hosted and sponsored by those employers, Voces trained thirteen associates in English language skills. By partnering with HR staff and direct supervisors, we were able to focus our lessons on the key aspects of English that were immediately applicable to the employees: following directions, explaining safety procedures, and correctly identifying parts and machinery, just to name a few. The results of the class showed immediate improvement in these skills after the eight-week course, along with improved communication with management, and a boost to overall job satisfaction.

The promise of an engaged and diverse workforce – who, according to a 2014 McKinsey study are 35% more likely to overperform than a traditional workforce – is very promising for this time of growth in Battle Creek! Voces is excited to be part of a movement where everyone comes together and recognizes that a little creative thinking can go a long way to recruit and retain motivated workers from all backgrounds, for the benefit of the company and our community.

*Voces is a nonprofit serving the Hispanic, Latino and immigrant populations of Battle Creek and Calhoun County. For more information about implementing our ESL services at your organization, visit Voces online at [www.vocesbc.org/language-access](http://www.vocesbc.org/language-access) or email us at [languageservices@vocesbc.org](mailto:languageservices@vocesbc.org).*

## Akira Kataoka Recognized by Japanese Government



*In November, the Government of Japan announced that Akira Kataoka, former President & Chairman of Denso International America, would receive the Order of the Rising Sun, with Gold Rays and Neck Ribbon. The award is given to those who have made "distinguished achievements in international relations, promotion of Japanese culture, advancements in their field, development in welfare or preservation of the environment." Known to many as "Andy," Mr. Kataoka was instrumental in bringing Denso to Battle Creek and worked closely with BCU as the company went through its site selection process. On February 22, BCU President Joe Sobieralski attended a ceremony in Mr. Kataoka's honor, hosted by Tsutomu Nakagawa, Consul General of Japan in Detroit.*

*Above left, Mr. Kataoka receives his award from Consul General Nakagawa. Right, Mr. Kataoka at Denso's Ground Breaking Ceremony in Battle Creek in August 1979.*



## BCU Out and About

1. BCU participated in a broomball tournament organized by Ignite BC in December. Proceeds from the event benefitted the Greater Battle Creek Ice Hockey Association. Broomball is similar to hockey, but players wear shoes, not skates. Using a stick with a plastic broom-shaped head, teams of six try to score goals using a large ball. After the final game ended in a tie, the championship was decided in a shootout, with BCU's "Legion of Broom" team crowned the champions.
2. When BCU renovated the Customs Cargo Center last year, two EV charging stations were installed, each with two charging ports. This means that up to four cars can be charged at a time. The charging stations are part of the Charge Point network and currently free to use.
3. On February 20, members of BCU's Board of Directors toured Heritage Tower to see the renovation project's progress. The tour was led by Mark Harmsen, lead developer of Heritage Tower. Mr. Harmsen said that he expects the first tenants will begin to move into the building sometime in June.
4. Visitors to the Fort Custer Industrial Park may have noticed some new signs recently. Four new signs were installed listing companies located on some of the park's side roads. The signs were installed at the intersections of Skyline Drive and Hill-Brady Road (serving Logistics Drive); Hill-Brady Road and Stanley Drive (serving Shiga Drive); Dickman Road and Fritz Keiper Blvd; and Dickman Road and N Brady Road.
5. On February 21, a roundtable discussion was held in Battle Creek with Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, local business leaders, BCU, and Kellogg Community College (KCC) officials. The focus of the meeting, which was held at the Regional Manufacturing Technology Center (RMTC), was how KCC, businesses and nonprofits are working together in Battle Creek to train workers. Following the discussion, the group toured the RMTC and met with students. Renovations to the RMTC are underway and are expected to finish by May. The BCTIFA, which BCU administers, contributed more than \$1 million towards the upgrades.



### President's Desk...cont'd

President at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Ms. Diaz touched on the Foundation's efforts in Battle Creek and beyond. Justin Winslow, President and CEO of the Michigan Restaurant and Lodging Association, then shed light on several trends in the hotel and restaurant sector. Mr. Winslow's remarks reinforced BCU's recent push for more restaurants, breweries and other hospitality establishments.

Finally, Earl Poleski, Executive Director of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, spoke to Battle Creek's crucial need for improved housing options. He also included a call to capture the full potential Calhoun County's opportunity zones. Reiterating the importance of quality living options, Mr. Poleski perhaps summed it up best: "Housing is where jobs go to sleep at night." He also acknowledged the burden of high rent in today's market, stressing the need for new affordable housing.

Circling back, I wrapped up the presentations with a nod to all of our strategic partners pulling on the rope in Battle Creek.

While much progress has been made in the last year, a lot of work remains. BCU is looking forward to a busy 2019 and has several big projects in the works. As a community, we must continue to work together in order to improve the quality of life for the people of Battle Creek.

## Contact Us

Battle Creek Unlimited (BCU) is focused on investment generation and job creation in Battle Creek, Michigan. BCU works closely with community partners to attract new companies to the Battle Creek region while also supporting the growth of existing companies. BCU was established in 1972 to develop the Fort Custer Industrial Park (FCIP), the largest industrial park in Michigan. Today the FCIP is home to over 80 companies, including 25 international organizations, which collectively employ more than 13,000 people. FCIP covers more than 3,000 acres, with over 1,000 acres available for development, and offers convenient access to rail, air cargo, interstate and international trade highways, as well as an international port of entry and a Foreign-Trade Zone.

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