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From the President's Desk



By Joe Sobieralski
President & CEO

Big things really are happening in Battle Creek. Here at BCU, my team and I are working nonstop on a long list of projects. Take a quick look around town and the progress is obvious. On Thursday, May 23, BCU and its community partners officially closed on the financing for the Heritage Tower project, now known as The Milton. A week earlier, the team at Restore (269) also closed on their financing for the Record Box development at 15 Carlyle Street. BCU also recently acquired the former Shrank's Cafeteria building and tore it down in late April to make way for new development.

On May 13, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation announced a \$15.5 million grant to Grand Valley State University. As a part of the five-year deal, GVSU will set up a satellite office in Battle Creek which will help increase access to higher education for students at Battle Creek Public Schools.



BCU's Joe Sobieralski and Paula Young work through a pile of closing documents for Heritage Tower "The Milton."

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BCU Awarded 2018 Economic Development Champion Award by Consumers Energy

In March, BCU was recognized by Consumers Energy with the company's 2018 Economic Development Champion Award. Consumers Energy Economic Development Manager Bill Wadsworth presented the award to BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski during a luncheon at Consumers Energy's office in Jackson, Michigan.

The award recognizes economic development organizations that have gone above and beyond in working with the utility company to support new and expanding business in their communities. Criteria used to select an organization includes the depth and breadth of economic development occurring in the community, the extent to which nominees engage Consumers Energy early in the process as energy issues and questions surface, and energy-related innovations planned or underway in the community to support new and expanding businesses.

Mr. Sobieralski thanked Consumers Energy for its long-standing partnership with BCU and the Battle Creek community. He said, "This award reflects the dedication and determination of the entire BCU team and the Board of Directors. This past year has been a year of collaboration

and opportunity creation for Battle Creek. With all the groundwork we have been working on, I am confident the future for Battle Creek is bright for 2019 and beyond. As we move forward, BCU will continue to be an advocate for our City, a resource for the community, and a driving force in economic development for all of Battle Creek."

BCU was selected based on the construction of their new state of the art office space, involvement in the Heritage Tower project, drone/defense innovation, and its Battery City initiative. Previous winners of this annual award include the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation.

"Economic development is a team sport, especially when competing for businesses that can locate anywhere in the world," said Jeff Mayes, Executive Director of Business Customer Care with Consumers Energy. "We're proud to award Battle Creek Unlimited for collaborating with us on energy issues and beyond to spur jobs and investment in Battle Creek and grow Michigan's economy."



Award Presentation (left to right): Jeff Mayes, Consumers Energy; Joe Sobieralski, BCU; and Bill Wadsworth, Consumers Energy



BCU Team (left to right): Lori Schroll, Paula Young, Bridgette Jones, Shabaka Gibson, Joe Sobieralski, Jennifer Wood, Adam Reid, Robert Corder, and Brenda Whited

Battle Creek Named a Finalist for 2019 All-America City Award

Battle Creek is among 20 finalists for the All-America City Award. This is the second year in a row the city has made the cut. Finalists were selected based on their work to improve the health of their communities through civic engagement.



The All-America Award is awarded annually by the National Civic League. The award recognizes communities for their efforts to address critical issues and create stronger connections among residents, businesses, nonprofit and government leaders. Since its creation in 1949, more than 500 communities across the country have received the award, which was once called the “Nobel Prize for constructive citizenship.” The theme for 2019 is “Creating Healthy Communities Through Inclusive Civic Engagement.”

Battle Creek’s effort is being led by BCVision and staff from the Battle Creek Community Foundation and the City of Battle Creek. In June, community leaders will travel to Colorado for the All-America City Award Ceremony. The Battle Creek delegation will share information on three community health initiatives to a jury of national experts. These include:

- Operation Fit (improving health and wellness in schools)
- Crisis Intervention Team (training to address mental health crises)
- School Behavioral Health Collaborative (ensuring mental health resources for students)

“This is a recognition of the great work we do here, and is a proud moment for our community,” said Brenda Hunt, President and CEO of the Battle Creek Community Foundation.

According to the National Civic League, All-America City Award winners see several benefits. The award helps build pride in a community and encourages collaboration among local partners. The award also attracts national attention and raises the profile of the community. In addition, All-American City finalists find it easier to attract and retain businesses, generate jobs, and grow the tax base. The award also helps attract residents who value a healthy and vibrant community.

Local residents and companies are helping raise awareness of Battle Creek making the shortlisting. BCU is proud to do its part. Best of luck to the Battle Creek delegation in Colorado.

BCU Team (left to right):
Matt Preston, Paula Young, Bridgette Jones, Jennifer Wood, Joe Sobieralski, Shabaka Gibson, Lori Schroll, Robert Corder, Brenda Whited, and Adam Reid



SecondMuse Sets Up In Downtown Battle Creek

Organization selected by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to assist Battle Creek start-up businesses

In December 2018, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation announced that it had selected SecondMuse to serve as the entrepreneurship support organization for start-up companies in Battle Creek. SecondMuse will provide coaching, mentoring and hands-on technical assistance to entrepreneurs, with a focus on creating a more equitable community. On April 17, SecondMuse hosted an open house at their new office downtown, located at 38 E. Michigan Avenue.

SecondMuse is a certified B-Corp, meaning that it meets social sustainability and environmental performance principles as well as accountability and transparency standards. The company, which was established in 2008, is based in Brooklyn, and has offices in Washington, DC, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Portland, Melbourne, and Bali.

SecondMuse will work alongside local resource organizations like the Small Business Development Fund and Northern Initiatives. It will offer one-on-one business counseling as well as Entrepreneur Support Group meetings. These free sessions are held at their office; upcoming sessions are scheduled for June 11, July 9, and August 6. The meetings run from 6-8 PM and provide entrepreneurs a venue to discuss their successes, passions, and struggles as they grow their businesses.

Contact SecondMuse at battlecreek@secondmuse.com or visit bit.ly/bcbizintake for more information.

BCU wins Footprint Award from BC Area Chamber

BCU received the Footprint Award at the Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce’s 2019 Annual Business Excellence Awards, held on Wednesday, May 15. The award is given out to a brick-and-mortar business or organization that has made great investment and beautification to their location. BCU moved into its new offices in October 2018.

BCU President & CEO Joe Sobieralski receives the Footprint Award from Kara Beer, President, Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce.

(Photo courtesy of Battle Creek Area Chamber of Commerce)



New Investments Announced at W. K. Kellogg Airport

The W.K. Kellogg Airport, like the adjacent Fort Custer Industrial Park, is abuzz with summer activity. Two initiatives have recently taken off in the form of groundbreakings – the first at WACO Aircraft Corporation, the second at the Western Michigan University’s College of Aviation. Together, these projects will result in more than \$40 million of new investment at the airport.

On Tuesday, May 7, WACO Aircraft broke ground on a new expansion. The \$20 million addition makes way for 80,000 square feet, showcasing new hangars, manufacturing, engineering, offices, and a restaurant. The expansion is expected to create 40 new jobs and allow WACO to expand manufacturing to include the classic Junkers F-13 aircraft as well as the iconic WACO biplane. All told, the company could build up to 50 planes annually. Construction is anticipated to take 12-18 months.

On Friday, May 10, WMU turned dirt for its \$22 million expansion at the College of Aviation. Led by Dean Dave Powell, the COA will add over 50,000 square feet to its facilities. Upgrades include new classrooms, research labs, simulators, paint facilities, and a cafe. The university aims to complete the project by the end of the summer 2020.

New space at the COA will help meet the overwhelming demands of a rapidly growing aviation industry. With 94% job placement

immediately after graduation, the top-three program will be able to “provide the proper education, training, and preparation” required for continued growth and excellence.

These developments underscore the airport’s integral role in Battle Creek’s economic engine, both today and in the future. As existing institutions like WACO and the College of Aviation continue to thrive, BCU is also working to bring emerging technologies like unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to Battle Creek.

BCU received a grant in October 2018 from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation to research the suitability of Battle Creek’s W.K. Kellogg Airport for the UAV sector. A draft report was delivered to BCU in May. In it, the authors note that Battle Creek has a unique mix of assets which make this region attractive to UAV companies. BCU is now working with community stakeholders to review the recommendations laid out in the report to chart a path forward.

Dignitaries break ground for WACO’s new expansion.



Bigs in Business: Battle Creek Businesses Defend Kids’ Potential Through Mentoring

By Amy Kuchta
Big Brothers Big Sisters

Since 2008, Battle Creek businesses have helped defend the futures of local children through the Big Brothers Big Sisters’ Bigs in Business program. Twice a month during the school year, students spend time with their mentors at their work-place.

The matches, as the pairs are called, meet to develop and grow their friendship by exploring various facets of the workplace or by participating in activities. The students experience the work setting, experiencing an introduction to career options while gaining a greater appreciation for the importance and relevance of their education.

Jennifer Shotwell, who mentors middle school student Raeonna in Denso’s Bigs in Business program, finds being a Big Sister rewarding. “I love that I have an opportunity to help create a positive change in a child’s life,” Shotwell says.

In addition to being a good experience for herself and her Little Sister, Shotwell says she believes Denso benefits from hosting the program. “Denso focuses on our community, allowing associates to have an opportunity to be very hands on,” Shotwell says. “Bigs in Business is another great opportunity to integrate our Denso Spirit philosophy of Foresight, Credibility and Collaboration into the future of our community. It provides an opportunity for Denso associates to

directly impact young lives and see positive results through the time we spend with our Littles.”

Big Brothers Big Sisters’ CEO Amy Kuchta says that Bigs in Business mentors help students prepare for the next step in their lives after high school graduation. “Whether students are continuing their education or going into the workforce, the students are learning valuable lessons from their Bigs. It can be anything from what types of careers are out there to how to apply for a job.”

Bigs in Business began in Battle Creek in 2008 at Bronson Battle Creek. In addition to Bronson, there are programs at Binder Park Zoo and Denso. There is one more unique Bigs in Business program here called Bigs on the Riverwalk, which brings staff from United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region, Battle Creek Community Foundation, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation together to mentor Littles at the United Way office.

Anyone interested in starting a Bigs in Business program can contact Amy Kuchta at 269-382-6800 or AmyKuchta@bbbsmi.org. Volunteers are always needed for the agency’s traditional community-based mentoring program. Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Big Couples, and Big Families meet with their mentee for activities in the community twice a month for about two hours each time. For information about this program, call Big Brothers Big Sisters at 269-382-6800 or visit ThinkBigToday.org/volunteer.



KCC Wraps Up Renovation of RMTC

Kellogg Community College recently completed renovations to the Regional Manufacturing Technology Center (RMTC). The RMTC, which is located in the Fort Custer Industrial Park, provides training for thousands of workers in the skilled and industrial trades.

The \$4.3 million investment includes new classroom and office facilities; new plumbing, electric, HVAC and security systems; flooring and wall upgrades; a new roof; and a repaved driveway and parking lot. In total, more than 80% of the building's 48,400 square feet were renovated.

The State of Michigan's capital outlay program provided \$2.15 million, with \$1.07 million from the Battle Creek Tax Increment Finance Authority, \$250,000 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and \$830,000 from KCC's dedicated capital millage.

The RMTC opened in 1990 and provides training in the areas of robotics, mechatronics, heating, cooling, machining, pipefitting, welding, renewable energy, electricity and electronics and other trades. In 2016, an 8,400 square-foot addition was added to the building. The expansion cost \$2.59 million, with the BCTIFA providing \$1.6 million.

The newly renovated facility significantly extends the building's lifespan, enabling KCC to help train the next generation of workers in Battle Creek.

President's Desk...cont'd

GVSU will partner with BCPS to help provide middle and high school students a pathway to careers in health care and education; offer teachers enhanced professional development and mentorship opportunities; and continue to build a pipeline of talented educators in Battle Creek.

In December, BCU announced a new restaurant incentive, with the goal of creating fresh dining options in Battle Creek. The RFP deadline was in late March and the BCU team is now vetting proposals. We expect to begin making announcements in early summer.

In October 2018, BCU got a grant from the Michigan Defense Center, part of the MEDC, which we used to look at the region's suitability for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), more commonly known as drones. The report was delivered in May and found that Battle Creek is in a strong position to attract drone business and notes that this sector is expected to grow dramatically over the next decade. We are working with business and community leaders to move forward on efforts to bring UAV business to Battle Creek.

BCU also commissioned a study of Battle Creek's residential housing market. This report is intended for real estate developers and investors considering Battle Creek and will help them understand the demand for housing, the type of housing needed, size of units and rent levels here. BCU is actively working to bring new developers to Battle Creek and this information illustrates the need in the community.

BCU has had a busy spring and is looking forward to an even busier summer as we make big things happen here in Battle Creek. Keep an eye out for some big announcements about several exciting new initiatives throughout the summer.

FCIP Operations Update

New walking path to be installed, new tenant signs, new flashing light

Plans are underway for the installation of a two-mile shared-use path, from Dickman Road to Skyline Drive. The path will run entirely on the eastside of Hill-Brady Road. City crews will begin construction in August. During this time, the northbound lane (closest to the curb) will be periodically closed where the work is being done. However, this should not impede business traffic. Please exercise caution while traveling in this area.

Also, four new signs were recently installed in the industrial park. These are located along the major streets to direct visitors to the companies on the side streets. Finally, a new flashing light has been installed at the intersection of Clark and River Roads. If you have any questions, please contact Bridgette Jones at jones@bcunlimited.org.

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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Save the Date: RMTC Open House June 20, 2019

KCC's Regional Manufacturing Technology Center will host an open house on Thursday, June 20. The event will mark the official opening of the newly renovated RMTC. The event will start at 5:00 PM, with remarks and the ribbon cutting ceremony to begin at 5:15 PM. Tours of the new facility will go on until 6:30 PM. For more details, contact Eric Greene at greenee@kellogg.edu.