



The

# INSIDE

**Allen Economic Development Group**

## President's Pitch

### Visioneering, investing in Allen County

*Visioneering, described by author and pastor Andy Stanley, is a course one follows to make dreams a reality. "It is the process by which ideas and convictions take on substance; a tool designed to discover and maintain vision."*



Visioneering and investing need to go hand in hand for the economic outcomes that businesses or communities' desire. The staff at Allen Economic Development Group values visioneering. It is part of what we do with our partners every day. It is our goal to work with them to maximize their potential, realize their dreams, and ultimately see the results of a better economic future for all of the people in Lima/Allen County. Visioneering plus investing will lead to increased value for a community when done the right way.

See STRATTON, page 3

## Downtown development underway



Work crews are busy in the southeast quadrant of downtown Lima. The Greater Lima Region Amphitheater, located at the corner of Elm and Union streets, is expected to be operating in 2023.

## Grants will bring better sites

EDCO, county home lots to be cleared with state funds

Eleven acres in the city will be redeveloped thanks to cleanup grant from the state.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine has announced over \$250 million in grants for communities as part of the new Ohio Brownfield Remediation Program. Allen County will receive \$860,500 to clean and remediate 11 acres along the 1100 block of East Kibby Street.

The Port Authority of Allen County (PAAC) has an option to purchase the former EDCO Tool and Supply site. Once the two remaining buildings are demolished and the site is cleaned, it will be marketed for redevelopment. Its location near I-75 makes it ideal for manufacturing or warehousing.

"The EDCO property on Kibby

Street has great potential and this brownfield funding will assist our team in the clean-up and remediation of this space," said Dave Stratton, President/CEO of Allen Economic Development Group. "It is our goal to regain vitality and attractiveness in this entranceway into the city. We believe that the outcome can be that of positive economic and business growth."

The PAAC entered into an Option to Purchase the former industrial site in 2018. It has conducted environmental studies and maintained the site for several years. The location in the city's fifth ward is zoned industrial and has utilities at the site.

Allen County previously received

See GRANTS, page 3

## Pohjala joins PAAC

Eric Pohjala is the newest member of the Port Authority of Allen County.

Pohjala, who also serves on the board of trustees for Allen



Economic Development Group, is the Chief Financial Officer at Lima Memorial Health System. He replaces Don Klausing, who served on the PAAC for more than a decade.

The Port Authority of Allen County was formed in 1982 by the Allen County Commissioners. It was reorganized in 2013 and is now administered by the Allen Economic Development Group. A port authority, through powers outlined in the Ohio Revised Code, can own, lease and buy land, provide financing mechanisms to eligible entities, issue bonds, and other economic development tools. The port owns 70 acres of developable land adjacent to I-75 in Gateway Shawnee Industrial Park.

Other members of the PAAC include Maria Sanko, Phil Buell, Ron Meyer, Barry Hardy and Paul Swartz.

# Companies craft workforce programs

Companies across the nation are searching for workers and Allen County is no exception.

The county's labor force participation rate has continually fallen since March 2020 and was at 57.56% in March 2022, 4.84% lower than the national rate. According to Ohio Means Jobs, over 2,300 job openings exist

within a 10-mile radius of Lima. Nationally, two jobs are available for every available worker. Opportunity is abundant for those looking for better salary, benefits, opportunity or culture.

The tight labor market has companies developing new strategies to attract workers. With Allen County's population expected to fall by 1.6% in the next five years, challenges will continue to increase. Even with automation and lean practices, businesses must make efforts to attract and keep the existing and emerging workforce. Approximately 20% of Allen County's population is Gen Z (those born 1997-2012), with Millennials (those born 1981-1996) totaling 19.5%. The message is clear: if Allen County is to stop the proverbial brain drain it must craft programs to entice Gen Z to find and build a good career in this region.

State lawmakers are making changes to assist companies looking for workforce solutions. Since the 2018-2019 school year, the Ohio Department of Education

has required school districts to create a policy to allow students to earn credits toward graduation through work-based learning experiences, internships and co-ops. The programs are designed to provide authentic learning experiences for students to link academic, technical and professional skills. The key is for

businesses and education partners to work together.

Bath Local Schools is one of the local districts working with companies to immerse their students in career exploration. The Career Awareness Training (CAT) program allows

seniors to receive hands-on experiences through an internship program for one or two semesters. So far, they have partnered with Lima Memorial Health System, Allen County Educational Service Center preschool program, Bath Township Fire Department and a local veterinarian clinic.

"We believe it's very important for our kids to be able to submerge themselves into their career interest while in school to help them better understand their future," said Bath Superintendent Rich Dackin.

Lima Memorial started an internship program with Bath and Wapakoneta students in September 2021. Students typically work five days a week, one to three hours each day. They

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— Rich Dackin,  
Bath Superintendent

## Stratton

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Allen County is prospering with the strategic planning, goal setting and visioning being done by our existing companies. Significant investments at companies throughout our county were announced in the second quarter of 2022. Some of the investments that will be transformational when completed include:

- Procter and Gamble will invest over \$500M in its facility in Bath Township to establish a new product line and increase its workforce by nearly 135;
- Ford Motor Company will spend a portion of an overall \$100 million investment at its Lima engine plant and create new jobs;
- Projects creating additional manufacturing and warehousing space continue at Charles River, Randall Bearings and Perry proTech.

Our community partners are also looking toward the future. Work on the Greater Lima Region Amphitheater in Lima is underway, and other projects like the Central Avenue District, Spring and Main and the Metro Center are progressing. Long-term strategies are also being developed by the city of Delphos and the villages of Spencerville and Bluffton.

Many entities assist with visioning, including the Ohio Department of Development, JobsOhio and the Greater Lima Region. Under the direction of AEDG, the Port Authority of Allen County applied for and received \$1.77 million in grants through the Brownfield Remediation Grant Fund. The result will be an environmental assessment on a former industrial site on Neubrecht Road, the demolition of the Allen County Home and the remediation of the 11-acre parcel on which EDCO Tool operated in the city of Lima.

In the first half of 2022, our public partners have worked with AEDG to cast a vision and invest millions of dollars in the county. As we move forward, we will continue to dream, vision, and invest in our future. Let's dream together.

Friday
Mark your calendar
Oct. 14

MakerFest  
CAREER DAY

## Grants

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two additional grants: \$710,000 to remediate the site of the former county home at 3125 Ada Road, and \$200,000 to complete environmental studies on a 57-acre site at 1403 Neubrecht Road, on which a creosote facility operated from 1938-1972.

"AEDG is committed to collaborating with our partners," Stratton said. "It is a privilege to work with the Ohio Department of Development for the removal of blighted properties for purposeful redevelopment."



## Check out new AEDG site

A redesigned AEDG website featuring available lots, local incentives and recent news is live and available by scanning the QR code or going to [www.aedg.org](http://www.aedg.org).



### AEDG Board Members

Chad King  
Cory Noonan  
Sharetta Smith  
Kurt Alexander  
Eric Pohjala  
Howard Violet  
John Recker  
Keith Horner  
John Shaver  
Tammy Whitlow  
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## Workforce

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were placed in various departments, including nursing, surgeon/doctor offices, lab, pharmacy, radiology, IT and case management. Students had to have good school attendance, be in good academic standing and get recommended by the school counselor. Students were individually interviewed by hospital staff and accepted into the program.

“Students were linked with a manager or director in the department of their interest,” said Patti Baucom, senior HR business partner at Lima Memorial. “Our existing personnel feel the importance of getting these students into the hospital setting. Managers have been very supportive in creating a meaningful internship.”

Several of the interns have been hired by Lima Memorial. The hospital is also utilizing funds from the OhioMeansJobs Rural Healthcare Grant, and other scholarships and tuition reimbursement accounts to fund their schooling.

Dackin said Bath looks to expand the CAT program every year.

“The more we can get our kids into real-world job experiences while in high school, the better off they will be in determining their futures,” he said.

Researchers at Drexel University’s Center for Labor Markets and Policy predicted an average of 33% of youth aged 16 to 19 would be employed this summer, the highest rate since 2007. Teenage employment has topped pre-pandemic levels,



Lima Memorial Health System partnered with Bath and Wapakoneta high schools to offer an internship programs to seniors. After a successful pilot, the company plans to bring on 10 interns in the coming school year.

even though the overall job market still hasn’t.

Suzie Reineke, brand manager for Reineke Family Dealerships, spoke at a recent Allen County Business Advisory Council (BAC) luncheon and detailed the 10-week Work-Study Program for high school students the company began in autumn 2021.

After being interviewed and selected, participants chose to work in the Service, Body Shop or Sales department. Students worked 2 hours a day, 2 to 3 times a week, earning \$10/hour. The student experienced each aspect of the respective department in two-week increments (see details at [teamreineke.com/internship](http://teamreineke.com/internship)). The program ended with the student making an oral presentation to management to explain what he/she learned and discuss areas of greatest interest.

The work-study program is the beginning step to a career pathway developed by the company that includes positions of express technician, junior apprentice, senior apprentice and base/master level technician.

“Students want a career path so we formalized a program using things we have been

doing internally for a long time,” Reineke said. “Showing the timeline from our work-study program to becoming a master certified technician convinces students and their parents that a good career is available in their front yard and they don’t have to leave their community to find it.”

National data shows Reineke is correct.

According to Deloitte, “Gen Z will demand greater personalization in how they move along their career journey. For organizations to attract and retain the best and brightest of the generation, it will require a different mindset.” The article from Deloitte encourages companies to develop robust training and leadership programs. Suggestions include: establishing internal apprenticeship programs; fostering diversity; creating ladder career paths; and utilizing the experience of older generations to mentor Gen Z into strong leaders.

Gen Z workers also want a sense of purpose in their work and place importance on a company’s social impact and diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

See WORKFORCE, page 5

## Workforce

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Ten students went through the Reineke program the first year; four have continued with the company. The program will continue in the 2022-23 school year. Reineke said the goal of the program is quality, not quantity.

“We want it to be a quality experience for the student. And we also know we must maintain productivity from our current technicians,” Reineke said.

The impact of the program has been felt companywide. Reineke said the program forced management to set expectations, goals and long-term strategies for all employees, and it has resulted in managers becoming even better trainers. Some employees moved to salary positions and a full-time trainer was hired to work with employees at the express service technician level. She added that some long-tenured employees have enjoyed working with young individuals who show a passion for the job.

“I have been impressed with the students,” said Robyn Walsworth, human resource director at Reineke. “They are driven and show good communication skills. We have been impressed with the soft skills we have seen.”

Baucom concurred that the students in the internship program at the hospital were nothing short of impressive.

“All of the students displayed professionalism,” she said. “They were present, courteous and a delight to work with.”

The hospital will be taking on 20 new interns in September.

Walsworth did the research



Ten students went through the Reineke work-study program the first year; four have continued with the company.

needed to start the work-study program, including looking at federal and state work laws, OSHA mandates and paperwork such as work permits, physician releases and other documents.

“The long-term payoff will be worth that time investment,” she said. “We know what we want to accomplish. We started with our goal and worked backward to develop this program.”

A key component of any work-study program is flexibility. Both companies worked with education partners regarding student release times and curriculum schedules.

Baucom also said there were some scheduling challenges with the program but there was flexibility on both sides and they got through it. Given the tremendous need for a workforce, she said hospital leadership was on board with implementing the program.

“We knew we needed to start a program even if we only kept one or two. It is too late to go after college students because they likely already have jobs elsewhere. We knew we needed to go after high school kids to keep them in the community,” Baucom said.

The work-study program and

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**“Just start. Don’t overthink it and don’t worry about perfecting it before you begin.”**

— Suzie Reineke,  
Reineke Family Dealerships

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the Reineke career pathway are outlined on the company’s website. However, the work-study isn’t the only tool the company is using. Both Reineke and Walsworth make presentations to students as young as seventh grade at various schools throughout the region. They also believe students should tour companies to realize the opportunity that exists in their own cities.

Reineke has advice for companies thinking about starting a work-study program.

“Just start,” she said. “Don’t overthink it and don’t worry about perfecting it before you begin.”

*Writer’s Note: The goal of the Allen County Business Advisory Council is to build mutually beneficial connections between educators and industry sector leaders to address the identified challenges in the region. Reineke and Baucom presented their company’s programs at a recent BAC luncheon.*

Sources: American Community Survey; EMSI Burning Glass, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Deloitte