



Leading business growth in Geauga County

## 2024 Annual Meeting

### **PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### ***GGP Holds Annual Meeting at Generations Event & Reception Center in Chesterland. Featuring Guest Speakers:***

**Mr. Mike Jacoby**  
**Economic Development**  
**Consultant**  
**Bricker Graydon**

**Mr. Jeffrey D. Harris**  
**Partner**  
**Bricker Graydon**

**Mr. Brendan Heil**  
**Of Counsel**  
**Bricker Graydon**

**Ms. Jacquelin R. Lewis**  
**Partner**  
**Bricker Graydon**

**Mr. Drew Cooper**  
**Director of Government Affairs and External**  
**Engagement**  
**JobsOhio**

The Geauga Growth Partnership, Inc. (GGP) hosted its 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting on Wednesday, March 20th, starting at 7:30 a.m. with a theme of Partners in Growth. The event took place at the elegant Generations Event and Reception Center. Attended by over 200 esteemed guests, including local business owners, government officials, and community partners, the meeting proved to be both informative and highly successful. The panelists delivered engaging presentations, and the breakfast, expertly catered by Versare Café & Market owned by Carmen & Gabriella Albino, was once again a delightful highlight of the event. The event provided a great opportunity for networking and learning more about GGP's progress throughout 2023 as well as insightful information about Northeast Ohio's economic development opportunities and future.

GGP's Board Chairman, John Epprecht, led the organization's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting. Mr. Epprecht, Co-Owner, and Retiree of Great Lakes Cheese, eloquently illustrated the profound impact of GGP's initiatives, emphasizing its unique network of connections and resources. Mr. Epprecht stated, "I have witnessed a transformation and growth that I can honestly say we didn't expect when we first started." GGP is the local "on the ground" organization that connects businesses to resources. The GGP team works to build relationships, understand business needs, and create connections to many resources. He highlighted the organization's commitment to innovation, unveiling the launch of 'Trends in Business and Well-being in the Workplace'.

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Moreover, Mr. Epprecht elaborated on two impactful projects supported by JobsOhio aimed at either enticing new businesses to Ohio or fostering the expansion of existing ones, ultimately fostering job creation and capital investment within the state. In a remarkable demonstration of GGP's efficacy, the collaboration with TeamNEO and JobsOhio in 2023 resulted in the retention of 138 jobs, the addition of 74 new positions, a substantial \$4.2 million increase in payroll, and an impressive \$14.9 million in capital investments. Currently, the team has 4 projects in process with 10 additional potential projects in the pipeline. Mr. Epprecht recognized GGP could not be the leader in business growth in Geauga County without partners and committed members.

Members present voted on and approved the re-election of the following board members for a three-year term: Richard Frenchie, at large; Christian Klein, Company 119; Bridey Matheney, Thrasher Dinsmore & Dolan; Tracie Roberts, Montville Plastics & Rubber; Stephanie Ronyak, The Arms Trucking Company; and John Solich, Middlefield Banking Company. Mr. Epprecht thanked and recognized an outgoing board member: Matt Nipper of KeyBank.

Mr. Rich Frenchie presented the 2024 Frank Samuel Distinguished Service Award to William (Bill) Conway. Mr. Conway is a founding member of GGP and is renowned both locally and globally for his innovative and generous contributions to business and philanthropy. Mr. Conway began his career in mining, and a dream to become an entrepreneur. This journey led to the establishment of Fairmount Minerals, later evolving into COVIA, a now publicly traded company with over \$1 billion in sales and a global workforce exceeding 2,200. Mr. Conway credits his father's wisdom of, "Be a giver – not a taker," for his philanthropic endeavors.

Kristin Beynon, Client Engagement Manager with MAGNET presented the Excellence in Manufacturing Award to ETNA Products Inc. Established in 1943, ETNA Products, Inc. is a fourth-generation family-owned business. ETNA Products, Inc. is a leader in the lubricant industry, manufacturing metalworking lubricants, coolants, rust preventatives, and cleaners for customers in over 40 states in the US and around the world. ETNA Products, Inc. focuses on providing quality products, bringing value to customers, and ensuring continuous investment in our facility and the people who contribute to their success. "Our mission is to take care of our customers—to meet and exceed their expectations; to take care of our people—to provide them with continuous improvement opportunities and a good, safe, and fulfilling place to work," CEO Catharine Golden said. "We talk about our mission at every company meeting to reinforce how important it is to ETNA."

Drew Cooper is the Director of Government Affairs and External Engagement at JobsOhio; founded 14 years ago, JobsOhio is a first-of-its-kind, state-authorized, nonprofit built with



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private stable financial resources, a statewide network of economic development partners, and the long-term investment outlook needed to attract, retain, and expand businesses, payrolls, and career opportunities across the state. The strategy for success is working with the six regional partners, including Northeast Ohio's TeamNEO, who then work with local economic development organizations, like GGP. Mr. Cooper concluded that the team of JobsOhio, TeamNEO and GGP have created over 1000 jobs, \$246 million in capital investments, \$49 million in new payroll and retained over 3400 jobs.

The discussion on Ohio's economic development landscape and the pivotal role played by organizations like GGP in fostering growth was skillfully facilitated by Jeffry Harris of Bricker Graydon, LLP, who moderated a panel featuring distinguished experts from Bricker Graydon: Brendan Heil, Council; Mike Jacoby, CEcD, Economic Development Consultant; and Jacquelin Lewis, Partner.

During the discussion, the panelists explained how local governments and non-profit entities spearhead recovery and advancement through strategic economic development initiatives. They delved into Geauga County's occupational profile, delineating key sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare & social assistance, construction, and retail trade, which form the top sectors of its workforce.

Furthermore, the panelists shed light on the job growth projections for Northeast Ohio, highlighting the emergence of opportunities in food preparation and service, healthcare support, and healthcare practitioner & technical roles. They also discussed the projections to fill job openings and replace retiring professionals, foreseeing a demand surge in food preparation and service, office and administrative roles, and sales & related occupations.

It was emphasized that talent acquisition remains paramount in site selection decisions, underscoring the significance of quality of life to attract and retain skilled individuals, thus sustaining economic growth. Talent and labor are key indicators of an organization's interest to invest and grow in Ohio.

Kimm Leininger, President and CEO of Geauga Growth Partnership, wrapped up the meeting with a continuing commitment to advancing GGP's mission to enhance the Geauga County's economic development while preserving its distinctive sense of community.

GGP would like to thank the 200+ Members and the community for an exceptional 2023 and we invite you to continue to grow with us by sponsoring and/or attending HomeGrown Geauga on August 1, 2024; if your organization is not already a member, join the GGP community by becoming a member; or bring a colleague to a GGP event. GGP needs your support to continue



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supporting businesses and growth in Geauga County. Learn more about GGP by accessing our website at: <https://www.geaugagrowth.com>

GGP would like to thank the following sponsors for supporting the Annual Business Meeting:

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Award Sponsors: A-M Seamless Gutters LLC; MAGNET & Ohio Department of Development

*Geauga Growth Partnership's mission is to enhance the economic climate in Geauga County by attracting new business, supporting existing business and preparing the workforce of the future. For more information visit [www.geaugagrowthpartnership.com](http://www.geaugagrowthpartnership.com), contact [info@geaugagrowth.com](mailto:info@geaugagrowth.com) or call 440-564-1060.*