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Coalition aims to stir interest in creative class

Cross section of region's 'high bohemian' workers hope to spur economy.

By [Stephanie Gottschlich](#)

Staff Writer

Friday, February 29, 2008

DAYTON — Efforts to grow a "creative class" in the Miami Valley took shape Thursday, Feb. 28, when the Creative Region Initiative announced which emerging leaders it selected to be catalysts for kick-starting the movement.

After evaluating 132 applications, a task force representing 20 community groups selected 32 people who represent a cross section of ages, counties, occupations, ethnicity and experience, the group said.

The Creative Region Initiative is the moniker given to yearlong effort started by the Southwestern Ohio Council for Higher Education for growing a creative class with the help of urban theorist Richard Florida and his Toronto-based company, the Creative Class Group.

Florida, author of the bestseller "Rise of the Creative Class," argues that the presence of a "high bohemian" class of artists, engineers, musicians, high-tech workers and creative thinkers drives economic growth more than the older approach of attracting companies.

Creative class workers — people who "think" for a living and comprise more than 30 percent of the nation's population — are key to the future of any region hoping to take advantage of changes across the global economy, Florida argues.

Communities nationwide have hired Florida's company to help them foster an environment that retains a talented work force, attracts new talent from around the globe and empowers their regions. SOCHE raised \$150,000 in donations to pay for the effort here.

Lisa Grigsby, executive director of the Miami Valley Restaurant Association and one of the catalysts, said she applied because the "same-old, same-old wasn't working. I think of that quote, 'Be the change you want to see in the world,' " she said.

A public information session for anyone interested in getting involved will be Thursday, March 6, at 4 p.m. at the Cannery Art and Design Center, 434 E. Third St., in Dayton.

Miami Valley's Creative Class catalysts

Age 20-29

Sarah Ammar, communications specialist, Avetec Inc.

Kate Ervin, planner, City of Dayton

Drew Fuller, attorney for government contracts and litigation, Sebaly, Shillito and Dyer

Scott Murphy, aerospace engineer, Air Force Research Lab

Josh Rauch, student at University of Dayton and intern at the Mathile Family Foundation

Ryan Sharpiro, research coordinator, Wright State Physicians

Age 30-39

Tokz Awoshakin, executive director, Civic Life International Inc.

Catherine Crosby, assistant director, Human Relations Council, City of Dayton

Matthew Joseph, commissioner, City of Dayton

Ojustwin Naik, corporate senior product manager, Teradata

Bill Pote, president, ResConnex Inc.

Stephanie Yenn, training and development manager, Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce

Age 40-49

Susan Byrnes, director of ArtStreet, University of Dayton

Theresa Gasper, president, Full Circle Development

Lisa Grigsby, executive director, Miami Valley Restaurant Association

Patrick Martin, vice president of finance, MCM Electronics

Anne Rasmussen, contractor, Dayton Early College Academy

Ron Rollins, managing editor of content, Dayton Daily News/Cox Ohio Publishing

Dave Seyer, vice president of development, Culture Works

Sally Struthers, dean of liberal arts, communication and social sciences, Sinclair Community College

Debra Wilburn, assistant director of Career Services, Wright State University

Art Williams, manager of business services, Woolpert Inc.

Age 50-59

Linda Burrs, president and principal consultant, Step-up-to-Success Diversity Education

Dusty Hall, program development manager, Miami Conservancy District

Larry Jenkins, ASC Engineering directorate, U.S. Air Force

Marilyn Klaben, education director, The Human Race Theatre Company

Bob Parks, owner and president, The Marketing Formula

Andy Snow, photographer, Andy Snow Photography

Sharon Williamson, director of strategic communications, WorkflowOne

Age 60-69

Carol Sampson, director of community development, Wright Dunbar Inc.


Thomas Thickett, president, Levin Porter Associates Inc.

Age 70+

Bing Davis, artist, educator and community activist, Willis Bing Davis Art Studio

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