



EDITORIAL: Wanted: creative connectors: Roanoke plans to draw on its intellectual capital.

(Roanoke Times, The (Roanoke, VA) Via Acquire Media NewsEdge) Feb. 13--What makes a community desirable and sustainable? The answer, according to researcher and University of Toronto professor of business Richard Florida, who has written several books on the topic, is the strength of its creative class.

Roanoke plans to test Florida's theory by becoming the latest city to try the Creative Communities Leadership Program.

The city -- meaning the usual list of top employees and officials -- can't do this alone. In order for it to work, people -- not government -- need to take the lead.

Stuart Mease, who is employed by Roanoke to create programs that attract and retain young adults, is soliciting people -- of all ages, races and career backgrounds across the valley -- to apply to become one of 30 selected "creative connectors." The best results come from a rich mix of people who bring different perspectives.

Those simply looking for a community service venture to pad their resumes need not apply. This program is for leaders who want to initiate and implement projects that will make Roanoke a more livable place for those already here and a more desirable choice for those contemplating a move.

To do this, of course, takes time, brainpower and a rich mixture of voices. Mease knows the right people are out there. Mease is a member of our Voices of the Valleys and, after just a few weeks of panel discussions, is impressed by the depth of intellectual capital waiting to be plumbed. He is hoping to achieve similar results.

Those who think they have the talents and time to understand the creative economy and how it can benefit Roanoke shouldn't be shy in volunteering. This is a unique opportunity to have an effect on the community.

Information about the program can be found at creativeclass.com and on the city's Web site at roanokeva.gov.