When the Dalton-Whitfield Archway Partnership Executive Committee began meeting in November 2009, one of the group’s top priorities was developing and retaining young leaders in the community. In furtherance of that goal, the Executive Committee formed a Young Professional Steering Committee to help guide the Community-E³ Visioning Effort in 2010. The young leaders who were part of that process spearheaded the October 2010 Community Vision Roll Out and have subsequently worked with many of the Dalton-Whitfield Archway Partnership issue work groups that spun out of that event.

In August 2011, Pam Partain, community volunteer and Dalton State College Director of Marketing and Communications, assembled a group of community leaders and entities to discuss the possibility of bringing author and community developer Rebecca Ryan to challenge the community to invest in quality of life initiatives articulated in the Community-E³ Vision. As the group discussed how to best utilize Ms. Ryan’s expertise, members of the Archway Executive Committee revisited the need to engage young professionals in the community. On October 14, 2011, the Archway Partnership and many of the organizations represented on the Archway Partnership Executive Committee co-sponsored an event featuring Ms. Ryan called “Creating a Greater Dalton: Rebecca Ryan Shares Strategies for Attracting and Retaining Young Professionals.”

Following her formal presentation, Ms. Ryan facilitated a breakout session of about 100 area young professionals. At that breakout session, Ms. Ryan challenged participants to take an active role in the future of Dalton-Whitfield County. Following that event, Dalton-Whitfield County Joint Development Authority Senior Project Manager Alex Stall began hosting a series of meetings with those interested in revitalizing an effort that began in Spring 2010 to form a young professional organization.

In January 2012, David Cook, newly-elected president of the young professional organization, shared the group’s progress, including its value statement and leadership structure, with the Archway Partnership Executive Committee. Members of the Executive Committee advised Cook to share his presentation with local government and civic organizations, which he and Vice-Chair Alex Stall are currently doing. The young professional organization hosts events regularly with over 40 area professionals participating.

The Dalton-Whitfield Archway Partnership Executive Committee has invited David Cook to participate in its monthly meetings as the young professional liaison and has pledged its support to the efforts of the young professional organization.

**Advancing Community Priorities:** Engaging young professionals in creating a better quality of life in Dalton-Whitfield County was identified as a priority by the Dalton-Whitfield Archway Partnership through the community visioning process. Having young professional representation on the Archway Executive Committee helps to ensure that the voice of the next generation of leaders is being heard and considered.