Community Comes Out In Force to Learn About Potential for a Business Incubator in Whitfield County

On Thursday, January 10, many interested members of the Dalton-Whitfield community gathered at the Mack Gaston Community Center to hear the results of a community readiness assessment for a potential business incubator in the area. The information was presented by a team of researchers from Georgia Tech’s Enterprise Innovation Institute. The need for the study was first articulated in 2011 by the Archway Partnership Diverse, Forward-Thinking Economy Issue Work Group, chaired by Executive Committee member Don Cope. The study was sponsored by the Dalton-Whitfield Joint Development Authority and the University of Georgia Archway Partnership. In the next several weeks, the Joint Development Authority will work with community members to determine what next steps to pursue.

To read an article by the Dalton Daily Citizen on this presentation, please go to the following link: http://daltondailycitizen.com/local/x503818916/Incubator-could-help-start-up-firms-survive-their-infancy

To learn more about the actions leading up to this presentation please review this Archway blog post: http://dalton-whitfieldarchway.blogspot.com/2012/11/georgia-tech-assesses-dalton-whitfields.html

Readers to Leaders Issue Work Group Makes Plans for 2013

On Wednesday, January 9, community members representing Dalton Public Schools, Whitfield County Schools, Shaw Industries, the Northwest Georgia Regional Library, the Family Connection Collaborative, United Way, the Community Center, private business, the local judiciary, and many more gathered together to discuss future plans for the Readers to Leaders Issue Work Group. Readers to Leaders is a citizen-based group that was formed through
the Archway Partnership after local government, civic, and school leaders made a pact to implement the Literacy Collaborative in both Dalton Public Schools and Whitfield County Schools. The group is focused on supporting literacy efforts outside of the classroom and ensuring that students and families have every possible opportunity to succeed.

At the meeting, work group members met Marlen Rodriguez, the new United Way Vista who will work this year to support the Readers to Leaders effort and tie the initiative to the work of the Northwest Georgia Regional Library. Marlen’s position was made possible through the support of the Northwest Georgia Community Foundation, the Northwest Georgia Regional Library, and private donors. Work group members also had the opportunity to plan events and initiatives for 2013 and beyond. The group, with Marlen’s support, will explore these opportunities further over the next several weeks.

Ideas discussed included:

- Celebrating literacy awareness during April 14-20, which is nationally designated as Week of the Young Child, National Library Week, and National Public School Volunteer Week. During this week, the group discussed supporting Pre-K registration at the Community Center with reading groups, book distribution, and educational handouts for parents addressing reading milestones. The group also discussed supporting and bolstering existing volunteer reading events slated for this week.

- Hosting a Second Annual Community Literacy Celebration at the Community Center during the summer. The group discussed using this event to kick off a satellite library branch at the Community Center and bring publicity to the library’s summer reading program.

- Bringing in a high profile celebrity committed to literacy to both inspire residents and serve as a fund-raising mechanism for the effort.

- Incorporating book fairs into existing art festivals.

- Working with local health care institutions and pediatricians’ offices to implement the Reach Out and Read program (http://www.reachoutandread.org/) locally.

The next Readers to Leaders meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 6 at 4:00 PM at the Dalton branch of the Northwest Georgia Regional Library.

Local Elected Officials and Library Consider Library’s Future

On Wednesday, December 19, University of Georgia College of Education Ph.D. candidate Roberta Gardner met with local elected officials, staff of the Northwest Georgia Regional Library, and library board members to discuss the development of a vision for the library’s future. At the meetings, Roberta shared a thought-provoking presentation about the history of the public library, the opportunities for the library in an economic downturn, how the library can impact literacy rates in a community, and examples of how the Dalton-Whitfield community can use the library as a tool in its campaign to get students on reading level at an early age.

Following Roberta’s presentation, participants had an opportunity to discuss thoughts and concerns. Over the next several months, Roberta will work closely with these leaders and other citizens to develop a future vision for the library, a timetable for that vision, and a public engagement strategy in regard to that vision.