

Leadership Lansing Focuses on the Importance of Diversity and Inclusion

MAKING PROGRESS IN BUILDING A DIVERSE and inclusive work culture requires leaders to be bold and willing to have tough, often uncomfortable conversations. Those were just a couple of the messages that emerged during the Leadership Lansing training in February. Diversity and Inclusion (DNI) was the theme for much of the day, which started with a lively panel discussion featuring experts from organizations that have excelled in advancing DNI. The panel was moderated by Tedi Parsons (LEAP) and featured Lori Simon (Sparrow Health System), Michael Flowers (Lansing Board of Water and Light), Kim Hafley (Foster Swift) and Karla Anderson (Emergent Holdings/AF Group).



“To be a DNI practitioner in the workplace, you have to be bold,” said Simon.

“It is hard work—you have to roll up your sleeves,” said Parsons. “You are going to get pushback.”

DNI is not something that is just for larger organizations with more resources to invest. Flowers encouraged smaller business to start by focusing on inclusion.

“If team members feel included in the decision-making process, that is a great first step,” said Flowers.

Panelists also recommended that a good starting point for most organizations is to do a cultural audit, which will provide a snapshot of where the organization is at the time of the audit.

Following the DNI panel, the Leadership Lansing cohort travelled to Peckham where they learned about the mission of the organization that provides career opportunities for the disabled. Peckham employs 2,500 team members across five service lines.

TechSmith CEO Wendy Hamilton served as the ‘Lunch with a Leader’ speaker. She continued the theme of diversity by emphasizing the importance of encouraging diversity of opinion in the workplace. She told the group to seek out opinions of people who will provide a contrary viewpoint to their own.

The February Leadership Lansing workshop concluded with a field trip to Granger. Among the takeaways was the learning about the eye-opening amount of technology the company has in place to manage trash collection, recycling and landfill operations. ■

Career Ready Talent: Our State’s Economic Vitality Depends on It

BY STACY ADADO, COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST, INGHAM INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

IN A RECENT HECHINGER REPORT article titled “10 years later, goal of getting more Americans through college is way behind schedule,” Jon Marcus discusses how budget cuts, high tuition and public disillusion have slowed the progress of this goal, while employers struggle to find skilled workers. Although this may be true, the good news is that more high school students than ever before are participating in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, better preparing them for life beyond high school.

Ingham Intermediate School District currently offers 19 CTE programs at the Wilson Talent Center in Mason, serving more than 800 students. Each program has a business advisory committee and works with local employers to ensure alignment with industry needs. Students can earn high school credit, free college credit, and state and national industry certifications at no cost. Over 500 industry certifications were earned last year alone. To say CTE students have an “edge” over their peers beginning their freshman year of college or entering the work environment is an understatement.

The state of Michigan has placed a spotlight on professional trades opportunities, and that focus must continue if we are to ever fill the

talent gap. Michigan needs welders, machinists, construction laborers and technicians, and in the capital region, we also need employees in the business and insurance sectors. Not all of these professions require a four-year degree or even a two-year degree. Training in professional trades doesn’t have to wait until college, this happens today in high schools across the state.

Employers, who are looking for talent, should attend the Reverse Job Fair on March 21, at Eagle Eye Golf Club hosted by CTE programs from Clinton, Eaton and Ingham Counties. This event flips a typical job fair structure and perspective employers search the room for students who have concluded training in construction, health care, information technology and manufacturing. These high school seniors are looking for employment (full time, part-time, summer), internships or apprenticeship opportunities with local employers. If your business is interested in attending this event, please contact Stacy Adado at 517-244-1324 or sadado@inghamisd.org.

As a region, we continue to make a concerted effort to show students that there are many paths to success. ■