

March YES! Campaign Newsletter & View from the Office of Economic Development

By Ron Kraft, Interim Economic Development Director

- The community moves on at a healthy pace and exciting things continue to happen.
- The YES! Campaign has reached \$2.2 million, well above the 1.85 million goal! Wow!
- The YAPG, Inc. Corporate Annual Meeting was attended by groups of Member/Investors twice the size of normal with 80+ people present.
- Dr. Don Brock shared the vision of Astec Industries and the successes they are having with their group of companies, including the Yankton Kolberg-Pioneer, Inc. plant.
- Senator Thune dropped in and shared a few things from Washington that are of interest to South Dakotans.
- Erik Nelson, Senator Johnson's office was also present. Senator Johnson dropped by a few years ago. We really appreciate having our congressional delegation visiting on a regular basis.
- Another familiar face in the crowd was Kurt Hauser, our Economic Development Director until October 1 and the guy who carried the "load" to land L & M Radiator in Spec Building #3. I apologize for not recognizing you at the meeting, Kurt. Kurt and Carrie are member/investors in the YES! Campaign.
- New retail business development is still on the horizon, but we cannot predict when actual commitments might be made.
- Probably the biggest news in town may well be that the Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan is, after 30 years, locally owned. Thank you to Gary Wood for having confidence enough in Yankton to make the necessary financial commitments to make this happen. This purchase saved our community a large number of jobs that likely would have moved out of the community.
- Also, we just learned that KYNT/KK93 Radio is now locally owned by Carol and Doyle Becker. Riverfront Broadcasting took over March 1.
- Having the local media support the business community is very important to long term economic development. I have always found the local media to be very helpful and supportive of Yankton.
- Computer technology projects seem to be the hot commodity in economic development expansion projects this winter. Yankton is surprisingly well equipped to play in this field, though we do have some "competitive disadvantages."
- Local referrals (leads) to businesses who are considering expansions is a key part of finding and nurturing projects to completion. The key is having local people tell us when a friend, relative, vendor or customer is considering a new location. The L & M Radiator plant came from local lead and from having Spec Building #3 available.
- Skilled Workers: The Regional Technical Education Center has spent the last nine months working with the South Dakota Auto Dealers Association trying to find a way to help train over 109 Auto Technicians to meet the needs of the state. John Hagemann has worked hard on trying help fit the pieces together to make this happen. These are jobs that pay very well and having trained technicians available will help rural auto dealers survive.