



Saturday, July 29, 2006

[SPARK, Washtenaw Development Council Merge to Form Ann Arbor SPARK](#)

ANN ARBOR, MICH. – SPARK and the Washtenaw Development Council, Ann Arbor's leading regional economic development organizations, officially merged Friday, creating one unified organization, Ann Arbor SPARK. The merger of the two organizations supports the region's mission for economic growth and represents all communities in Washtenaw County.

"Year-to-date, WDC has experienced tremendous success assisting 12 companies, including Toyota, Google, Hyundai, Advanced Photonics and Xoran, creating 2271 new jobs and \$341 million of new investment" said Michael A. Finney, president and chief executive officer of Ann Arbor SPARK. "SPARK has engaged 20 start up companies this fiscal year including Innovative Therapeutics, Airways, ERT Systems, Mindworks, Compendia Biosciences, and Phrixus Pharmaceuticals. These companies have collectively raised nearly \$3 million and represent great opportunities for long-term economic growth in our region."

Said William Milliken, chairperson of the Washtenaw Development Council: "Ann Arbor SPARK is the result of a collective mission of local business, government, education and economic development leaders to find a better way to market the Ann Arbor region as a viable, thriving place to do business. An exceptional group of local leaders have come together to form the Ann Arbor SPARK Board of Directors, creating a strategic alliance that will rival any economic organization in the country."

Rick Snyder, chairperson of the original SPARK, CEO of Ardesta and chairman of Gateway Computer said Ann Arbor SPARK reflects the culmination of more than 2 years of collaboration and strategic planning. The synergies that will be generated by combining these two strong organizations resonates well with businesses across an array of industries and stages of life cycle, and provided the catalyst to create Ann Arbor SPARK."

As part of the merger agreement, Ann Arbor SPARK named its new Board of Directors as well as its Executive Committee. The Ann Arbor SPARK Board of Directors will meet annually to determine the organization's policies and strategic direction; its Executive Committee, comprised of 12 local leaders, will meet monthly to provide operational direction to Finney and his staff.

Ann Arbor SPARK's Board of Directors:

Albert M. Berriz, CEO, McKinley

David A. Brandon, chairman and CEO, Dominos, Inc.

Dr. David Canter, senior vice president and director, Michigan Laboratories, Pfizer Global Research & Development

Dr. Mary Sue Coleman, president, University of Michigan

Dr. John A. Fallon III, president, Eastern Michigan University

Robert E. Guenzel, administrator, Washtenaw County

Timothy G. Marshall, president and CEO, Bank of Ann Arbor

Bill Milliken, president, Milliken Realty Company

Rick Snyder, CEO and co-founder of Ardesta, LLC

Dr. Larry Whitworth, president, Washtenaw Community College

Michael A. Finney, president and CEO, Ann Arbor SPARK

Ann Arbor SPARK's Executive Committee:

Laurel R. Champion, publisher, Ann Arbor News

Gretchen Driskell, Mayor, City of Saline

Professor Steve Forrest, vice president for research, University of Michigan

Roger W. Fraser, city administrator, City of Ann Arbor

Robert E. Guenzel, administrator, Washtenaw County

Michael Korybalski, local development finance authority

Dr. David Mielke, Dean, College of Business, Eastern Michigan University

Bill Milliken, president, Milliken Realty Company

Kenneth Nisbet, director, University of Michigan Tech Transfer and chairman of the Ann Arbor IT Zone

Dr. Edward Pagani, senior director and head of Strategic Alliances for Pfizer

Global R&D in Michigan, and president of MichBio

David Parsigian, partner, Miller, Canfield, Paddock & Stone

Rick Snyder, CEO and co-founder of Ardesta, LLC

Michael A. Finney, president and CEO, Ann Arbor SPARK

As part of the creation of Ann Arbor SPARK, current staff levels will be maintained with plans to add new positions over the coming year as it expands its services. Ann Arbor SPARK plans to introduce new services to attract business to the region and promote growth of companies starting in the region, including pre-seed funding, wet lab incubator services, investor development, and robust business acceleration.

For more information, click on AnnArborSpark.Org

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