

# Making it Happen



April 2006

NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITY PROGRESS INITIATIVE

## Industry Cluster Strategic Planning Looks Toward Bright Future

by Chelsey Ross



**Making it Happen.** Here are just a few of the Industry Cluster members who attended the Industry Cluster Network planning session in January.

In southern Wood County and Rome, we are lucky that our community has plenty to aim for. The future looks bright for the Heart of Wisconsin area, thanks to the dedication and hard work that over 130 community members are applying towards the Industry Cluster Network. 2006 brings with it the opportunity to enhance the Cluster strategy to reach new heights.

On January 20, 2006, members of six local industry clusters met to identify the "next steps" needed for our community's economic development.

One of the main objectives identified at the Strategic Planning Session was to host a Business Matchmaking Procurement Event. The event would provide an environment for suppliers and end-user businesses to learn about each others products and develop professional relationships.

At the Cluster Strategy meeting,

participants also identified that regional partnerships are expected to become critical in the coming years. Action steps were planned to help local residents and businesses begin to reach outside of the seven communities participating in the Community Progress Initiative, and into our regional area.

Industry Cluster members plan to bring the successes of the Industry Cluster to the forefront by spreading the word at service club meetings in the area. In addition to public education, the Clusters are now recruiting new members, with a particular focus on youth and government representatives.

Ideas are just ideas, but as we've seen throughout the Community Progress Initiative, with the help of dedicated citizens like you, ideas for 2006 can and will become realities.

"To retain emerging business opportunities locally, we need to try something new. The Community Progress Initiative provides the business platform and synergy for individuals and organizations to transform their economic situation from continued down-sizing to unlimited opportunities."

~Dale Arendt, Paper and Forestry Cluster and Cluster Planning Meeting Facilitator

"Because of the grass roots efforts by our area citizens, there are physical things taking place that people in the community can actually touch, feel, taste, and experience."

~Dwight Hopfauf, Tourism Cluster

"We live here and have something at stake when we look at the South Wood County area, which is why every person should want to get involved, give their input, and make things happen in their community. By doing whatever it takes, we can have a community that everyone is proud to be a part of."

~Steve Lewallen, Small Business Development Cluster

"By becoming actively involved, I can make a difference and improve our local area, but I know I can't do it alone. The industry clusters help to make people aware of what is happening in our community, and if we all work together, changes can be made."

~Deanna MacMillan, Workforce Training and Education Cluster

"After I attended my first industry cluster meeting, I was very impressed with the people involved and how they were taking such an active role in trying to move the Heart of Wisconsin area into a positive, progressive place to live, work, and play."

~Lee Breezee, Entrepreneurial Boot Camp participant

"We need to make our area attractive to the next generation and provide new types of employment that are necessary to bring young people to the South Wood County area."

~Gary Rosencrans, Downtown Revitalization Cluster

### Get involved with an Industry Cluster!

- Downtown Revitalization Cluster
- New e-Economies Cluster
- Paper & Forestry Product Cluster
- Small Business Development Cluster
- Tourism Cluster
- Workforce Training & Education Cluster
- Agriculture Regional Cluster
- Healthcare Regional Cluster
- Transportation Regional Cluster

For more information or to view a list of contacts from each cluster, visit our website: [www.progressinitiative.com](http://www.progressinitiative.com) or contact Melissa Loken at 715-423-1830.

make it happen!  
**Community  
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# Creating a business-friendly culture!

## Volunteer Co-Chairs of New e-Conomies Cluster

**Dr. John Dietrich** operates Dietrich Chiropractic, SC. When asked why he volunteers, John said being involved in the



Progress Initiative is a way to bring the collective minds of many people with special abilities and backgrounds together and come up with new ways of doing things.



**Chad Bormann** of Bormann Consulting provides website design, technical and networking support, and

system upgrades to businesses and nonprofits. He also designed the Progress Initiative website. "It's rewarding to be part of an initiative that's making positive changes for the economic future for our area."

**J R Siewert** is part owner of Coldwell Banker Siewert Realtors. When asked what drives his volunteerism, he said, "If you want to affect change, you need to be involved. If we're going to receive from our community, we need to give back."



Thank you to John, Chad, and J R for "Making it Happen!"

## New e-Conomies Cluster Builds Links in Community

by Antoinette Rahn

**The New e-Conomies Cluster has been at work in the Heart of Wisconsin area for nearly two years. Its forward momentum has been synonymous with identifying the resources, services, infrastructure and technology opportunities that exist in the area, and actively pursuing options for combining, connecting and dispersing this information in a progressive manner.**

From the beginning, this group has been about identifying "what is" and using that knowledge to help the community become something more, explained JR Siewert, cluster co-chair. "Initially our cluster was established as the New Industries Cluster, but during our first discussions it became clear that we needed to look beyond industry and look at new economies," said Siewert, who shares co-chair responsibilities with Dr. John Dietrich II and Chad Bormann. "We have a lot of the technology infrastructure in place to support new economies; that's unusual for a community of our size."

### Portal Web Site

The group began researching the community's online resources as part of its **portal Web site** project. From the county Web site to sites for various business and social service resources, there's a lot of available information, but no central gateway to enter into for easy access, which is what the cluster looks to achieve with its portal Web site.

Whether it's a family looking to relocate to the community, or a business searching for a new home, countless numbers of people would benefit from a portal that links them to all the resources that exist, the co-chairs said.

"The portal Web site portion of the New e-Conomies cluster has been instrumental in defining the areas that need to be addressed in our community for an e-friendly environment," Dietrich said. "This information then has been extensively

used by the Wisconsin Rapids Area Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Heart of Wisconsin Business & Economic Alliance as they upgrade their respective Web sites."

As this group of 12 members completes identifying the resources to include in the portal, and building the "skeleton," the work of building the portal is just beginning.



**Incubate your business idea here!**  
[www.ideasincubator.com](http://www.ideasincubator.com)

### Ideas Incubator

The New e-Conomies Cluster continues to develop the **Ideas Incubator**, a vehicle for matching ideas to resources within the community, as a means for creating new ventures. At the same time, the group recently fielded an inquiry for the cluster to be involved in the potential production of a video highlighting the community, said Dietrich.

As this cluster continues its forward progress it serves as a reminder to all of us that knowledge truly is power – the power to inspire, power to build and power to become something greater.

### Get Involved!

**The New e-Conomies Cluster meets once a month, and within the cluster there are two groups which meet to work on the Ideas Incubator and the portal Web site. If you are interested in joining this group, contact Melissa Loken at the Heart of Wisconsin (715) 422-4856.**

# Advanced Leadership Institute is underway

by Chelsey Ross

Leaders of our community are currently enrolled in a new, seven-month program, the **Advanced Leadership Institute** – dedicated to continuing positive community development and made possible by a grant from the Ford Foundation.

Under the leadership of KI Thoughtbridge Consulting principals Katherine Tyler-Scott and Irma Tyler-Wood, participants will meet regularly through September 2006. As you can see in the list at right, members of the Leadership Institute represent many areas of the community and are committed to making this region stronger for the future.

The ultimate goal of this pilot program is to create and maintain a strategic leadership group that will support regional planning and increase the momentum of social and economic change in the Heart of Wisconsin area.

Watch for additional news about the Advanced Leadership Institute in future newsletters.

Building a strong and positive community!

## Community Progress Initiative Receives \$240,000 Ford Foundation Grant

by Chelsey Ross

In early February, the Community Progress Initiative received a \$240,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to enhance and support programs that serve residents of the Heart of Wisconsin area. The funding will allow the Initiative to move forward in developing the leadership and strategic planning skills of local residents.



Ford Foundation recognizes the importance of experiential learning and encourages the study of other communities. Last year, a study tour to Redwing, Minnesota taught participants how that small city revitalized their economy and how to apply some of their ideas within South Wood County. Watch for upcoming study tours!

“Through this generous award, the Ford Foundation has shown its confidence in and support of the Progress Initiative and our community. The programming funded through this grant will strengthen the Initiative substantially and benefit our community in many ways,” said Kelly Lucas of the Community Foundation and Connie Loden of the Heart of Wisconsin Alliance.

Ford Foundation’s grant will support the following areas:

- Advanced Leadership Institute
- Innovative Industry Leadership
- Experiential Learning/Study Tours
- New Ideas! Speaker Series
- Grassroots Community Leadership
- Marketing/Community Awareness

For more information, please contact Kelly Lucas at 715-423-3863. To view the Ford Foundation news press release in its entirety, visit [www.progressinitiative.com](http://www.progressinitiative.com).

## ADVANCED LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE PARTICIPANTS

**Guadalupe Ancel** Community Foundation of South Wood County Board Member  
**Terri Anderson** Town of Rome  
**Leata Anderson** Christian Life Fellowship  
**Dale Arendt** The Arendt Group  
**Jerry Bach** City of Wisconsin Rapids  
**Celse Berard** Riverview Hospital Assoc.  
**Mary Brazeau Brown** Glacial Lake Cranberries, Inc.  
**Jackie Bredl-Dietrich** Heart of Wisconsin Board Member  
**John Chrest** Wood County Department of Social Services  
**John Clark** Mid-State Technical College  
**Page Casey Clark** Port Edwards Progress Team  
**Ericka Cloud** Rainbow Casino  
**John Corrigan** Renaissance Learning, Inc.  
**Jon Evenson** Village of Biron  
**Sheldon Ferkey** Wisconsin Rapids Mall  
**Gordy Freeman** City of Nekoosa  
**Karen Ghinazzi** Arts Council of South Wood County  
**Fawn Gottschalk Laack** Ocean Spray  
**Kathy Hartjes** Rudolph Progress Team  
**Hilde Henkel** Wood Co. Board Supervisor  
**Mary Ironside** WoodTrust Bank  
**Helen Jungwirth** Daily Tribune  
**Peter Kolar** Nekoosa Area Progress Team  
**Ann Kroll** Downtown Public Art Group  
**Karin Mast** Wisconsin Rapids Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, Inc.  
**Sharon McCray** Rome Progress Team  
**Jennifer Pfefferkorn** Vesper Area Progress Team  
**Lonnie Reetz** Wisconsin Rapids Area Progress Team  
**Pam Ross** Opportunity Development Centers, Inc.  
**Dean Ryerson** Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools  
**Tammy Steward** Wisconsin Rapids Area Progress Team  
**Joe Terry** Village of Port Edwards  
**Moh Thao** Mead Elementary School  
**Craig Timm** Domtar Industries Inc.  
**Bruce Trimble** United Way of South Wood County  
**Doug Wenzlaff** Solarus  
**Wayne Wesenberg** Wisconsin Rapids Central Labor Council  
**Jean Young** Wisconsin Rapids Area Progress Team

# Building a strong and positive community!

## WHAT ARE PROGRESS TEAMS?

The Community Progress Initiative is all about looking at what we need now to improve our future, and hundreds of local residents are taking the lead by being doers and achievers through their local Progress Teams.

“Visioning sessions” were held in 2004 for residents to come together, create a vision, and start to make plans for the future. There are seven Progress Teams working to advance their community’s vision by collaborating with key community groups, officials, and leaders, and giving all residents a chance to get involved in community improvement projects and issues:

- Nekoosa Area Progress Team
- Pittsville Area Progress Team
- Port Progress Team
- Rome Is More Team
- Rudolph Progress Team
- Vesper Area Progress Team
- Wisconsin Rapids/Biron/Grand Rapids Progress Team

To see all vision statements, visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com).

## Vesper makes its mark

by David Beurle

The Vesper Area Progress Team has been working hard to fulfill their community vision statement. With a core group of approximately 10 people, they have shown great enthusiasm and creativity with their projects throughout 2005.

A unique aspect of the Vesper team’s work is that they are focusing their efforts around the heritage of the community. They see enormous potential to build the quality of life and reputation of their small community. There is already a buzz in Vesper that was not there 12 months ago. In 2005, they held the successful “Celebrate Vesper Area” event, Family Fun Days, Farmers Markets, and Tuesdays in Vesper.

To date, a key to the team’s success is their strong focus on building partnerships and alliances within the community and throughout the area. The progress team has built several effective links with other community groups including the Volunteer Firemen, the Lion’s Club, and numerous local businesses. Because of their work, not only are the area businesses and groups benefiting, but the entire Vesper community is reaping the benefits as well.

The Vesper Area Progress Team has also been working on a community calendar to help promote local events, businesses, and synchronize activities across town. This has been pulled together with the assistance of a group which calls itself “Vesper Communicates.” To help organize the community calendar, the group holds open community meetings that allow residents of Vesper to swap information and schedule local events.

The Vesper team is positive that their community and area has a strong future as a small, exciting village that is perfectly suited for small businesses, unique community experiences, and people looking for a close knit, friendly environment.

*“The Vesper Area Community Progress Initiative works for the community; we want the community to step forward and take ownership of this new ‘Vesper Communicates’ group as it is working together to help ensure the continued success of your community. In 2006, the new Lester Vesper Library will be opening. We are all very excited about that and other community events in the upcoming year.”*

**Ruth Cline,**  
Chair, Vesper Area Progress Team

**Ruth Cline,** Chair, Vesper Area Progress Team pictured here at the Vesper Halloween Chili Feed Party.



## Vesper Farmers Market reopens on May 16.

In mid 2005, the Vesper Area Progress Team launched the Vesper Farmers Market. These are held every Tuesday throughout the summer and fall months. The weekly event has now grown to be a unique and authentic farmer's market experience. The markets regularly include a large array of fresh baked goods and produce from near and far, including items from local Hmong and Amish communities.



Last Spring, Seifert's Hardware Building was razed to make room for a new library, the Lester Public Library of Vesper. It's nearing completion and is set to open on May 6 with a week-long celebration and a ribbon-cutting on May 13.

## Tuesdays in Vesper

Vesper's Team brings together its weekly events under the umbrella of 'Tuesdays in Vesper.' By bringing together existing and new community events, area residents now have a range of interesting and fun experiences available. From the Farmers Market with local produce, baked goods, and crafts, to the famous firemen's brat fry, the Vesper area aims to be the Tuesday destination-of-choice for people across the region.

## May 13 is Celebrate Vesper Area Day

On May 13, shop at Vesper's village-wide garage sales and events; then take a break and enjoy the kiddy carnival, petting zoo, and Firemen's brat fry – to name just a few of the attractions. **For Vesper's calendar of events, go online: [www.vesperwi.org](http://www.vesperwi.org).**

## Building on Heritage

The Vesper community hosted a 'Creatively Marketing Your Community' workshop that attracted nearly a quarter of the town's population. The interactive workshop included a brainstorming session on ideas to market the village consistent with the Vesper area vision statement. Out of the session and other discussions, plans are underway to start gardening clubs, historical groups, and improvements in the downtown area.

## Community Progress Funds

Vesper is working to build its local Community Endowment. Since October 2005, thanks to donations from Vesper area residents, families, friends, businesses, and organizations, the fund has grown to over \$7,000. The goal is to reach \$20,000 in order to receive a \$20,000 matching gift from the Barker Mead Fund. The Vesper Area Community Progress Fund is part of a plan to build local resources and self-reliance for the long term by making community improvements within and around the Vesper area.

**For more information on the Vesper Progress Team and their projects, contact Ruth Cline at 715-569-4202 or by email [stonegate@tznet.com](mailto:stonegate@tznet.com).**



## VESPER AREA VISION STATEMENT

Vesper Area is a safe family-friendly community which celebrates our small-town characteristics, and we work together to create a positive environment and exciting community events.

We are a heritage village with thriving businesses that celebrate our agricultural background. We offer unique outdoor recreation opportunities and successful community-based events.



Daily Tribune Photo

*"Many areas of the community have benefited from the Vesper Farmers Market, and we are thrilled by its success. We're currently planning expansion of the Market as part of 'Tuesdays in Vesper.' We foresee organizations and businesses collaborating in additional activities, and building upon the best that our rural community has to offer."*

**Jennifer Pfefferkorn**  
Vesper Area  
Progress Team member

# Building a strong and positive community!



## RUDOLPH VISION STATEMENT

Rudolph has a welcoming small town atmosphere that:

- Embraces a wide range of cultures and ideas
- Provides a nurturing environment for families, and
- Creates a sense of community for all of our residents.

We are a vibrant country community worth seeking out. We build upon our agricultural heritage with unique experiences, specialty shops, attractions, and events which appeal to residents and visitors alike.

## Rudolph kicks off the New Year in style!

by David Beurle

The Rudolph Progress Team, led by Kathy Hartjes and Christy Steinle along with a dedicated team, has been focusing on building local partnerships, creating vibrant events, and coordinating community action. Their efforts have ranged from facilitating joint local government meetings to organizing the 2005 Kickball event and forming a local business network.

As a way to fulfill their vision, Rudolph kicked off 2006 with the “Christmas Tree Bonfire,” a free community-wide event. The event was held on Saturday, January 14 at Rusty’s Backwater Saloon, and was designed as a community celebration. A chili social and the burning of several Christmas trees followed the inaugural Rudolph Calendar Party.

During the calendar planning session, representatives from community groups worked on a wall-sized calendar and planned annual events. This activity was focused on coordinating events and the collaboration of various organizations – an important organizational process for an active community.



L to R: Dale Aumann, Jeff Hartman, and Kathy Hartjes, members of the Rudolph Community Progress Fund Committee, work at finding new and creative ways to build their community’s endowment fund.

Organizer Kathy Hartjes said, “We feel these attributes are incredibly important in a successful community. Planning new events around established activities and making sure things are coordinated appropriately, will make our community successful and allow more people to attend.” The Rudolph Progress Team is strongly focused on activities that bring benefits to the whole community. They share a strong commitment and hope for a bright future for the Rudolph area by building on their local strengths and making their vision a reality.



During the Great Annual Bicycle Adventure Along the Wisconsin River in June 2005, approximately 900 cyclists stopped at the Rudolph Progress Team’s stand in downtown Rudolph. You can tell by the smiles here, it was a great day!

## Building local partnerships and creating a collaborative community

The Rudolph team has made big strides in building local partnerships. Their work began by facilitating the first joint meeting in Rudolph's history between the town and village boards. The meeting generated new thoughts and ideas about how future collaboration might occur.

In addition to the 'calendar party' held in January 2006 where community groups scheduled several events, the Rudolph Progress Team has hosted Rudolph business meetings to explore the interest and potential for closer networking and collaboration between area businesses. The first meeting attracted approximately 40 people to discuss the idea and gauge interest. With some funding, this idea is being put into practice and the community is working to form the Rudolph Business Owners Club.

## 2006 Sesquicentennial Celebration in Rudolph!

2006 is Rudolph's Sesquicentennial birthday party - watch out for a major community celebration in typical Rudolph style later in the year!

## Rudolph builds local Endowment Funds

The Rudolph Community Progress Fund has received a well-timed boost – the Town of Rudolph and Village of Rudolph have taken steps to help build a stronger community by making financial investments in their local Community Progress Initiative. The Town has donated \$5,000 to the Rudolph Fund. The Village donated \$2,500 in 2005, and will contribute another \$2,500 in spring 2006.

Contributions from local residents, businesses, and groups have brought the total endowment balance up to \$16,000. All contributions made by December 31, 2006 will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Barker Mead Fund through Community Foundation of South Wood County, up to \$20,000.

The Rudolph Progress Fund Committee awarded three grants in 2005. Grant money is helping to establish the Rudolph Business Owner's Club, supported the annual Rudolph Country Christmas, and offset some of the publishing costs associated with the upcoming Rudolph Sesquicentennial Book.

**For more information on Rudolph Progress Team and local projects, contact Christy Steinle at [dsteinle@wctc.net](mailto:dsteinle@wctc.net) or 715 435-4416 or Kathy Hartjes at [hart@wctc.net](mailto:hart@wctc.net) or 715 435-3994.**

## RUDOLPH KICKBALL EVENT

In 2005, Rudolph Progress Team hosted a Kickball Tournament. This event was a spectacular success, pulling together the community around a fun day and bringing a new event to the area. It was strongly supported by local businesses and was a good example of community collaboration.

The Kickball Tournament was created to provide autumn fun for all. To build upon the tournament's success, the Rudolph Progress Team is planning to host the event again in fall 2006.

**For Rudolph's calendar of events, go online: [visitrudolphwi.org](http://visitrudolphwi.org).**

*"The kickball tournament was an extremely successful event. Not only did we raise over \$2,000 but we also created more awareness for the Rudolph Community Progress Initiative. It was a great way for people to work together for a common and fun cause. Both Kathy and I are so thankful for the individuals, businesses and organizations that helped make it a fun event. We look forward to next year!"*

**Christy Steinle**  
Co-chair, Rudolph Progress Team



*Would you like to Make it Happen?*



- Please add my name to the Community Progress Initiative mailing list.
- I would like to get involved in the Community Progress Initiative. Please contact me.
- My contribution to the Community Progress Initiative is enclosed.
- I would like to make a contribution to the Community Progress Initiative. Please contact me.
- I'd like to receive Weekly emails about what's happening within the Progress Initiative.
- I'd like to join a Progress Team for the \_\_\_\_\_ community. Please contact me.
- I'd like to join an Industry Cluster. Please contact me.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail this form to:** Community Progress Initiative P.O. Box 954, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-0954

As a member of this community,  
I can "make it happen"



- Create My Future
- Support Local Business
- Encourage Entrepreneurship
- Give to My Community
- Provide Leadership
- Drive Change
- Inspire Others
- Be Positive

## The Community Progress Initiative is...

a bold three-year program in South Wood County and the Town of Rome to create vibrant communities with prosperous local economies.

**It is about making our local community stronger and better for the future by addressing what's needed today.**

### Community Progress Initiative Supporters

- Barker Mead Fund through Community Foundation of South Wood County
- Ford Foundation
- Stora Enso North America
- U. S. Dept. of Agriculture – Rural Development
- Wis. Dept. of Commerce with federal Community Development Block Grant Funds
- For a complete list, visit [progressinitiative.com](http://progressinitiative.com)

# Calendar of Events

Visit [www.progressinitiative.com](http://www.progressinitiative.com) for details and other upcoming events.



- **APR. 3:** **Progress Team Celebration & Planning**  
5:00 pm at The Ridges
- **APR. 5:** **Business 2 Business Club**  
Introduction to resources to help your business  
12:00 pm at Wood County Courthouse Auditorium
- **APR. 19:** **New Ideas Speaker Series**  
The Future of Leadership presented by Dr. Richard Kyte and Tom Thibodeau from D. B. Reinhard Institute for Ethics & Leadership  
7:30 pm at Wisconsin Rapids Performing Arts Center
- **APR. 24:** **Encore Evening Business 2 Business Club**  
Budgeting For Small Business by Bob Miller, CPA  
6:00 pm at Wisconsin Rapids Elks Club
- **APR. 26:** **Leadership Class Graduation**
- **APR. 27-29 & MAY 1:** **Entrepreneurial Boot Camp**  
Contact Melissa Loken at the Heart of Wisconsin (715) 422-4856.
- **MAY 1:** **Informational Brochures for Leadership Class 2006-07 are available.**  
Contact Heart of Wisconsin Alliance at 423-1830 for more information.
- **MAY 3:** **Business 2 Business Club Meeting**  
12 pm at the Wood County Courthouse Auditorium  
Contact Melissa Loken at the Heart of Wisconsin (715) 422-4856.
- **MAY 13:** **Celebrate Vesper Area Day and Library Ribbon-Cutting**
- **MAY 16:** **Tuesdays in Vesper & Weekly Farmers Market Begins**

## *Making it Happen!*

*is a newsletter published every two months for the purpose of bringing Community Progress Initiative news to the community. Hundreds of volunteers devote their time to the initiative, and this newsletter will showcase their dedication and hard work.*

**Newsletter** Chelsey Ross email: [cross029@uwsp.edu](mailto:cross029@uwsp.edu) 715-423-3863  
**Contacts:** Mary Olson Community Foundation of South Wood County 715-423-3863  
Wendy Haske Heart of Wisconsin Business & Economic Alliance 715-423-1830



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