



greater MANKATO *this month*

Retaining & Attracting an Educated Workforce

Attendees at both the Greater Mankato Leadership Delegation Retreat and the E2020 Annual Meeting this spring were asked to rank community priorities for the coming year. For both groups one priority was ranked highest: Retaining and attracting an educated workforce.

Why do employers and citizens see this as such a high priority?...Because access to talent is increasingly becoming a key differentiator in determining whether or not a community has a strong or weak environment for businesses.

The increased focus on the concept of talent retention and attraction began a few years ago, as a large group of baby boomers were getting ready to retire, threatening to shrink the pool of talented employees. While the current economic climate has delayed some of these retirements, they will eventually happen and when they do, it's vital our region have a ready pool of qualified employees ready to take their place.

Fortunately, Greater Mankato has five higher education institutions that can fill the employment pipeline with new talent, as well as provide training for current employees needing to update their skills.

This is particularly important now. As some employers in the area make downward adjustments in their employment numbers, this ready access to education becomes an opportunity for dislocated workers to update or retool their skill set. At the same time, because many of these workers may already have talent in specific areas, they can step in and serve other businesses in the area that may be increasing their operations.

In addition to the fine education institutions ready to provide the training needed to produce and enhance a talented work force, we have other assets that work together to encour-



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age retention of these talented employees in our area. Employees are increasingly looking not only for a good work environment, but even more important, a great climate when they're away from work.

Not only does Greater Mankato offer a great place to live, but we also have specific programs that engage new employees in the community. Through the Greater Mankato Young Professionals program, younger employees are given an opportunity to create a network of friends and colleagues in the area, while learning about the amenities in our region and giving them a sense of place. The Young Professionals program was created by a group of area young professionals and Greater Mankato Growth's Talent Initiatives Director (hired two years ago to specifically address this important area) and since launching a year ago has grown to 100+.

With progressive programs such as this, along with the many other amenities our community has to offer, Greater Mankato is well positioned to continue to attract and retain talented employees, one of the most important elements of our continued economic vitality.

Greater Mankato Young Professionals

An opportunity for young professionals age 21-39 to network with one other and learn more about our region by participating in social and professional development events.

greatermankato.com/yp

"Greater Mankato This Month" appears on the 15th of each month in The Free Press. For more information on Greater Mankato Growth, Inc., the area's chamber of commerce and economic development organization, visit greatermankato.com