

# creative class

By Kathy Coopman Voigt, Editor

**2007-08 Pulse Sponsors**

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

Ever since the buzz began over the words and works of Richard Florida and Rebecca Ryan, communities from coast to coast have been trying to hip-up their image to attract what has come to be called the Creative Class, the post-Boomer young professionals. Popular thought has it that this group of artists and engineers, entrepreneurs and activists will be the muscle powering economic development in the 21st Century. Public and private sectors hope these cool creatives will heat up cash registers and tax roles in their communities.

But as the saying goes, one's strengths can also be one's weaknesses. The very characteristics that make this age group worth courting make them equally difficult to nab and retain. This is, after all, a mobile bunch with their own core values and interests to appease, a group with little loyalty to employer or community, a group for which "cool" can quickly turn to "cold."

Communities like Atlanta, Austin, Denver and Chicago currently fly the banner of Cool Community in the eyes of the young professionals, but hardly a

community in the country isn't trying to woo the women and men in their 20s, 30s and 40s to city centers and neighborhoods. Note that Detroit will host the international Creative Cities Summit next fall, a gathering that is expected to draw about 500 national business and community leaders, academics and artists. Allegedly, participants and speakers will teach those assembled what makes one community attractive to hipsters, and what towns leave them cold.

The summit is only one ploy in Michigan's toolbox to attract young talent. The state has invested more than \$5 million over four years in 107 development projects to ramp up its status as a cool destination for Gen X workers. However, the city just created a network for young professionals in 2007.

Here in the Fox Cities, the Chamber convened a task force about five years ago to study what employers deemed one of their top priorities: worker attraction, especially young tech savvy workers. The group researched the then-new trend of creating networking and professional

development organizations to connect new workers with their peers, with advancement opportunities, and with their communities, all in hopes of keeping them grounded here.

Today, Pulse the Fox Cities Young Professionals Network is in its fifth year and gathering steam, expanding its offerings of professional as well as personal development programming, and connecting with similar groups in Northeast Wisconsin. About a dozen local firms support the program through corporate underwriting, and their designees provide direction on the Pulse steering committee.

Sponsoring firms include Coalesce Marketing & Design, Inc. (in-kind); Epiphany Law; Fox Communities Credit Union; Fox Valley Technical College; Keller Inc.; Miller; Network Health Plan; Pinnacle Perspectives; Schenck Business Solutions; Time Warner Cable, and Valley Home Builders Association.

Check out Pulse events, sponsors and events registration online at [www.foxcitiesyoungprofessionals.com](http://www.foxcitiesyoungprofessionals.com). *end*

## Pulse Steering Committee

**Kristin Hundertmark**  
Coalesce Marketing & Design, Inc.

**Clarissa Wells-McNamara**  
The Post-Crescent

**Jeff Lonigro**  
Miller Electric

**Mary Greiner**  
Schenck Business Solutions

**Ryan Thompson**  
Epiphany Law, LLC

**Kip Golden**  
Co-Chair  
Keller, Inc.

**Stacie Pack**  
Network Health Plan

**Kristine Zach**  
Time Warner Cable

**Nicole Better**  
Schenck Business Solutions

**Heather Vander Heyden**  
Fox Communities Credit Union

**Megan Millard**  
Kimberly-Clark Corp.

**Brent Schuettpeiz**  
Fox Valley Technical College

**Christine Shaefer**  
Valley Home Builders Association

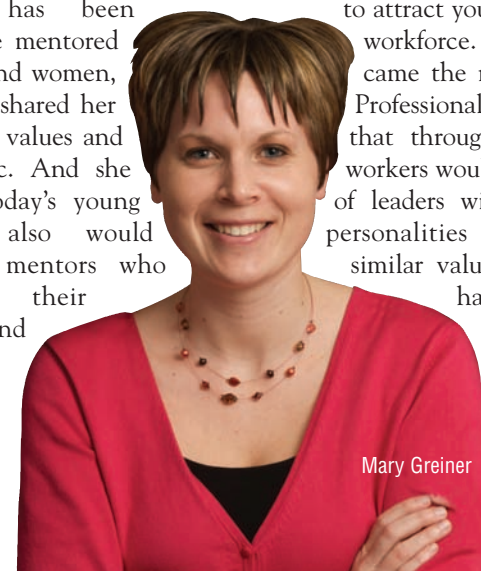
## Sponsors Encourage Learning the Ropes

When Karla Blair was a young accountant, there weren't many women in the industry to show her the ropes. But throughout her career she has been fortunate to be mentored by both men and women, by others who shared her work style, her values and her work ethic. And she thinks that today's young professionals also would benefit from mentors who would share their experience and expertise.

Blair, CPA and shareholder in Schenck Business Solutions, served on the Chamber task force assigned to study ways to attract young talent to the Fox Cities workforce. Out of that group's work came the roots of Pulse, the Young Professionals Network. Blair hoped that through such a group, young workers would connect with a variety of leaders with different styles and personalities and skills, but with similar values and goals. Schenck has been a Pulse sponsor virtually since its inception.

Mary Jo Parkins, also a shareholder with Schenck, agrees that attracting a sufficient supply of quality workers for their industry was a major concern, and supporting Pulse was a way for the firm to ease their young workers into a peer group and into the community.

"Every year we add new staff," she says. "We expect our young



Mary Greiner  
Schenck representatives on Pulse Steering Committee



Nicole Better

*continued on page 28*

## Sponsors Encourage Learning the Ropes *continued from page 11*

people to get out into the community and meet people, since that's what they will be doing in their work."

Blair says the learning starts within the company, and both leaders and beginners benefit from working together. "You learn a lot about the generational differences and all of that when you work with other people in your organization," she says. But within an occupation like accounting, sometimes personalities and work styles

can be too homogenous, and young workers benefit more from being exposed to other approaches.

"As an organization, we stress the communications and networking skills that people need," Blair says. "It's not just the technical skills that you have to have. Pulse was a place for people to come together and get comfortable with their peers. For me, it used to be that when you reached a certain level you were expected

to go out and meet people and develop relationships. Now we certainly emphasize that developing the networking base is so important no matter what level you are at.

"We didn't limit participation (in Pulse) to a certain level of employee. There's a lot of enthusiasm out there for it. It has a fun aspect. Some only went for the fun and not the benefit to our organization. But there were also people who were more serious, and the ones more likely to advance in their careers went to get more out of it."

Pulse was a place where the different personalities could mingle and yet feel comfortable, she says, where individuals could build a network of peers. "Some people just expect others to come to them," she explains. "The ones that really succeed are the ones who go out and develop a group to connect with and I think that's just huge." While Pulse offers social activities, it also provides professional development opportunities that are relevant to the peer group.

"There are so many options out there competing for their time," she says. Pulse, she credits, has always put forth topics that seem to be "on point for that group. They seem really relevant."

The longer Pulse exists, the more diverse its membership grows. Blair notes that as their personal lives change, so do the interests and career needs of young workers. "A lot of the original enthusiasm for Pulse was from people who were single or who didn't have children," Blair says. "Once they have children of course everything changes. But that's also a stage when the mentoring piece comes into play — when they want to work with people in the same stage or those a few steps ahead. You almost have a little subset within the larger group."

Developing a mentoring component is a logical next step for Pulse as an organization, Blair agrees. "We hope that this is going to be a by-product of Pulse," she says. **END**

Want to keep up on the current Real Estate Market?

Go to [www.richardrealestate.com](http://www.richardrealestate.com) to sign up for a FREE monthly E-News Letter, or call 993-5432.



**Richard DeKleyn LLC**  
For the Times of Your Life

**COLDWELL BANKER**  
THE REAL ESTATE GROUP, INC.



**Virtualtech**  
Web Site Design and Promotion, Inc.

What Makes Virtualtech *DIFFERENT*?  
Our clients get *RESULTS* from their websites!

Contact Tammy today  
and start getting results from your website.

[www.virtualtech.com](http://www.virtualtech.com)  
(920) 954-1923 or (800) 474-7001



**BOMIER**  
**PROPERTIES INC.**

*A Company That Produces Results!*  
*A full service real estate company serving*  
*Northeast Wisconsin since 1990*

Call or e-mail us today for all your commercial real estate needs

[info@bomier.com](mailto:info@bomier.com)      **920-739-5300**      Fax 920-739-7007