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Impact WV aims to bring young talent here

By FRED PACE Feb 1, 2017 Updated 1 hr ago



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Lori Wolfe/The Herald-Dispatch Natalie Roper, executive director of Generation WV, speaks during a press conference Tuesday, Jan. 2017, at Core10 in Huntington. The press conference was held by Generation WV to announce partnering with 6 companies in West ' to launch a new yearlong fellowship program, Impact WV.

HUNTINGTON - As population continues to decline in West Virginia, attracting, retaining and advancing young talent in the state becomes more challenging - and more crucial to the state's

future.

A group that is working to meet that challenge - Generation West Virginia - on Tuesday introduced in Huntington a new, yearlong fellowship program called Impact WV intended to bring seven young people to the state and immerse them in life in the Mountain State. To do so, it will partner with six companies located in different parts of West Virginia that will offer the paid internships.

"Generation West Virginia has done a significant amount of research on the factors that both attract and retain young talent," said Natalie Roper, executive director of the nonprofit organization based in Charleston. "We are living in a knowledge economy where young people have become the most important resource. West Virginia's future depends on its ability to reverse these declining population trends. ...



"Impact WV hopes to introduce young talent to West Virginia companies, while also showing young people that there are a variety of viable, innovative and good-paying jobs here at home," she said.

Impact WV is now accepting applications for the paid internships, and interested people can learn how to apply at the website weimpactwv.org.

Roper said the program was designed based on important elements young professionals seek: working with high-impact companies, being a part of community solutions and growing as change agents through personal and professional development.

The announcement was made at a press conference at Core 10 on 3rd Avenue in downtown Huntington. Core 10, a software development company, is one of the participating companies in this "first of its kind" fellowship program in West Virginia.

In the fall, seven people will be chosen for the fellowships, which also involves weekly opportunities volunteer at local nonprofit organizations.

Officials from the companies involved also were on hand and explained what their businesses do:

n Gene Coulson, executive director of EntreEd, said the comprehensive K-12 Entrepreneurship Education Initiative known as America's Entrepreneurial Schools began last year in West Virginia and has been awarded nearly \$2.2 million to expand efforts to more counties in West Virginia as well as counties and districts in Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee.

n Josh Dodd, with MESH Design and Development, a full-service communication design studio based in Charleston and Brooklyn, New York, said his company builds brands and digital platforms for clients across the country.

n Lee Farabaugh said Core 10 is a software development company that creates financial technology solutions for the banking, health care, insurance and retail industries, among others. "We're proud to support the inauguration of this initiative dedicated to fostering the Mountain State's best and brightest," Farabaugh said.

n Evan Hansen, with Downstream Strategies in Morgantown, says the company offers consulting services to help build resilient communities, promote economic development and protect the environment.

n Bernie Twigg, with WesBanco, based in Wheeling, said his company is a multistate, banking holding company with total assets of approximately \$9.8 billion and a proud participant in the new program.

n Chris Vaught, of Vaught Inc., in Beckley, said his company thrives on solving tough problems in the complicated, heavily regulated and ever-changing landscape of health care. "We are confident that this bold, leading-edge initiative will help Vaught Inc. attract and retain skilled, energetic talent needed to move our business initiatives forward," Vaught said.

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