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CITY OF COVINGTON HAVING TECHNOLOGY ZONE SHOWCASE

'Covington - I.T. Is Happening'

The Covington Technology Zone Showcase event will be held December 12th from 11am to 3pm at 1 Madison Ave., site of the former Covington Landing.

This event, open to the public free of charge, is hosted by Covington technology firm C-Forward and will feature the ***Microsoft Across America Truck!*** The following companies and organizations will be showcased: Microsoft, C-Forward, Tier1 Performance, Systems Insight, The City of Covington, Renaissance Covington, Gateway Community and Technical College, Northern Kentucky University, Tri-Ed/E-Zone, Covington Business Council, and TANK. The event is sponsored by Republic Bank & Trust and Microsoft.

BACKGROUND

In mid October Brent Cooper, President of C-Forward, got a surprising call from Microsoft. C-Forward had been selected as the Microsoft Gold Partner to host the ***"Microsoft Across America Truck"***. This 42-foot truck is loaded with the latest Microsoft software and partner hardware and software featuring Cisco, HP, and Intel. Microsoft provides everything, free of charge, as a reward to a successful

partner that has demonstrated success using Microsoft software. “I was thrilled they selected us. Our 49% increase in software sales and our high customer service ratings this year had something to do with it”, Cooper explained.

For Cooper, much of their growth is attributable to being a part of the City of Covington Arts & Technology Zone (CATZ). “Our partnerships with other businesses and organizations in the area, like Systems Insight, Tier1 Performance, and the Northern Kentucky Tri-ED/E-Zone, are a big reason why we are doing so well”, said Cooper. The event will highlight Covington’s technology zone, the area Covington has focused on developing with technology companies as a whole,.

“What these businesses have done”, explains Renaissance Covington Manager Kathie Hickey, “is exactly what the city envisioned when we defined the boundaries of a ‘Technology Zone’. They have created jobs, developed their properties, and enjoyed the benefits that come from being in close proximity.”

C-Forward agreed to expand the event and called a meeting with Tier1 Performance, Systems Insight, and the NKY Tri-ED/E-Zone to discuss a Technology Zone Showcase Event. With at least a dozen technology firms within a block of each other in Covington, the city’s plans for a “Covington Technology Zone” appear to be working. Brent Cooper explains, “Because we are all in related Information Technology (I.T.) fields, we do business together from time to time and have become friends. We bounce ideas off each other and collaborate on projects as the need arises. There is a synergy between the technology based firms

here in Covington that I have found to be extremely beneficial. I will call Systems Insight, Tier1, businesses in the NKY E-Zone, etc. when I need expertise that they offer. It is fun to see all of our businesses growing and as a Covington Business Council member and property owner in Covington, it is great to see technology companies succeed here. It's great for everyone involved."

And succeed they have. The three businesses being featured started with a collective 7 employees. They currently employ over 60 employees and that doesn't include the large number of part time and contractor employees.

C-Forward has grown over 17% each year it has been in Covington, but this year it has seen its consulting business increase over 49%. "When we moved to Covington we had 8 employees. We currently have 18 employees and have plans to expand to 20-25 employees by the end of 2008."

Systems Insight, which developed the building they are in, has seen growth and success over the years as well. Chris Fisher, the owner of Systems Insight, will tell you that Covington has been a great location for them. "We have clearly benefited from being in the 'technology corridor'. Being in the heart of the city has provided us an opportunity to establish relationships with alliance partners like C-Forward – companies with skills that complement ours."

Tier1 has seen even more dramatic growth. The success of Tier1 Performance is particularly significant as it was the first graduate of the NKY E-Zone. Tri-ED/E-

Zone is focused on Northern Kentucky's economic development efforts and companies like Tier1 are an example of why they exist. They started out with 5 employees and currently employ over 31, not including subcontractors and part time employees.

"Being located next to C-Forward, Systems Insight, and the Northern KY E-Zone provides us with support and resources almost immediately. This proximity allows our companies to collaborate often, sometimes in passing conversations while eating lunch at several nearby restaurants." said Normand Desmarais, Co-Founder and Chairman of Tier 1 Performance Solutions.

All three businesses being highlighted in the upcoming 'showcase' have received a number of awards for their growth and community service. But one of their biggest contributions may be their participation in the revitalization of Covington.

"Recently, our slogan in the city has been "It's Happening". But with companies like this continuing to locate and grow in our City, we may have to re-phrase that slogan to 'I.T. is Happening'. People recognize that this type of development doesn't happen with just business alone. It truly takes a collaborative effort between government, education, and business to reach our goals." "Because our businesses could not hire qualified employees without the assistance of the educational institutions in the area, we were delighted that NKU & Gateway decided to participate in this event" explains Cooper. "We cannot continue to grow

like we have without a qualified workforce. An educated workforce is essential to our current and future success.”

Transportation is another key to success. TANK (Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky), is providing a bus at this event to demonstrate the new wireless technology being offered on buses. This technology was developed in collaboration with NKU’s Infrastructure Management Institute (IMI). “NKU came to TANK with this idea, and we believe the success of this partnership will allow Northern Kentucky to leapfrog over many metropolitan regions in the level of technology and quality of public transportation we provide in our community,” said Andrew Aiello, TANK Deputy General Manager. “TANK is very interested in attracting new commuters,” said Gina Douthat, director of communications and development for TANK. “We believe there is an untapped market for public transportation, especially among younger commuters who’d like to avoid the hassles and more expense of daily driving and who would like to make better use of their time. TANK’s Mobile Wi-Fi provides another big incentive for riding the bus.”

This Covington Technology Zone Showcase is a perfect example of the type of collaboration going on in Northern Kentucky. Big companies like Microsoft working with small businesses that are growing and developing their communities with the assistance of their city, other business organizations, educational institutions, and transportation.

About C-Forward, Inc.

C-Forward, Inc. is a local Computer Network Consulting firm located at the corner of 5th & Madison in Covington, Ky. The company was founded in 1999 by Brent Cooper to serve other businesses in the Greater Cincinnati area, and has grown 12%-25% each year. They are "Network Administrators" for companies who cannot afford or do not need a full time I.T. professional. Their certified technicians are friendly and knowledgeable. The company finds ways to enable different kinds of computers (Microsoft, Novell, Linux, Macintosh, Palm, Pocket PC, etc) to work together on a network or remote location. They diagnose and/or fix computers or related peripherals. Also, C-Forward provides any voice and data cabling, anti-virus, anti-spam, wireless, and disaster recovery solutions. They offer competitive rates with discounts for block consulting and service agreements.

C-Forward is an active member of the Northern Kentucky, Northeast Cincinnati, and Greater Cincinnati Chambers of Commerce, the Cincinnati Better Business Bureau and the Covington Business Council.

C-Forward Company Awards:

- 2003 - NKy Chamber 2003 Small Business SUCCESS Award
- 2003 – NKy Chamber Emerging 30 Award
- 2003 - BBB Torch Award
- 2004 - Cincinnati Chamber Small Business Excellence Award (Emerging Business)
- 2004 – NKy Chamber Emerging 30 Award
- 2005 - Covington Business Council Outstanding New Business of the Year
- 2006 – NKy Chamber Emerging 30 Award
- 2007 – Vision 2015 Philanthropy Award

About Tier1 Performance

TiER1 Performance Solutions is a nationally recognized provider of end-to-end learning and knowledge solutions. Recipients of the 2007 Blue Ribbon Small Business Award from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the 2007 Kentucky Small Business Person of the Year by the US. Small Business Administration, TiER1 Performance was also named on the inaugural "Inc. 5000" list of the fastest growing businesses in the U.S. With a cumulative 3 - year growth rate of 91.2%, TiER1 is ranked number 3351 on the list.

About Systems Insight

Systems Insight, Inc. is an established technology firm providing Staffing, Web Development & Design, and Web Stories.

We provide solutions and resources to our clients in all areas of technology. We have a Web Development & Design team providing custom web site design, custom web development, content management and e-commerce solutions.

We are a well respected local organization and we focus completely on our client's success. We are up front and honest and provide great resources, creative solutions and excellent customer service.

About NKy E-Zone/Tri-ED

The Tri-County Economic Development Corporation (Northern Kentucky Tri-ED) was created as a nonprofit corporation in 1987 under the auspices of the Fiscal Courts in Boone, Kenton and Campbell counties and the Northern Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. The seventeen-member Board of Directors is comprised judges and executives from the area.

Northern Kentucky Tri-ED markets and promotes the three Northern Kentucky counties on a national and international basis, as a location for new or expanding for:

Advanced manufacturing projects,
Professional office projects, and
Technology oriented cluster.

Northern Kentucky Tri-ED provides assistance to local companies that are expanding their operations and works with the local communities to develop the resources and infrastructure to support its economic development program. We also play a supportive role for other public agencies and private development companies having a common mission.

About Gateway Community and Technical College

Gateway Community and Technical College currently has four campuses located in Covington/Park Hills, Edgewood, Highland Heights and Boone County. In addition to these campuses Gateway offers classes in Pendleton County. The college offers courses through the Urban Learning Center in Covington, Newport and Dayton. Classes are offered there in association with Northern Kentucky University and Thomas More College.

About Republic Bank

Republic Bank has grown to over \$3.2 billion in assets and 40 banking centers, with Republic Bank & Trust Company, our Kentucky chartered bank having 38 banking centers in eleven

Kentucky and three Indiana communities and Republic Bank, and our Florida bank having two banking centers in Florida. We are very much aware that our success is based on serving individual clients as if they were our only clients. Our size enables us to offer a wide range of financial services including the Internet products on this website for personal and commercial clients.

About NKU's College of Informatics:

The College of Informatics unites business, communication and computer technologies to help students understand the changing face of technology in the business world. The College's goal is to graduate students who are savvy about information technology, who are accomplished in communications and who are intellectually agile "renaissance people" for the information age. Learn more about the College of Informatics at informatics.nku.edu.

About TANK:

The Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky is an integral part of the Northern Kentucky community, providing public transit service to Boone, Campbell, and Kenton Counties as well as downtown Cincinnati for more than 30 years. Close to 4 million passengers each year rely on the more than 100 TANK buses throughout the region to get them where they need to be. TANK is committed to providing safe, reliable, customer-oriented transportation for the people of our community. TANK's commitment extends to addressing current and future needs of the community. A major component of this commitment involves keeping abreast of advanced technologies and to providing services which will improve traffic flow, protect the environment and assist in the economic development of the Northern Kentucky region. TANK is on the web at www.tankbus.org.

About Covington Business Council:

- BC serves its members as a unified business advocate for approximately 200 Covington are businesses, protecting your interests in the community.
- CBC promotes economic development projects, whether large or small, in Covington, bringing more opportunities for growing your business.
- CBC provides financial support to the Covington Police Department's Bike Patrol Program, keeping you and your business safe.
- CBC seeks the reduction of the City of Covington's payroll tax, bringing more quality employers to your business.
- CBC offers your business a presence on the CBC Web Site, exposing your business to world-wide opportunities.
- CBC fosters relationships with local and regional organizations, providing your business with the most current information and opportunities with regard to the development of Northern Kentucky.

- CBC offers forums and networking opportunities, bringing you and other professionals together.
- CBC negotiates membership incentives and discounts such as insurance, increasing your business profitability.
- CBC is the only organization focused on serving the Covington business community!