



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Area Leaders Explore Establishing Angel Investment Network to Support mid-Michigan Entrepreneurs

Midland, MI (November 5, 2007) – MidMichigan Innovation Center (MMIC) recently hosted a select group of 60 community and business leaders who participated in a one-day workshop, “Starting an Angel Organization: The Power of Angel Investing.” The seminar introduced participants to a process for making decisions regarding the formation of a regional angel organization here in mid-Michigan.

An angel investment organization is a group of individuals and companies who leverage their capital to support entrepreneurs and startup companies. By providing such financial support and business expertise, the angel organization provides seed capital to worthwhile business endeavors with the goal of financial returns, and a significant contribution to enhancing the region’s entrepreneurial environment and growth in Michigan’s lackluster economy.

According to MMIC board member, and trustee of the Charles Strosacker Foundation, John Bartos, “This has the potential for a significant impact on the economic health of our area. It was great to see all four counties – Bay, Isabella, Midland, and Saginaw –working together for a strong common purpose.”

The initial meeting and seminar was facilitated by Bob Okabe, an experienced angel investor and venture capitalist. Okabe shared how to develop a successful angel organization, how it could function to guide solid investments, and how it positively impacts a region by supporting innovative entrepreneurs. The curriculum for the program was developed by the Angel Capital Education Foundation, a relatively new spin-out of the Kauffman Foundation. The Kauffman Foundation is the leading foundation in the country known for supporting entrepreneurship by acting upon their vision to foster "a society of economically independent individuals who are engaged citizens, contributing to the improvement of their communities."

Brent Case, Executive Director of MMIC, shared his view of what this means to our area, “Once the network is launched, it will help entrepreneurs grow here in mid-Michigan, and keep them from relocating to where the money is. The network should also attract entrepreneurs to the region as they, too, can tap into this new source of capital.”

“The angel investment organization is a much needed resource for mid-Michigan,” said MMIC CEO Bill Money Penny. “The feedback from the event has been very positive and there seems to be a significant amount of genuine interest in forming the angel group, not only to make investments – and make money – but to also make a difference in our area, and to have a little fun.”

Interested investors will be meeting again in early December to discuss details regarding the structure of a mid-Michigan angel network, consider additional educational programs for investors in the region, and explore investment opportunities for future members/investors involved in the network.

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Media Background Information:

MidMichigan Innovation Center

The MidMichigan Innovation Center is a private, non-profit organization created to provide entrepreneurs and start-up companies with a supportive and collaborative environment. MMIC connects entrepreneurs with critical resources, valuable services, flexible facilities, and entrepreneurial training and education that will help them develop their business ventures.

The Kauffman Foundation

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation was established in the mid-1960s by the late entrepreneur and philanthropist Ewing Marion Kauffman. Based in Kansas City, Missouri, the Kauffman Foundation is the 30th largest foundation in the United States with an asset base of approximately \$2 billion.

Angel Investment Networks

An angel investment is a vehicle for young, smart, high-growth start-up firms to raise seed capital to bring their business ideas to fruition on a scale large enough to interest investors and enhance an area's economy. Originally the term "angel" was used to describe wealthy individuals who provided money for theatrical productions in 19th century England. While the return on those investments may have been another curtain call, today an angel's return can be a considerable financial gain.

In 1996 there were 10 angel investment organizations around the country. Today there are more than 250 angel organizations nationwide. This community-oriented investment model has proven to be successful for investors, start-up firms and regional economies.

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