

(Chatter)

SPEAKER:

OK, guys, one minute warning.

(Chatter)

SPEAKER:

OK, if I can get everybody to settle down, please. I would like to welcome everybody today. We have a great turnout, it is really great to see so many familiar faces. If I can ask you to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance?

(Pledge of Allegiance)

SPEAKER:

Thank you. OK, so some administrative stuff real quick. If everybody could turn off or put your cell phones on vibrate. Bathrooms are out the door, to the side here. If anybody needs to get up during the presentations. And, our event today is actually closed-captioned on our live feed, we are on I believe, YouTube, for the live feed today. If anybody is watching from home, you have it closed-captioned. I will take a moment, to recognize the elected officials who are with us today. We really have quite a few here. Yes, a long list.

They are alphabetical, so I don't offend anybody, OK (Laughs).

Richard Bryan, Daytona Beach Shores City Commissioner

(Applause)

Phyllis Butlein, Debarry Vice Mayor.

Charlene gain your Florida Senate district legislative assistant, Office of Senator Tom Wright.

William O'Connor, Orange City Council Member. Berry, cotton, Office of Senator Rick Scott. Bill Partington, Ormond Beach Mayor. Danny Robbins, Volusia County Vice Chair. Matt Reinhart, Volusia County Councilman. Jake Johansson, Volusia County Councilman at large. It's great to see so many of our County Counsel here.

I'm going to get in trouble for this, Suzanne Konchan, Volusia County Deputy County Manager, she is here. And Cyrus T Callum, Volusia County Director of Aviation and Economic Resources. They tell you not to mention your bosses.

With a great event today, great presentation coming up. First, I want to thank UCF for sponsoring today's event. We change the layout of the Q meetings, as you well know, so now they have sponsors. Your breakfasts are covered by the sponsors, rather than the county covering them. It is really nice, and we get to celebrate some of those entities that are strong within our community and give back. If I can ask Carol Ann, to come up, Carolyn Dykes.

Four incubators are located in the three UCF Innovation Districts, and around UCF campuses. Focusing on early-stage companies and specific clusters of technology and industry that are key drivers of central (indiscernible) economy. For others are located in other parts, serving fast-growing companies in our areas.

Innovation and the culture is what we are going to be talking about the panel. With that, Carol Ann.

CAROL ANN DYKES LOGUE:

Thank you, so much Helga. And to you Cyrus, for the continued support for the incubation activity. Yes, we have an incubator across the parking lot, we are growing and turning out stunning innovative companies. If you are a client or graduate of the UCF business incubator, will you raise your hand? I know we have several here.

(Applause)

CAROL ANN DYKES LOGUE:

So be sure that you talk to these innovators here. But you know, you cannot support innovators as university if you yourself are not innovative and understand what that word means. If you look at your program today, you will see a number of facts about UCF listed in the program, including the fact that yet again, for the fifth year running, we are ranked in the top 20 most innovative universities and colleges in the country.

(Applause)

CAROL ANN DYKES LOGUE:

That ranking is actually based on the ranking that we received from other college and university presidents and provost. It is a recognition of our ongoing and success and excellence, and student success. What does that mean? Making education accessible. 49% of our students are first-generation students. We are very proud of that. 60% of our students graduate with no debt.

That is, you have to work hard to make that happen.

(Applause)

CAROL ANN DYKES LOGUE:

And thanks to our extensive industry engagement, constantly with our students, 80% of our students have a job when they cross that stage to get their diploma.

(Applause)

CAROL ANN DYKES LOGUE:

Excellence and innovation and research, we are ranked in the top 16 university in the world in terms of the tech we turn out. National excellence, you see just a few rankings in here, in our programs that are ranked nationally, in certain degree programs, online access, bachelor degrees, the list goes on and on, and on. Local impact, though. You should be asking, what does that

mean for me? Right? Right here and Volusia County, in Daytona Beach, that means that we are contributing to the economic diversity and innovation and excellence of this economy every day by supporting the innovators that come to the incubator program, the impact we have on entrepreneurs in the community, and across the county.

But we do not do this on her own, there's a reason that UCF trademark the phrase America's partnership University, because we partner constantly with organizations across the community as well as other academic institutions. If you think you may not know, we have partnered with Stetson University, our college medicine that's right on college medicine, and one of the researchers at Stetson University have partnered in gaming develop. We have a summer program through our Florida interactive entertainment Academy for students from Stetson to participate in the gaming develop the program. The College of medicine partnership is within (unknown name) University. Were 70, engineering faculty members, is working on technology for children that are born with only one functional heart valve.

We've also partnered with (unknown name) on Aeronautics systems for coastal scanning in coastal research will stop we are all in, here come in Volusia County. Doctor Miller here, who is with our regional campus program.

(Applause)

CAROL ANN DYKES LOGUE:

And her area of responsibility includes our regional campus here at Daytona State College. We have gone here from (indiscernible) studio, partners with us as well as Embry.

Glad to have all of you here, thank you, and I look forward to what you will hear from Connie, this morning about our incubation program. Thank you.

(Applause)

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

It is so great that there are so many of you here today, if you can hang around so that if anyone has questions, they can take you. OK, now, it is my turn, to give you an overview of the economy and where we are in the county. If you will bear with me for one second, I know this is supposed to be the quarterly update, but it is still February, so I'm close to the beginning of the year.

I want to take this opportunity to give a quick overview from a year-over-year standpoint. You all have your quarterly books, it is not in the quarterly book, the weeds of the information that I will show you are. I wanted to do an overview of where we are.

Volusia County's economy is strong. It is strong as a rock. The rock (Laughs). This is a really busy slide, but I could not resist. Bear with my sense of humor. If you look, this is year-over-year, its fiscal year from October to September. This is how the county views the budget year. Overall, our employment is up 5.4%. Which is no small shake, because our workforce is actually up more than that.

The airport passenger traffic, is to let you know, 18.9% increase. That is phenomenal. Tourism receipts, 19.9%. Residential constructions is up a steady 2.5%. We will go into that, a little bit of the detail on that, in my presentation goes on. Same with commercial construction, it's up 5.4%. The crazy number, most of you won't believe, home sale prices are up 23.5%. Are there any realtors in the audience for? Can you vouch for me? I am right, right? Those numbers are going out.

From an employment standpoint, manufacturing is up 8.3% in our county, leisure and hospitality, workforce, it is up 10.9%. Professional services are up 8.5%. It is really not a surprise, because nationally those three are also up on the national level.

Volusia County is doing really well on that front. I just thought it was important to take a second, I know we are still to be talking quarterly, but I just wanted to take a second to let you know where we were. In the grand scheme.

So, when we talk about Volusia County and our GDP, you can see that we are mostly black. A couple of areas are red. These are the comparisons from 2019, pre-COVID, from 2021. That is the earliest area to get from the GDP numbers from, it from the state. Take a look at chest rotation and warehouse. 57% increase. It his pre-COVID. It is not showing the dip in between. This is why we have seen no dip in between.

Professional services in the county, 10%. This is a couple that I will bring upon a future side as well. Manufacturing is up 7%. So these are really seeing great returns. And then if you look at information, we are showing a 12% drop in information, but again, information is not IT, people tend to get that confused. They think it is technology, information has to do with newspapers, radio. Because social media has taken such a stronghold and how we communicate with each other today, that falls under professional services, and professional services actually has gone up.

So, Volusia County, itself, we are seeing increases in our GDP, but look at our businesses. We are showing a 15% increase in businesses within our county between 2016 and 2021. Just in this quarter, alone, this is a new thing that I have added and, again, this is not in your book, but I think it is important. Our cities, our economic development professionals within the cities are all working with their local businesses on expansions and on new businesses. So we wanted to show, kind of a pulse of where we were.

These are all expansions or new construction that is gone on in the past quarter. If I could ask the economic development professionals who are here today, to just stand up, there a few of you here, I know that. Yes.

(Applause)

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

There were quite a few here. These guys all do a great job, if you have any question about what is going on in your community, reach out to them. They are full of it. Full of information. (Laughs) They really are great, great people to work with. Sorry.

Because we have had so many businesses in our county, the state is growing tremendously. I don't know if many of you saw this in the paper, or heard it on the news, but within the last couple of weeks, Florida's workforce, people at work within the state, has exceeded New York's. That is a major milestone. We are definitely on the rise. If we want to talk about where we have seen workforce change in our MSA over the past quarter, our MSA, includes Florida County. -- Flagler County, not just Volusia County.

Let's look at the numbers we talked about, manufacturing, hospitality, and information. Professional services has gone up 4% just in the last quarter. It is a nice healthy number, right? Manufacturing, past quarter has increased 5%. Hospitality, again, 5%. And information has gone down 5%. So, we are seeing that trend that we were talking about continue on a quarterly basis, as well. We are seeing nice, steady growth. A good number of new jobs being created.

Total workforce in these particular industries is 8500, but if we look, and you are all familiar with the site now, right, if we look at the labor force and employment we are at, right now, as some of the highest numbers we have ever been with workforce in our county. Even with that, we are at some of the lowest numbers of unemployment. We are essentially at full employment at 2.5%. That yellow spacer, those of the people who are currently listed as unemployed, we do believe that there are some that are unseen that are not being shown here. There is more out there. But that is the workforce that we are working with.

Workforce, no surprise, when we did our survey through local businesses, workforce was actually the number one concern. The number one consideration going forward for our businesses. Enter Volusia County business resources, which is a partnership with our office, and all of the economic development professionals in this county. We are working to try to find some creative ways to help our businesses with that.

But, construction industry is also working to help our businesses with that. Residential construction, the permits are listed here. Going on year-over-year, you can see that there is an increase of 22 we are more than halfway through the year yet, you can see when the number lies. What is really interesting about this, the permit count is actually less than what we had during the big push in early 2000. The permit value, is higher. The green line shows you the total permit value of those, and that is a huge gap between the two.

It shows you that the value of real estate, 24-25% that I mentioned earlier, really is having an impact. Which of course, affects our cost-of-living, and the salaries being offered by our businesses.

Commercial construction, commercial permits are on the rise, as Woelfel saw in 2022, we had first quarter. This chart is confusing to some, so we are going to change in the future, the height of the bars actually showing you the value of the permits. The number of permits are listed in the chart, just simply as a number. You are not seeing a reflection of it in the chart itself. OK, as far as the graph goes. The numbers are right there with the previous years. Steady growth. The first quarter, that is probably Amazon that you are looking at there. As far as the permits go.

This is a new feature that we have put in the Q book. If anybody has any comments or feedback on it I would love to hear from you. I love infographics and precise affirmation. This is broken down by industry.

Warehouse and business residential, multifamily, sorry that is not include multifamily. 3.9 million. Healthcare, \$23 million in investment will topple leisure and hospitality is 11.7 million. Retail is 14.5 million, multifamily is 50 million, and municipal 16 million. We're showing how well the community is moving.

We have diversity, we have jobs moving in. And it is important that we keep the balance in the community. Part of the way that we keep balance in the community, that was a nice easy transition... is by making sure that we have innovation. And we have new businesses, and the way that we do this is by providing an atmosphere and the resources to help those people within the community.

I don't know about you, but I've had a million ideas on what would be a great business product. Anybody else? Look, I'm still here, so I'm not taking advantage of that (Laughs) It is so much fun letting everybody else take the risk, and enjoying their success, right? By having the resources here, and those people that have that little extra push to get themselves going, we have the talent to help them along.

These are some of the most creative and innovative people I have ever met. You will see we have posters outside, when you are getting your tea and coffee this morning, because we want to showcase them. The people who are here to talk to us about culture and fostering an innovation culture here in our community are the ones who help these businesses to succeed.

So, with that, I'm going to introduce our panel today. First, on the list is Stephanie Miller, Doctor Stephanie Miller. Doctor Miller joined Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in 2013 to establish the University's first technology transfer office, enabling university research results to become real world politics. Doctor Miller manages operations at the ERAU Research Park including the MicaPlex Technology Business Incubator. Since 2017, the Research Park has helped 25 companies raise over \$90 million, to create over 160 high wage jobs, and employ over 2010 student interns. This is phenomenal.

SPEAKER:

(Indiscernible)

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

That is phenomenal news. Next on the list is Lou Paris. I'm going in the order of the pictures. Connie don't get mad at me. Lou is a highly accomplished entrepreneur and academic. He previously served as the director of the Prince Entrepreneurship Program at Stetson University. He is a wealth of acts Bertie's and entrepreneurship, providing training to residents of the Lucy and Flagler counties through Startup Quest. He had founded successful businesses such as Mamuto LLC, HotelEnglishOnline.org, and MeVoy.com. Lou has achieved great success in his ventures, securing funding, and launching new products. Welcome, Lou.

If you guys have not noticed, I'm reading from a script here, because my staff does not trust me to talk about these people as friends. (Laughs) I might give out embarrassing information. Just to keep it safe.

Connie, is also with us. We get to work with her on a daily basis. She's a start up ecosystem builder. Her expertise has helped hundreds of entrepreneurs raise millions of dollars to grow. Connie has a table and saying, I think it is I make millionaires. She's won several awards including a statewide award, the Education Partner of the Year, by CareerSource Florida. And Best Business Consultant 2009 for Central Florida by the Florida Small Business Development Center Network. Also as an innovator, she is the founder of the Volusia Tech Hub in his written several healthy Living e-books. Welcome, Connie.

(Applause)

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

So we really do have a great panel. OK, back to the original. I'll just talk really loud. Let's dive in, I went to hear you say. We have preprepared questions, but if anyone has questions, we will try to let you get in some questions as well.

First question, let's define innovation. Once a start?

CONNIE GARZON:

Innovation is the creation of something new. Many people think that it is just the creation of technology, but actually, it is the creation of a new business model. A new way of sales. It is the creation of something new. Don't confuse technology and innovation. It is just something that you change from what you're currently doing.

LOU PARIS:

Something new, there are quite a few people from the city. For simple, expediting or making processes for permits faster. That is innovation. The does not include technology, it is just rethinking a process to make it better. That is one single example. I do think that a lot of people get hung up, they get caught up in technology. They think innovation is this texting. It really isn't. A book is a very old piece of innovation but has persisted through the years. There are plenty of examples of things that you would not perceive as innovation. But were done differently, this is innovation.

STEPHANIE MILLER:

(Indiscernible)

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

I have to agree, you can only say and so anyways. In order to be innovative and to support a culture of innovation, you have to actually sell your innovation as well. Again, it is not necessarily a product. It is a mindset. By having that thought process, embedded in you, and makes life more interesting. Number one. You never know what you will come up with. I know some of our universities are including programs, specifically for their students. I think Embry is one.

STEPHANIE MILLER:

Yes, we have started to include all of her curriculums, entrepreneurial thinking. A lot of her students, of course, want to go to the big aerospace companies, or airlines, and I know they want a corporate job. But there still room for innovation in those corporate jobs. We are making sure we put that in the curriculum so that they can bring that type of thinking into their future job.

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

It goes with all jobs. It really doesn't matter where you are. I joke around. What I'm doing today, is not what my degrees in. But, by doing the degree and having education, it taught me critical thinking, and taught me how to be creative, and at the same time, you had to be technical and

whatnot. So, it is just so important, I think it's great that the universities are embracing that now, and showing that creativity is equally as important. It's not equal, right... (Laughs) Math is important as well.

LOU PARIS:

If I can add something to that. Stenson has... in entrepreneurship program. More than half the participants of the program are not seeking to develop their own business, maybe as a side gig forever. But, they are definitely looking for employment opportunities. So, they are learning, innovation inside out to be applied within a business.

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

And what better for business than somebody who looks at their procedure critically? Right? And comes back with ideas. And UCF have an incubator here, has this mindset as well. Built on that. How does innovation friendly community impact the local economy?

STEPHANIE MILLER:

The impact can be so trim it is. I just meant Monday and Tuesday over in Tampa at the synapse Summit, and seeing all of those entrepreneurs start up in organizations that support them there, and understanding that no one organization can do something to support them, but as a community we can support them. And have the services that they would need to be successful. That was of course, the impetus, for (indiscernible) resources, what we are part of. It also helps us to serve entrepreneurs, we know people are doing, we have helped you get from point A to point B, now to get to the next step you need to go to this organization to talk to them, here's a person, get to the next stage of help with them. It's important for community to be able to come together and support them, and have all of the resources that they would need.

CONNIE GARZON:

I want to... you remember when (indiscernible) started. It was late in the 1800s, they were creating the (indiscernible). It was like, something is going on here, so those Stetson University, a research university, and the government, created a type. Many people think it was is just a computer, no, before they were creating products for being more efficient with work, and this is a key component in that war. From that, everybody thought that we have to go there. So then the development continued, research and develop. Supporting researchers. In the 1900s, it was one computers, and the 60 or 68. Steve Jobs met his partner in an event for Arctic winners. All of these people were just talking about innovation. And little by little, they connected with investors, with venture capitalist, with the government, you know, the government. And universities play key role in innovation. This is the key for us to continue growing. And that is

what we are doing here. The rest is history, now they are the capital technology of the world. We are going to be neck.

LOU PARIS:

I'll tackle this in a different way. If I were to pull the audience right now, and asked you if you have ever thought of an idea where there is an invention, a book, or painting, all hands would go up. Imagine, I've asked this question to at least 2000 people, and how many of you have acted upon it? It would be a smaller number. If all of you acted upon your ideas, whether it was a book, a painting, or whatever gadget you invented, and you actually made this happen, would our economy better? Yes. It would.

It is a matter of degree, it's not flipping a switch, it's acting on our ideas and empowering others to do so. Entrepreneurs have to be resilient. When I did my things, I did not have any support from outside parties. I went at it myself, and I tried to connect myself here and there. And to the extent, there are organizations that actually help with the process, only God, that is a blessing. We should be steering more people in that direction. Do you know someone who wants to write a book, steer them to someone who can help them do so.

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

That is really good information. I can tell you, from the county standpoint, what we did the survey of local businesses and entrepreneurs, one of the responses that we got, the top three issues, one was workforce like I said earlier, one was financed, being able to find the money to finance the products, and there are resources for that. The other was finding the resources that they needed. We know for a fact, we have resources in the county. And that was the impetus for Volusia Business Resources. Shameless plug here. Volusia Business Resources.com, if you have not gone to it, you have to. It's a location where you can see everything within the county. Which brings me to the next question.

Re: innovative? Are we innovative enough? Is there more we can do or should be doing?

CONNIE GARZON:

I want to start. I want to say thank you to the County Counsel, and the economic development, for working with us to start the first incubator in this area. So, that is an example of innovation. So, they met in 2010, how can we bring innovation? So they decide to bring in an incubator. And, they partner with UCF. And was Stetson University and ERAU. This education helped us

in the entrepreneurs and the business community to continue changing what we have going on right now. So thank you.

STEPHANIE MILLER:

I think that we do have a law, we have a lot more that we could bring, it blows my mind, I have been here 10 years, and the change from when I first moved to Daytona, versus where we are at today, is absolutely phenomenal. But there's still so much more room to grow, as well. The support that is available in the organization, entrepreneurs is very robust. But there's always room for improvement, more programs that can be put in place, more funding mechanisms to address his challenges, and workforce as well.

LOU PARIS:

I will add one more thing, I hope my college degree. Higher education ecosystem works, and how the rest of the community works, I've seen two different groups in terms of innovation. At a university level you are looking to see more technical things, ERAU highly technical, Stetson a step below in terms of the engineering standpoint. If you go to the community, it's another step down. It still innovative. I think there are two crowds that we can help, a crowd that is out there that wants to do the next nonprofit. Or like I said before, the next artistic flair. A painting. Those people have to be helped just the same way that a student developing a new type of drone should be helped.

Again, I think there are two crowds that we have in the county.

CONNIE GARZON:

I'm going to add to that, actually, for the business community. What we can do as educators, is to create programs for them to be more innovative. An example, (unknown name), when you started was in 2014, so she was an amazing florist. Recognized in the florist industry, and I remember, we met at the yoga place (Laughs) And she said I have this Excel spreadsheet and I would like to know if you can help me. And I said to her, sure, her idea was to create a (indiscernible), for the force industry. And I said to her that we could. It was an event, that we met, and we met at (unknown name), remember before? Let's work on this, little by little, we found developers, we competed with big-time entrepreneurs. Karen was the only woman, pitching in front of these investors. And we would be saying to ourselves on my gosh what are we doing here. That's an example of how we work with the business committee. We can apply for grants, research grants. With what they currently have. (unknown name), an example with you. In a business for so many years, and now they have the innovation to change it. It's another

revenue stream. That's what we need to continue doing with all the businesses in the community. While we help our students. Universities are key component of innovation.

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

No, that is great. It is true. You never know where your next lead will come from. I don't know if you said yoga, or yogurt (Laughs), Even though, I love them both.

CONNIE GARZON:

(Indiscernible)

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

Fortunately for us, you are extroverted in financing.

CONNIE GARZON:

(Indiscernible)

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

Which was another entrepreneur who came up with that, I'm sure. And there are some really great programs, I know, Stephanie, you have a program going on right now, or has it closed?

STEPHANIE MILLER:

We have one going on right now. One program that is in progress is in collaboration with starter studio, Don Haynes, their CEO, is here, we have four student teams that are going to that program to really do a process called customer discovery. It is really saying, do I have a solution that addresses a problem, and importantly, are people willing to pay for? They are going through that right now, it's in preparation for student pitch competition that we have every year called launch your venture. If you know any entrepreneurial students, college, undergraduate, and university or college across the state of Florida, they have 10 more days to apply for that.

They get up to \$10,000 if they win, and lots of donated professional services from people in this room to help them out and understand what they do not know about business, to build a successful startup around the technology that they have developed.

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

That is great.

STEPHANIE MILLER:

Thanks for letting me plug that.

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

You to take advantage of the audience when you have it. There are so many of these programs going on within our community, that we are not aware. Connie, her group does the (unknown name) foundation which is another competition program that Lou's students usually win. He is has great track record.

Part of doing well and doing good in these environments, correct me if I'm wrong, you're helping your students, not just develop their product, but you are developing their presentation of their product. Can you talk a little bit about that?

LOU PARIS:

Absolutely. The pitch competition is one, what people see when you go to the competition is the finale. The last few students are pitching investors with people in the audience. The magic happens before that. We worked at least one month or two in advance, doing a bit of customer discovery, Stephanie was describing, with our students. And we put them in a position where they have to do a lot of work leading up to the competition to be able to be ready for it. The amount of learning that happens, about entrepreneurship, about business, in that process and presenting your idea is incredible.

I've seen students, literally I had a student who took second place in that competition, but one month before we were in a classroom setting and she started talking. Giving a presentation had nothing to do with the competition, I'm talking about (unknown name), 10 or 20 seconds into it, she ran from the room crying because she cannot do it anymore. And I thought that we were in trouble. We work through that month, and her delivery on the presentation, my jaw dropped. Wow! This is a different human being who's pitching right now. That is the kind of impact that I like to see in these students in these presentations.

This is an event that should be kept to the community, we should continue to do this to be able to get the students to have the opportunity to prepare themselves that way, whether they win or not doesn't matter, case in point here, Kendall, she did not win the first time. She was so upset. She's in the room, by the way. She did not win, she was ticked off. She said this is BS. How did I not win?

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

She was so sad, she was driven.

LOU PARIS:

She was driven. She made it to the Fox TV show, 'billion-dollar idea', she made on that show because she was ticked off. She deserves some applause.

(Applause)

LOU PARIS:

I'm going to challenge the community to solve a big problem, the problem that I have seen when I worked at Stetson for 12 years. Every time I asked how many of you are staying in the area? Only single hand would go up. They are fleeing the area as quickly as they can. Not because the area sucks, but because they do not perceive areas of employment. (unknown name) you are (indiscernible). Kendall, is moving somewhere else, I challenge you to retain some of the like her, or somebody like her in the community. She has a billion-dollar idea, and we kept her, imagine how better off we would be.

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

No pressure, Kendall. I would be running of the room, Reno. We do have some really great stuff for the student. One of the ideas that we have been tossing around is perhaps having this kind of competition or entrepreneurs who are not students. Right? It might be something great to do to make it available to some of us who are second careers, we have no ideas, want to try something new.

The education component is still there, the competition is not. Connie's program helps businesses, and we were able to connect you with the bank, so at the end of your program they

came out of this program with a business plan. In the mindset of how to make it work. And the bankers were sitting there ready to talk to them about financing. You want to talk a minute about that?

CONNIE GARZON:

Sure, this is a new initiative that we launched in January 2023. It is all about opening incubator doors to help the business community. Especially, because we see that the economy is moving superfast, and our businesses do not have time to know what is going on in industry. So what we are doing, is saying to them come on guys, we're going to teach you everything about technology, everything about how you can add another revenue stream. Pitching to them the web tree. Have you heard about the web tree? That is what is going on now, in the world. Artificial intelligence, Dominic is here, he is a genius. We've another person who will be pitching everything about the web tree, lock chain, and everything that is going to... That is happening with crypto currency. The only thing that we are doing in the incubator is teaching people how to pitch to investors. That will be the next work how to pitch to investors and bankers. The incubator program here, in this area, is funded 100% by Volusia County, they provide the building. We have 21 offices, you are welcome to visit anytime.

So, besides the (unknown name), we offer the incubation program, the soft landing program which is a program for international companies. Or out-of-state companies, or out of the county companies that want to relocate here into Volusia County. With great success, one client is (unknown name) a company from Columbia. They have a manufacturing operations MicaPlex. They have invested 4 million into the community.

STEPHANIE MILLER:

This is a good example of how we work together. We have room for manufacturing facilities, being an international company, the soft landing program was completely appropriate for them, as well. So they work with both of our incubators and are getting the benefit from the different services that we offer. And I think they originally came in as a lead from the Daytona original chamber, we interact with so many economic developing groups, and other types of business services. To bring these companies in, the innovative companies. And hopefully, they are hiring some of our students of the graduate. So they will stay here.

CONNIE GARZON:

That company went to three different clusters, they went first to California, then they went to Indianapolis, and then he went to Boston. And they decided to come here, because the CEO likes the racecars. He's a racecar driver. In their Colombians, and when I spoke Spanish with them

they thought oh my gosh. Bilingual. We close the deal. One of the things that they say, the reason that it was his place, it was because we are so friendly to all of the visitors. And we welcome them. When they went to California, they felt like they were being asked to they were. They did not feel invited. We have to continue, and it's thanks to everything you do here, connecting all these entrepreneurs and business owners, the universities, you know, we are friends. Yes.

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

That is great. For those businesses, and all of those businesses in the room, so we can show them how friendly we actually are. Let's say there's somebody in here who has an idea, I'm sure there's at least one, how do they start? Where did they go? What are they do?

STEPHANIE MILLER:

Volusia Business Resources.com is where they start (Laughs)

(Applause)

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

That was nice.

CONNIE GARZON:

I love it.

STEPHANIE MILLER:

In all seriousness, it does have a great way of filtering down to what your needs are and giving you a place to start. If you reach out to an organization and it turns out it is not the right place to start, we all know each other, and we will tell you to go talk to Connie, we are not quite the right ones but maybe they can, or this one. It is something that will help all of our entrepreneurs in the county.

LOU PARIS:

The ecosystem definitely exist. The resources are there. It is up to us as a community to be able to deploy, to send them in the right direction. I've talked in the past about deployment. A little army of people like us, who understand the resource, and sending... you cannot control the entry point of an entrepreneur into the ecosystem. They will access it whichever way they access it first. We cannot control. But we can control having someone there at all those typical points. City offices. Banks. Having someone well-versed in the topic and send them to the resource website.

CONNIE GARZON:

I think that the more we know about what other entities do, the better we serve our entrepreneurs. I know what Stephanie does, I know what Lou does, I know the practitioners do. So, we know where to refer them. We never leave anyone behind. If I cannot help them, then I send them elsewhere to a school, I always try to help them. The important thing is to understand what everybody does. With the resource programs.

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

Volusia Business Resources is actually all of us. It's no one person doing much more than anyone else. The key to it, because I am going to do a plug for it, I do believe that it makes a huge difference for our community. We started the Volusia Business Resources last year. You will have a pamphlet, I think, at your table, right? In addition to the Q we do shameless plug there. If you open it, it tells you who is a member of that.

If it is not there, I'm going to make them get it. So on your way out, he will give you more papers to take back with you. It will show you the list of the economic development practitioners that are involved. And the website is important because it gives you direction. More portly, we call it VBR, VBR is a mindset for me. It is an opportunity for all of our practitioners to come together, and we sit, and we go over statistics and what we are seeing is gaps, and what each of us are expensing. Become of creative ways to find solutions.

A lot of the people, I think is probably one person every table that comes to these things, and we learn about each other. Right? We learn about each other, we show our works, we show where we are performing short, we want to take advantage of some of the else's ability. Like Stephanie was saying. So we know where to send the business, so that we are providing best services. Not necessarily from our office, but from the incubator or from the chamber. We make sure that we connect them with the right people, and that matters.

So, with that, I will let you all have a closing statement and open up to question.

CONNIE GARZON:

My closing statement is thank you, once again for your support. And thank you to my boss, Caroline, and UCF are teaching me everything I know to bring this concept here. I want to thank the client, Karen, you have been amazing, how many jobs have you created? 13? Well. I have Chandra, and (unknown name). In 2016, I started with an idea, they said I don't award from anybody I want to start a company. And now how many employees do have, 40. And their clients are?

COMMENT FROM FLOOR:

(Indiscernible)

CONNIE GARZON:

Yes, and they are doing everything at the incubator, at the lab. Who else? Dominic is here. I don't see any other client. Thank you for everything.

LOU PARIS:

I learned so much from that, that was one that was not successful, that first one. I learned everything that I needed to be successful in all the other ones afterwards. I will rephrase what I said before. I want to challenge us as a community to retain the talent that we are cranking out at the local universities.

There are going to other opportunities, and their are opportunities here. We just have to make them aware of it. This does not happen with the job fairs. Job fairs are what they are. We need to engage them at a deeper level. An example, I lived in London for little bit, I considered attending the London business school. The London business school is the second, top MBA program in the world. I was invited on a Friday night to go to the school to meet some of the other students. Prospect students.

I saw this vibrant space. A lot of students were there. I was thinking this is a Friday night, they should be partying someone else. They were there because there were top executives of important businesses there. They wanted to be there. It was on a job fair, they were just mingling, talking over cocktails. Having conversations to get a feel for each other. We need to do more of that. The business community has to connect with the students.

Not because you have to, because you will be better off. There's a lot of intellect, there's a lot of intellectual horsepower there that you want to tap into. You have to tap into, to grow into a bigger thing. That's my challenge to you is a community. Do attend the job fair, but do more. Find any other way to engage the students more beyond the job fair.

STEPHANIE MILLER:

I want to extend that challenge further. Be an ambassador for Volusia County and understand our resources. Know what they do, not just us up here, so that when an entrepreneur talks to you, you can say I know exactly where to send you. To keep them here and create jobs. Please help us as a community, the county, so that we can really do this together. But it will take all of us. As a very last thing, my dad is watching from Delaware, hi dad.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

So, you know, this is really great. After we have these events in conversation, we always hear wonderful things in the business community about the resources that we have. You know, I'm going to put us on the chopping block here for one second. If there's something that you see that we are not doing right, or if there is something where an innovative idea on how we can help the business community. Call us, let us know. Tell us, not just each other. We want to help make changes. And set the right environment for us in this county. Right? That is what matters. We want to be here to help.

With that, I'm going to open up to questions or comments?

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

I don't if they disagree with you, I think the tide is turning. I just left, I have been six months in a high-tech community. Kendall, you are going to come back. If you are leaving, you're coming back. I just came back this week. Because I will tell you people are looking for that warm and friendly welcome post the federal government where I was coming from in high-tech, is

desperate to keep people there. They were saying if I wanted to stay in Florida, we would open an office. The tide is turning. My question is, a AIML, do we have that here, are we working on that.

STEPHANIE MILLER:

We definitely do at Embry, and others at larger schools. It is something that we are tapping into because in our curriculum. AIML is artificial intelligence machine learning, it's a way to automate tasks in daily life. It brings out fears and people. We need to make sure that we are using it responsibly. But at ERAU here are the things that are coming, here are the things your students need to learn about, every university has these, so we keep these curriculums up-to-date so we are up on the tech trends going on.

LOU PARIS:

My bio that you heard at the beginning was written by (unknown name) (Laughs). I kid you not. And students are learning how to use it very aggressively. That's how papers are being produced nowadays. (unknown name) is it.

CONNIE GARZON:

Good news for this group is that we are doing, kind of full-day seminar, everything about IA with Dominic. That is free, open to the public. Technology is moving so fast. I did not know what you just mentioned. I have been learning with Dominic and other clients, they make me supersmart. Yes. We are going to open those seminars to the community so that everybody will know what is going on in the technology world. We have brilliant students here. Thank you.

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

We are at 9 o'clock, but if there is one more question, anybody?

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

I am a serial entrepreneur, one of the things that I believe is that somehow Volusia County has a lot of tremendous positive vendors, I believe that are being under marketed, let's say. But, I think that the the 21st century mentality, I'm having a heck of a thing getting things done, it just does not make sense. I'm 64, I have been doing it since I was a kid. I have 28 different businesses right now. What I'm saying is I find it difficult to go through the paperwork you have to go through, and I think we can help entrepreneurs, if I was not a hardheaded guy and I didn't want to leave Miami, I would go back to Miami. Somehow, it's easier. That's all he had to say.

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

That is great. We can chat after, to zoom in on a little more detail on that. Find it was there. Alright, with that, I want to thinker panel.

(Applause)

HELGA VAN ECKERT:

And thank all of you for coming out today. We so love doing the quarterly. And having the business community come out, and interact with us. Thanks, and have a great day.

(Applause)