



Game Balls

During January's Strengthening Stark Governance Committee meeting, Ray Hexamer, president and CEO of Stark Economic Development Board, presented five Strengthening Stark Game Balls. The game balls represented "A Job Well Done" on a Strengthening Stark initiative.

Game balls were presented to:

1. **Jennifer Meeks Eells**, executive director of the Stark Tuscarawas Workforce Development Board, for her work on the Strengthening Stark Jobs Platform.
2. **Alan Harold and John Reese** from the Stark County Auditor's Office for their work on the Stark County GIS Mapping System.
3. **Alison Matas**, reporter of The Canton Repository, for her reporting on Strengthening Stark strategies, projects and initiatives.
4. **Robert Gessner**, former president of MCTV and chair of the Strengthening Stark Business Growth Committee, for purchasing and demolishing the former Doctors Hospital property in Massillon to be used for future development.
5. **Ken Sukosd and Frank Hezoucky** from Hendrickson USA and **Walt Good** from Team

NEO for the \$50.6 million axle plant under construction on the GO Site (former Stark County Farm) in the Village of Navarre. The plant will employ 300 people. *No picture; winners not in attendance.*



Pop-Up Neighborhood Job Fairs

Community partners recently came together to launch a series of pop-up job fairs within targeted neighborhoods in Stark County. Each pop-up job fair is held at either a school or church in a neighborhood facing significant socio-economic challenges and takes place in conjunction with an already-planned community event. While at the community event, area residents can learn more about current job openings in Stark County and also be screened for open jobs at a business that's conveniently located in their neighborhood. A wide array of community partners are represented at each job fair, making it easier for people in Stark County to navigate the job search process and learn more about the resources available to people who are facing barriers to employment such as transportation and childcare.

Coordinated by the Greater Stark County Urban League, the first-ever Strengthening Stark pop-up neighborhood job fair was held on January 16 during Cedar Elementary School's chili cook off. Since the school is conveniently located near Aultman Hospital, area residents were screened for open positions at Aultman. If they passed the pre-screening, they were given a name and direct phone number of someone who works in human resources to follow up with about the next step in the application process.

Other community partners collaborating to make these unique job fairs possible are Community Building Partnership, OhioMeansJobs, Goodwill Industries and Stark State

College.

The second pop-up neighborhood job fair was held on February 27 during parent/teacher night at Allen Elementary School. More details are coming soon on March's job fair.



Paradox Prize

Through the [Paradox Prize](#), the Fund for Our Economic Future, the National Fund for Workforce Solutions, Greater Cleveland Partnership, The Lozick Family Foundation, Cuyahoga County, the Cleveland Foundation and DriveOhio are investing in big ideas to improve the mobility of Northeast Ohioans stranded economically by their geography.

Grant funding is awarded in the range of \$20,000 to \$100,000, depending on the needs and potential impact of each project. To date, more than \$350,000 has been invested in projects that have the potential to eradicate the 'no car, no job; no job, no car' paradox in Northeast Ohio.

Approximately 60 applications were submitted for consideration for the third round of funding for the Paradox Prize, and Strengthening Stark and a group of community partners were recently named a finalist. Winners will be announced in late-March.

Lee Leaving for MAGNET

Janelle Lee's last day with Strengthening Stark was February 7. She has since joined [MAGNET](#) (the Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network) as the director of client engagement. In this role, she will focus on the growth and development of manufacturing companies along Rt. 30 from Stark, Wayne, Ashland and Richland counties.

We are sad to see Janelle leave, yet thrilled she will continue to strengthen our community by working closely with Stark Economic Development Board, Strengthening Stark and other Stark



County organizations and leaders on manufacturing projects and initiatives in the area.



My Stark Story: Joel Daniel Harris

I am Joel Daniel Harris from Canton, and this is my Stark Story!

Imagination! Energy! Passion! Ability! These are the descriptions and attributes of the middle schools kids I engage with. My name is Joel Daniel Harris and I am the executive dreamer for TomTod Ideas, Inc. I was born and raised in Canton, I'm married to Joy and we have two beautiful daughters. After graduating college, I spent eight years as a youth pastor teaching, mentoring and restoring faith, confidence and trust in youth. I quickly learned that middle schoolers have tons of imagination; they are very energetic; they have great ideas; they love to explore ... but some don't have an opportunity and/or the resources to be the best they can be.

In 2013, I started [TomTod Ideas](#) , which is a space for middle-schoolers to dream and

create, using ideation, exploration and fun-ination action with adults with wisdom and experience. Together, they empower each other to explore and launch ideas that put empathy and imagination into action.

With five full-time employees, we have worked with over 2,000 youth within the Akron-Canton Metroplex. Our goal is to help these youth grow and thrive, use their imagination to bring news ideas to help the community innovate, advance and hopefully stay here and immerse into the community.

I am Joel Daniel Harris, and that is how I am Strengthening Stark!

Upcoming Event: Stark Tank

Initially scheduled for March 18 at Walsh University, Stark's version of Shark Tank featuring local middle and high school students has been postponed to help prevent the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The event will be rescheduled at a later date.

Want to get involved? Let us know!

Contact us at (330) 453-562 8 or info@strengtheningstark.com if you want to get involved. We would love to chat about how you can play a role in Strengthening Stark County.

Contact us

Do you know others who would be interested in learning about Strengthening Stark? Encourage them to [sign up](#) to receive our monthly email updates!

Need a crash course in Strengthening Stark? The Canton Repository has you covered! Visit the Rep's website for a quick and easy to access [page](#) with links to every Strengthening Stark story written by the paper since the initial report was published in 2017.

