

# Tech center will lead to a better tomorrow

By **JOAN SMITH**  
and **DAVID WHITWAM**

We write as supporters of a deeply meaningful community movement that embraces our past to deliver realistic plans for creating jobs and enhanced future opportunities for residents and our local communities. The Hanson Technology Center groundbreaking on Thursday is an outstanding example. It launched a grassroots-inspired and regionally prioritized Campaign for Tomorrow, so ably shepherded by Lake Michigan College.

We are proud to join with so many who have contributed to a common vision and worked to give energy and meaning to the word “great” in the slogan Michigan’s Great Southwest. Realizing we cannot sit idly by and allow macroeconomic changes to diminish opportunities for our neighbors and children, countless community initiatives have sprung forth in recent years to create desired change. We are amazed at the breadth of these volunteer-led

and donor-supported efforts that include school improvements, affordable housing, new education and recreation facilities, expanded volunteering, health initiatives and facilities and individual support programs along with multiple tourism and destination developments. Together we are building a better community for all.

It is in that mutually supportive spirit ingrained in the hearts of so many that the work made possible at Lake Michigan College by their Campaign for Tomorrow will benefit new and existing employers and members of our community. With new programs and facilities, LMC is preparing students with the education and training required for lifelong success. The intent is simple: a meaningful job leads to improved health, full enjoyment of a high quality of life and family success. A better-educated community is a vibrant and prosperous community.

LMC’s Campaign for Tomorrow creates new learning

opportunities designed to build off our heritage industries and agricultural diversity to be successful in our changing global economy. Whether in advanced manufacturing, wine making or in high tech medical services, the college’s new initiatives supported by the Campaign for Tomorrow are at the forefront of technological change.

The centerpiece of this initiative is the Hanson Technology Center, a cutting edge facility to serve the training needs of our community, residents and businesses. Our support of this project is in honor of a man whose life story serves as inspiration to others. Merlin Hanson was raised by parents who never allowed their own physical disabilities to stand in the way of self achievement, and they instilled this life and work ethic in all of their children. Although he knew poverty, Merlin learned a technical trade and to this day is a passionate lifelong learner whose success in business and philanthropic leadership is well known and widely respected. When asked to lend his name

and reputation to this effort, in typical Merlin fashion, he and his generous wife, Carolyn, have provided a major gift to the campaign – not just to a building, but to a community-wide movement that is about enabling individual opportunity in a collectively growing set of communities – creating jobs and creating a trained workforce for our region.

A common thread that weaves through and strengthens this community is the people. Through foresight, collaboration and individual generosity, Lake Michigan College and the Campaign for Tomorrow offer a powerful example of our united spirit. We, on behalf of the contributors to the Lake Michigan College Campaign for Tomorrow, thank the countless “can do” individuals and businesses who are working to ensure a brighter future for all.

*Joan Smith, a partner at Smith-Dahmer Associates, is chairwoman of the Lake Michigan College Campaign for Tomorrow. David Whitwam, retired chairman and CEO of Whirlpool Corporation, is honorary chairman of the Lake Michigan College Campaign for Tomorrow.*