

Wednesday's Project Innovation talk by Florida (Richard) called a must-see

By LAURA LAYDEN

Originally published 04:56 p.m., May 19, 2009

Updated 04:56 p.m., May 19, 2009

NAPLES — It has been described as a “must-see” event.

Richard Florida is coming to Naples this week as part of Project Innovation, a community-wide project the Economic Development Council of Collier County launched late last year to build an action plan for a better economy.

Florida is the author of the national and international best-selling book, “The Rise of the Creative Class,” and the founder of the Creative Class Group, an advisory firm he says is “charting new trends in business and community.”

He's the last speaker in the “Community of Innovation” series, which has brought in experts from around the country to share new, innovative ideas in economy building.

Bill O'Neill, chairman of the Economic Development Council, urged the dozens attending a Project Innovation tour of North Naples medical device manufacturer Arthrex last week to sign up to see Florida, if they hadn't already.

He described Florida as the “leading light” of creativity.

“He will solidify everything we have been working on,” O'Neill said.

A group of community and business leaders involved in Project Innovation have settled on six drivers for a new economic action plan: talent, governance, business climate, quality of place, innovation and infrastructure. On top of the drivers are the words “World Class.” That means the standard for everything will be to make it world class, from schools and parks to businesses and research.

The action plan will be finalized during the summer and projects will be identified to “make it happen,” said Beth Skotzke, the Economic Development Council's events and communications manager.

Nearly 400 have responded to attend Florida's talk Wednesday, "It Pays to be Creative." The Economic Development Council is still taking reservations. The event is from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club off Gulf Shore Boulevard.

* * * * *

Esquire Magazine recently named Florida one of the "Best and Brightest." His ideas have been featured in major advertising campaigns for such companies as BMW and have been used to change the way regions, nations and companies compete.

He's a regular columnist with the Globe and Mail newspaper and has written for the Atlantic Monthly, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Harvard Business Review, the Boston Globe and the Financial Times.

His newest book, "Who's Your City," is a national and international best-seller and has been featured as an Amazon Book of the Month.

Florida is the director of the Martin Prosperity Institute and a professor of business and creativity at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. He has been a professor at Carnegie Mellon University, Harvard and MIT, and a visiting fellow of the Brookings Institution. He earned his bachelor's degree from Rutgers College and his Ph.D. from Columbia University.

* * * * *

Below are a few frequently asked questions and answers found on Florida's Web site:

Q. How do you define the creative class?

A. The creative class describes 40 million workers - 30 percent of the U.S. workforce - and includes two segments of workers:

-- Creative professionals - These professionals are the classic knowledge-based workers and include those working in health care, business and finance, the legal sector and education.

-- Super-creative core - These workers include scientists, engineers, techies, innovators and researchers, as well as artists, designers, writers and musicians.

The creative class is the core force of economic growth in our future economy. In fact, the creative class is expected to add more than 10 million jobs in the next decade.

Q. What is the economic impact of the creative class?

A. Even though the creative class represents only a third of the workforce, they earn more than \$2.1 trillion - 50 percent of all wages and salaries in the U.S. This total represents as much as the manufacturing and service sectors combined.

In addition, the creative class controls nearly 70 percent - almost \$500 billion - of the discretionary income (buying power) in the U.S. This is more than double that of the manufacturing and service sectors combined.

Q. If you had 10 seconds to talk about your work, how would you describe the essence of your research?

A. One phrase: Every single human being is creative. Economic growth is driven by creativity. So if we want to increase it, we have to tap into the creativity of everyone. That's what makes me optimistic. For the first time in human history, the basic logic of our economy dictates that further economic development requires the further development and use of human creative capabilities. The great challenge of our time is to find ways to tap into every human's creativity.

Q. You define industries into three different sectors. What are they?

A. Service, manufacturing and creative. The agricultural sector hardly registers anymore, accounting for only about 2 percent of the workforce. Manufacturing is dwindling, too. But the booming service sector has 50 million workers and 31 percent total wages.

While smaller than the service sector, the creative sector accounts for 50 percent of wages and salaries _ as much as the manufacturing and service sectors combined. While the manufacturing sector will continue to decline over the coming decade, both the service sector and the creative sector will grow.

Q. What are the "3T's" of economic development?

A. Talent, technology and tolerance - represent what I call the 3T's of economic development. The 3T's approach represents a comprehensive strategy for organizations, cities, regions and countries to compete and prosper in the creative age.

Q. How do you answer critics who say jobs drive creative development, not the other way around?

A. It's false. That's why I wrote "Rise of the Creative Class." The two go together in a cycle of economic growth. To grow jobs you need people, and good jobs attract more people.

* * * * *

After his talk Wednesday, Florida will autograph books. He will end the night with a few interviews granted to local media.

Though Project Innovation will continue during the summer, the only other scheduled event is a tour of software developer Neighborhood America in North Naples on June 4. That's part of "Champions of Innovation," which is giving the community a first-hand look at innovative companies. There have been five other tours of businesses, including Arthrex last week.

* * * * *

For more information on Richard Florida, visit www.creativeclass.com.

For reservations to hear him talk, go to www.projectinnovation.cc or call the Economic Development Council at (239) 263-8989.

Other interesting links:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200903/meltdown-geography>

<http://www.city-journal.org/2008/bc0328sm.html>

<http://network.nationalpost.com/np/blogs/toronto/archive/2009/05/13/richard-florida-goes-to-city-hall-quotes-karl-marx.aspx>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khQ9BaXZAjM>

© Naples News