

# Choose Here

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This is the sixth of ten consecutive articles that I will be writing covering the most frequent topics I have discussed in the first half of 2019.

The focus of my last article was on factors that attract people to our region and to our businesses or organizations. This week the focus will be on retaining the people that are already here. To be clear, the items that were listed in attracting employees last week also pertain to retaining employees.

It is also important that we don't take for granted the people who have grown up here or have been here for a long time. There is a phrase that I often hear when referring to employees who are new to our community and it is "They chose to live here." Rarely do I hear that same phrase when referring to those that have spent their lives here. The reality is that if you grew up in Greater Elkhart and are still here, you chose to be here.

Here is an example of the necessity of making sure we are telling our region's growth story to the people that are already living in Greater Elkhart.

In 2018, your Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce worked with our partners to bring more than 200 prospective young employees to our city and region. We shared with them the great aspects of our area and shared the vision of where the region was headed. In the first six months of this year I have spent a lot of time talking to young people between the ages of 18 and 22 who grew up in this area. The purpose of those conversations was to see if they knew as much about what was happening in the area as those that were brought in during our different recruiting events. The answer was/is "No".

Lesson learned. Everyone, whether from here or somewhere else, needs to know why this is a great place to live, work, and play and how they can be a part of our amazing growth potential. Recruiting doesn't stop once someone is here. It's an ongoing process.

What if I told you that in June of 2020 approximately 2,700 potential future employees are going to be available to the workforce? What would you do to meet them? What do we need to say to them for them to choose to make the South Bend-Elkhart Region home? How do we recruit them?

That number in June is not a figment of imagination. Those questions are not rhetorical. It's going to happen and we need to make sure as we are recruiting from around the country, we are also recruiting those that are here.

Collectively we must all learn how to tell our story and then share it with as many as will hear it. Our commitment, at your Chamber, is to continue to search out and provide opportunities for our business community to get in front of as many people as possible to share your stories and our community's story. Between October 2019 and May 2020 our goal is to introduce and provide recruiting opportunities to 600 plus potential employees and thus community members.

Have a positive and productive week. Get recruiting pitches ready. The people you need may already be here. If they're not, then let's go get them!