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Young professionals establish in Huntington

Group looks to give younger generation voice in community

BY ANDREW MACIEJEWSKI
amaciejewski@h-ponline.com

Huntington Young Professional Entrepreneurs is establishing themselves in the local community to give a younger generation of business people a voice in the future of the city.

Within HYPE's first two meetings, attendance has nearly doubled, growing from eight people at their inaugural meeting to 15 at their most recent meeting

last week. HYPE will meet on the first Monday of each month at 8 a.m. at Moe's Restaurant at 2990 W. Park Drive to network and discuss how they can help shape the community.

HYPE founder Brooke Sommers said she hopes the group will give the younger generation a sense of belonging and attract and retain young talent.

"You see a lot of people who they grow up here, start their professional careers and move away to a bigger city," Sommers said. "Our long-term goal is to provide a group for those younger individuals to keep them in the community."

Sommers said the group is currently working to structure the group and think of ways that they can volunteer in the community collectively to give back in some way.

"I think that's really the biggest purpose of it: to give others the opportunity to be a part of something that they feel like makes Huntington feel even more like home to them," Sommers said.

Huntington Mayor Brooks Fetters said he loves the idea and thinks it will add to the resurgence of downtown.

"When I look at all of the downtown businesses that have come up in the last decade around town, a lot of them are homegrown entre-

preneurs," Fetters said.

Fetters said that young entrepreneurs like the owners of Antiquology, The Rusty Dog Irish Pub, The Berg Ale Haus, The Brick House Grill and HYPE are all following a passion and adding to the local economy by providing services that create a better quality of life for residents in Huntington.

Fetters said HYPE and the Huntington University entrepreneurship program involvement will bring energy, creativity and a knowledge of technology and marketing that will increase the economic development of the city.

Sommers said she got the

idea after being involved with similar groups in Fort Wayne.

There have been attempts to start similar groups in the past, but Sommers said she is teamed up with Steve Kimmel, executive director at Huntington County Chamber of Commerce, to start the HYPE.

She said the group has been successful so far and they are receiving a lot of support from local business people.

"I think there's a lot of potential here in Huntington," Sommers said. "I think this could really benefit in that. I see a lot of great things happening in Huntington."