

*Wednesday, October 19, 2011*

## **COSBE forms partnership with Second Chance**

The Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce's Council of Small Business Executives (COSBE) is celebrating its 25th anniversary with a celebration of its past accomplishments and a new strategic partnership with Second Chance Partners.

COSBE presented a check for \$10,000 Tuesday to Second Chance Partners, which is a nonprofit organization that gives disengaged students who are at risk of not graduating from high school an educational alternative.

The Second Chance Partners program ties high school curriculum and real world applications by bringing the students to area manufacturing companies to learn and work. SCP's students have a 95 percent attendance rate and a 90 percent graduation rate. Upon graduation, 60 percent of students enter the workforce immediately, 30 percent attend technical colleges and 10 percent enter the military.

"Twenty-five is obviously an important milestone and a time to reflect on our many accomplishments. We've come a long way," said Mary Steinbrecher, COSBE's executive director. "We've grown from an idea on how to better meet the needs of the small business community to an organization that today has more than 50 executive-level roundtables, a well-established Future 50 awards program, is a recognized voice in advocating for pro-business legislative policy and a \$500,000+ contributor to the Milwaukee 7 economic development initiative."

Mary Scheibel, COSBE's incoming chair, said, "We also knew it was important to use the 25th anniversary to make a firm commitment to the future. Adopting Second Chance Partners (SCP) as our educational non-profit partner opens up a great opportunity to address two issues important to the region's future: manufacturing and workforce development."

Through the relationship with COSBE, Second Chance Partners can benefit from the resources the small business community can bring to bear on this issue while offering key benefits to COSBE members as well, Scheibel said.

COSBE members will have opportunities to become directly involved in the SCP program by hosting education centers and employing students, participating in SCP's annual job fair, and in events designed to help COSBE members better understand how to engage young people and develop a future workforce. In addition, there are several opportunities for members to provide financial support.

"As we look to the future, we see endless opportunities for the small business community to make a real difference. The foundation is in place and momentum continues to grow as more and more small businesses join forces through their affiliation with COSBE. We're excited about the future and what the next 25 years will hold," Steinbrecher said.