



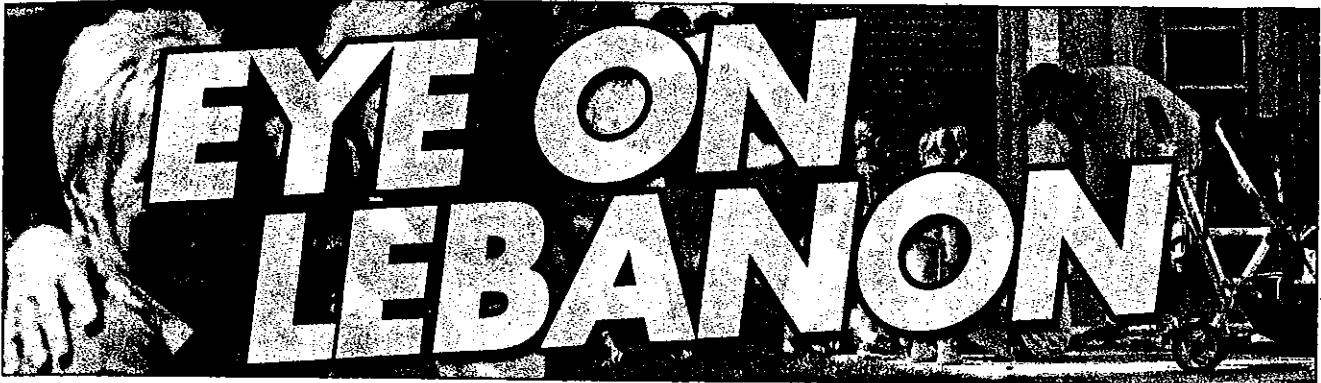
THE

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## The future of our community is, indeed, bright

There's no denying that it's been a tough 18 months economically. No one has been immune to the recession, including economic developers like me whose job it is to market Boone County in good times and in bad.

Today's capital markets continue to be restricted, and this has slowed the pace of closing deals with new employers since 2009. While we're on the short list for a number of projects right now, we're seeing and feeling the impact of companies' inability to finance reloca-



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tion.

We're not alone in this circumstance, but that doesn't

stop some people from viewing our economic development cup as half empty. I'd like to challenge anyone with concerns in the crowd by highlighting exactly how full our cup really is - and inviting all local residents to join me in celebrating our successes and planning for future growth and development.

Our key asset is our location. Boone County and Lebanon in particular are the Ag-Urban Gateway of northwestern Indianapolis. We help link Lafayette to Indy and Bloomington. As a suburb of Indianapolis, we need to embrace our status as a gateway county/city and open our proverbial doors to the opportunities that lie ahead.

Another asset is the Lebanon city government. The pro-business attitudes of the mayor and city council help me position our region as progressive and the kind of place employers want to do business with. Ease of communications between government and business is critical to future success.

Existing businesses are yet another strength of ours. We

know from experience that success attracts success, and we're exceedingly proud of local businesses such as those in the Lebanon Business Park. One family-owned local business, Gabriel Metals, has grown from a one-person shop in 2007 to a 30-person, two-building facility in 2010. Investments like this beget other investments by existing and even new employers.

The Lebanon Community School Corp., Witham Health Services and relationships with local community groups and regional and national land development companies also top our list of strengths, making it obvious to those who "shop" our county that we have a lot to offer.

Granted, we have challenges. Everyone does. But ours are manageable - and being addressed proactively by many people and organizations in our communities.

We have work to do on aesthetics so that the first impression people have of us and our cities and towns is as positive as it can be. I'm confident that work

being done now will move this "challenge" to the "asset" column very soon.

We also must continue to look for ways to revitalize a sustainable economy in Lebanon's downtown. Anchored by loyal and long-standing businesses, downtown needs our support, ideas and commitment to reach its full potential. We owe it to ourselves (and to the businesses that have kept downtown alive) to build it up and make it shine brightly for the short and long term.

Will it be easy? Nothing worthwhile ever is.

Everyone has a part to play in the future of our cities, towns and county. Our communities will become what we make them. Why not embrace the future and make them the best they can be, while still acknowledging our rich history?

I, for one, am ready to fill that proverbial cup. Are you?

*Dax Norton is the Executive Director Boone County Economic Development, Corp.*