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Metro Hartford - Catching them doing something right!

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During December, I had some time off and found that what I heard on the news and read prompted me to write an OP-ED. It hit me that as a former elementary school teacher, there was no better way to encourage my students to continue to make better choices, work harder and strive for excellence than catching them doing something right. What other practice has bridged time and remains so fundamental to motivating today's young people and where "good job!" has become part our vernacular.

But, something seems to "mutate" in us as we become adults where politics trump policy, criticism trumps a congratulation and the media responds to our interest to tune in for a condemnation rather than a commendation. Today's national dysfunction or gridlock seems to be metastasizing and I believe it is time for a call to action. It's all about balance. It is time to "catch them doing something right."

As an economic developer in Connecticut, I am pleased to see my governor and leaders making strategic international linkages. I am also pleased to see where our state is better leveraging the work of and collaborating with private organizations such as mine, the MetroHartford Alliance. In June, my organization, in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, produced a highly successful Connecticut-Israel Technology Summit. This event brought together CEO's from Israel who interfaced with Connecticut leaders, venture capitalists, academia and business. These attendees not only flew in from Israel, but came from Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, and Vermont where new contacts were made and we are pleased to say, deals were done.

As a follow-on and capitalizing on this momentum, commissioner Catherine Smith, Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, led a small, focused business delegation to Israel in early December. With a tight itinerary, the delegation followed up on work in progress, initiated new business and academic relationships, met Israeli businesses who have made Connecticut its U.S. beachhead and signed an MOU with the Israel Technology Transfer Network (ITTN).

Another move in the right direction is what is now known as Bioscience Connecticut, a 2011 far reaching legislative initiative that is yielding results. The story is refreshingly nonpartisan and begins in 2006. Under the Rell administration, Connecticut became one of only four states that passed legislation to fund and to support stem cell research, however, we were the only state to structure it as an ongoing, competitive grant program, insuring that we taxpayers would have an ROI. At the time, there were only two labs doing stem cell research. Now we have over 100 scientists doing stem cell research and Connecticut is recognized as a global leader in this field. State funding of \$68.89 million dollars has been leveraged to attract almost \$300 million of additional outside funding, yielding taxpayers an ROI of more than 4 to 1 - not including job creation. In addition, Yale invested \$80 million in the Amistad Building now housing the Yale Stem Cell Center; UConn

established its \$52 million facility for cell and genome research, home of the UConn Stem Cell Institute, and the co-located Technology Incubation Program is now spawning new companies. With June 2011 legislation in place and leveraging this growing center of excellence, the Malloy administration seized the opportunity to attract The Jackson Laboratory that fall. This strategic acquisition to our state is further strengthening the work toward personalized medicine and the Connecticut brand.

Just looking at the University of Connecticut's Health Center (UCHC) activity, drive up to their campus in Farmington and you will see a beehive of construction. As Jim Thibeault, UCHC director of planning and strategy says, "UConn is definitely expanding to better meet the needs of the state." The 189,000 s/f Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine on the UCHC's lower campus is scheduled to open in October. The Health Center's current hospital, built in the mid '70s, is being repurposed for R&D and making way for a new 11-floor state-of-the-art hospital tower, with all private patient rooms, to open in 2016. Replacing many of the older buildings on campus, the new 300,000 s/f Outpatient Pavilion is scheduled to open in December.

Expanding beyond Farmington, the UCHC, University of Connecticut Medical Group and John Dempsey Hospital have medical exclusivity for the Storrs Center project. There you will see a 15,500 s/f multidisciplinary medical center that opened in December; a 3,500 s/f urgent care center to open in March and a 2,600 s/f dental center that is slated to open in July. In Canton, construction for a 17,000 s/f multispecialty medical facility will begin this spring. It will house urgent and primary care, dermatology and a Mohs Surgery Center. And, there is certainly more activity in the pipeline along with growth in the medical and dental schools and the research enterprise.

Collectively, many are doing it right and producing results - from targeted global marketing, to stem cell research and personalized medicine, to the creation of the CAA for a more nimble statewide airport system, to adding captive insurance to our repertoire of industry practice, and the list can go on. Sometimes, it just doesn't hurt to just say, "good job!"

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