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The Vindicator

2 city groups recognized for making an impact

The award goes to those that had a major impact on the economic or social revitalization of a community in Northeast Ohio.

By KATIE SEMINARA
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YOUNGSTOWN — Community organizing and the creation of jobs helped two city organizations receive an award that recognizes efforts that strengthen Ohio communities.

The Mahoning Valley Organizing Collaborative and the Youngstown Business Incubator were two of 13 nonprofit organizations in Northeast Ohio that split the Community Impact Award of \$100,000.

For 14 years, the Dominion Foundation and *Inside Business Magazine* have awarded com-



munities and organizations with the Community Impact Award for efforts of resurgence in areas of Ohio, according to www.dom.com. The Dominion Foundation is dedicated to communities' economic, physical



and social health.

To be eligible for the award, organizations must have "made a major contribution to the economic or social revitalization of communities in Northeast Ohio" and be located in the Dominion service area, according to www.dom.com.

"We received the award on the basis of the Taft Technology Center and on the ability of the incubator to generate jobs," Youngstown Business Incubator Director James Cossler said.

The efforts of demolishing and renovating about seven blighted buildings on Federal Street downtown, which led to the multi-million-dollar tech block, also played a role in the incubator's receiving the award, he said.

The incubator works to create and build technology-based businesses in the Mahoning Valley.

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The funds the incubator won, about \$7,000, will go toward its Inspire Lab, Cossler said.

The Inspire Lab was created to benefit entrepreneurs who are at the beginning stages of their business venture, he said.

"It's just as much our job to help people make money as it is to help them save money," Cossler said.

The lab will be a "furnished open-source lab," where entrepreneurs can get together to talk to one another and to talk to the staff of the business incubator.

"[The lab] is meant to help develop ideas for viable businesses," Cossler said.

The MVOC, which was awarded for its efforts of community organizing in the Idora neighborhood, intends to spend the award cash in a different fashion.

"We plan to spend it on neighborhood improvement," said Ian Beniston, MVOC director of policy.

The goal will be to find a vacant piece of land in the Idora neighborhood on the southwest side of the city and create a community garden or utilize the land in a similar way, he said.

The collaborative, which was formed a year ago, unites various community groups and helps them work together to increase the quality of life in urban neighborhoods in Youngstown and Warren.

The joint efforts between the MVOC and the Idora Neighborhood Association resulted in the forming of a block watch with more than 200 members, as well as a campaign to clean up the corner stores in the neighborhood, Beniston said.

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