

Under-40 group takes on regional economy

Pipeline 4 Progress boldly jumps at the challenge of tackling upstate economy. Star Gazette – February 6, 2008 – [Read it on StarGazette.com](http://www.star-gazette.com)

An organization that refuses to shift gears in changing times is probably doomed to become ineffective. That does not appear to be the case with Pipeline 4 Progress, an organization now in its third year that aims to involve the under-40 segment of the Twin Tiers.

What's particularly impressive about Pipeline 4 Progress since its inception in 2006 is that its leaders have recognized that their annual summit to engage under-40s in the Twin Tiers needs to be supplemented by a more focused look at the region's economy.

As a result, the organization will host its first Regional Action Initiative next Wednesday at the Corning Museum of Glass where as many as 500 people have been invited as representatives of business, economic development and educational institutions to discuss the future of a 13-county region stretching over most of southwestern New York. The concept of a regional approach to brainstorming economic development ideas wisely parallels efforts by Daniel Gundersen, the upstate economic development chairman appointed by Gov. Eliot Spitzer a year ago.

Gundersen, from almost day one, has advocated looking at the strengths of various regions in developing their economies. In attempting to fix the upstate business climate, Gundersen, Spitzer and Republican New York state senators, who have their own upstate prescription, all seem to recognize that a one-plan-fits-all approach won't work neatly across the diverse upstate regions.

Pipeline 4 Progress has clearly bought into that same mindset by setting up this initiative that is geared toward building an economic alliance among the 13 counties, including Chemung, Schuyler and Steuben. This kind of regionwide effort has long been a goal of former U.S. Rep. Amo Houghton, who as representative of the 29th Congressional District developed an economic perspective that went well beyond county lines.

In fact, Houghton is one of the scheduled speakers at next Wednesday's conference, but the real meat of this gathering could well come from the five opportunity teams that will be formed to plan strategies and eventually an action plan. Whether the conference ends up being just a good talk or a genuine call to economic arms will be up to the Pipeline 4 Progress attendees and their willingness to put words into action.

Mike Fuller, chairman of Pipeline 4 Progress' steering committee, and his committee members have undertaken an ambitious expansion of their annual summit, which will be held this spring, by breaking out the economy as a separate issue. It's a smart way to deal with something of vital importance to the area, and if it succeeds, P4P can share a lot of the credit.