

GENEVA-ON-THE-LAKE — Businesses from across northeast Ohio gathered at the Lodge at Geneva-on-the-Lake on Wednesday morning, May 7th, to network and hear from one another.

The event was organized by the Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network, with Doug Rende, CEO – SHAPES Unlimited as a featured panelist addressing operational efficiencies.

“We hold these meetings all around the region,” MAGNET Director of Client Engagement Darlyn McDermott said. MAGNET works in 26 counties across the state, she said.

According to a brochure from MAGNET, the organization is a nonprofit founded in 1984. It is part of a national network of similar organizations. McDermott said MAGNET focuses on keeping manufacturing jobs in Ohio. “When you look at Ohio, there’s so much manufacturing,” she said.

Alongside hearing from members of MAGNET, attendees to the event got to hear from a panel of local manufacturers. The businesses were primarily medium-sized manufacturers with anywhere from 15-250 employees whose businesses were based in Ashtabula, Trumbull, Mahoning, Columbiana and Lake counties, McDermott said.

Shapes Unlimited CEO Doug Rende, of Youngstown, spoke about how they were developing their businesses, working with employees and dealing with economic issues.

“If you can get your people engaged to understand that if you’re willing to accept the status quo you’re dead and you just don’t know it yet, and understand that growth and change is critical,” Rende said.

Rende said it has been important for his company to engage with local politicians.

“If we’re going to bring new jobs in and new manufacturers into the community, how do we make sure we can house them?” he said. “How do we make sure we’re providing the right childcare as a group, as a company or as individual people? Then, what are the next steps of how this further evolves as a collective, collaborative effort.”

The event was done in collaboration with Growth Partnership for Ashtabula County and Lake to River Economic Development, who both spoke at the event. McDermott said MAGNET works with both organizations, along with the Youngstown-Warren Regional Chamber of Commerce.

Alongside local manufacturers, representatives from the offices of Congressman David Joyce and Senator Bernie Moreno spoke at the meeting. MAGNET works to promote manufacturing to federal representatives, McDermott said. “It’s my role and others to stick close to our manufacturing,” she said. Networking with legislators is also important, McDermott said.