

My Take: From Vision To 'Touchdowns'

Written by Jane Alexander, Editor-In-Chief
Friday, 16 September 2011 09:03



Is anybody really listening up there? I'm talking about Washington, which keeps finding ways to ignore the haunting "jobs, jobs, jobs" refrain that millions of desperate Americans are tuned in to. (We should be ashamed that these numbers include countless returning military veterans who can't find civilian work to support themselves and their families!)

Despite gruesome unemployment stats reflecting immeasurable pain across the U.S., our well-paid, well-insured politicians left us hanging in August. Rather than stay in D.C. and do their jobs—*i.e., see to the needs of the nation, 24/7/365, if that's what it takes*—they chose to high-tail it out of town mid-month for more fund-raising and belly-aching. Can we expect anything different in September?

I, too, am weary of "grown-ups" competing to see who can lift their legs the highest while a disheartened workforce twists in the wind. To paraphrase CBS' Bob Schieffer in his closing *Face The Nation* commentary on September 4, "Were these people [our elected officials] ever on a team?"

Thank goodness some outside Washington do know what teamwork is all about—*and are using their know-how to help improve things for others.*

I recently met one of these fighting hearts at Chicago's Soldier Field: the great Richard L. Dent, who spoke at an event hosted by eSightenergy (

www.esightenergy.com

). Yes, THAT Richard Dent...the former Chicago Bears defensive end and Super Bowl XX MVP who has just been enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Class of 2011.

These days, Dent serves as CEO of RLD Resources (energy and telecommunications

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consulting). He also oversees the "Make A Dent Foundation," which he established 14 years ago "to discover and advance innovative and effective ways of helping people help themselves and lead productive and prosperous lives." One way it's doing this is with the Great Lakes Center for Energy Smart Communities (GLC) that's being set up in Park Forest, IL.

As I understand it, the GLC will be the first organization of its kind to focus on developing and delivering comprehensive community-based practical energy-efficiency solutions, training and outreach by leveraging a broad range of new technologies. A project of the center's core tenant is a case in point: The U.S. Department of Energy will be developing an advanced single-stage lithium bromide absorption chiller module utilizing low-temperature waste heat from natural gas engines. The desired outcome is efficient, secure combined power and cooling for distributed datacenters. (Private-sector partners in this demonstration project include GE, HP and Carrier, among others.)

You'll hear more from us in the future about the GLC. What's important to this discussion is the fact that one of the center's key goals involves providing vocational training and placement services related to energy-technology jobs—with an emphasis on returning veterans and secondary students. Given its focus on technical-skills training, certification and accreditation (including that around some very mission-critical equipment), the GLC seems to have compiled an effective playbook for battling two dilemmas: a lack of jobs and the still-growing skilled-trades crisis. I wonder how many similar efforts are going on elsewhere? If you know of any, do tell. In the meantime, congratulations to Richard Dent and his team for working to turn a winning vision into "touchdowns" for others!

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