

Grand Erie Business Centre: New Staff, Same Mandate

By Jillian Zynomirski
The Haldimand Press

CALEDONIA—Grand Erie Business Centre (GEBC) has introduced a new staff member to the team and promoted a familiar face to a new role.

GEBC's previous Business and Lending Advisor Tauri Caputo has accepted the General Manager position and Robert Manning joins as the new Business and Lending Advisor.

The General Manager position was left empty for about half a year since previous General Manager Mike Peace left.

Caputo has been involved with GEBC since 2006 and was the Business and Lending Advisor for 2.5 years. His new role as General Manager is to support the Business and Lending Advisor, work closely with the board of directors, sit on various community board of directors and ensure the organization is running suitably to obtain funding. Previously, Caputo was a business professor at Brock University for nine years, teaching Business Communications, Marketing and Strategic Management.

Manning's role as Business and Lending Advisor is to work directly with clients through a process of investigation, consulting, assessment of loans, business plans, community outreach and consultation. He ensures the community is aware of what the centre of-



CALEDONIA—Robert Manning (left) joins the Grand Erie Business Centre as a Business and Lending Advisor and previous Business and Lending Advisor Tauri Caputo takes the General Manager position.
—Haldimand Press photo by Jillian Zynomirski.

fers and maintains relationships with Haldimand County's Economic Development and Tourism division, local chambers of commerce, business improvement associations and other associations. Manning previously worked as a business consultant in the region of Halton.

GEBC is a private, independent, not-for-profit, government-funded corporation that delivers the Community Futures (CF) program to the areas of Haldimand and West Lincoln. It is the only one of its kind in the area.

The CF program is community-focused and rural-based and is designed to help rural areas grow. The program provides access to services that would otherwise only be available in larger urban centres.

"This is a fairly unique program that allows for, at no charge, counselling by people who are very much integrated in the community, looking for ways to improve the community and develop it through business and employment," said Caputo.

The centre works with new businesses and existing businesses to drive rural employment, expand rural business developments and create jobs. In addition, they offer loans of up to \$250,000.

"Currently we have about 60 loans in the community and in the 28 years the organization has been around, we have loaned just under \$25 million into the community," said Caputo. "We lend to people who are otherwise not bankable. Organizations or individuals who are look-

ing to start a business or are looking to grow but can't access funding through a traditional bank or credit union."

Caputo said money that is generated through the loan fund goes back into the fund to grow it.

The centre has two full-time staff (Caputo and Manning), two part-time and a volunteer board of directors who currently run their own business, or have in the past.

"If you have a small business, are looking to get into business or grow your existing business and you need some advice or access to credit, we're here to help you out and find the best solution for you," said Caputo, adding that they are always looking to help budding entrepreneurs.