

Quarter 3, 2022 Newsletter
Shaping One Itasca

Letter from the President

Inaction breeds doubt and fear. Action breeds confidence and courage. If you want to conquer fear, do not sit home and think about it. Go out and get busy.
Dale Carnegie

IEDC continues to drive home our mission

- To grow the Itasca County economy through education, research and outreach that creates business opportunities.

That means driving key initiatives to address workforce shortages and job skills, support for entrepreneurs and small businesses, as well as business attraction and retention. This is no small task. Our team has grown to serve these needs and bring new opportunities to our community.

Today's economic development has challenged traditional paths to progressively grow, support, and engage in areas that would not have not been "in our lane" just a decade ago. Housing, childcare and even workforce development often found themselves outside the realm of business retention and development, business plans, financial training, and many more standard economic development functions.

In our work, that has translated into efforts such as "Thrive Up North," a workforce recruitment tool; and "ItasCAM," a partnership with our local housing organizations to map our communities' assets. It means engaging in conversations around diversity, equity and inclusion as well as developing strategic partnerships with education - both high school and post-secondary.

IEDC has stepped up and met these challenges head on. While not claiming to be the expert in the room on many of the issues, we are also not afraid to request expert consulting support when needed. It has not been an easy path, but a critical one helping our community to see opportunities in challenges and potential in



adversity.

Fortunately, you have been there with us. Engagement from partners, leaders and community members is at an all time high. We are forging ahead, with you by our side. We may not always agree, but we know that progress takes all voices and we need to find a way to bring those voices to the table. For our team, that means more and more of “meeting people where they are.” We invite you to join us, find an initiative that you are passionate about, and bring your voice to the table.

With genuine intent,

Tamara Lowney

President of Itasca Economic Development Corporation

SBDC Updates

With fall in the air, we are excited about the business landscape in Itasca County! Small business is doing well with three new business starts in the quarter and a year-to-date total of seven. We expect this to be one of the best years for new business starts in Itasca County in the last decade. Thank you to all the business owners who have allowed us to be part of your journey.



Educational classes have been expanding as promised. Profit Mastery continues to be valuable to business owners. A small hint, we will be bringing you a new streamlined version of this training in the near future. Please keep an eye out for information regarding educational opportunities in the coming months.

Key outlooks, inflation and interest rates are rising, causing some disruption and recalculation of expansion plans. Working though feasibility of projects and pricing strategies are the key consulting focuses this year. Supply chains seem to be improving, however there are still issues in the market. Pivoting, (I know we hear this a lot) has become normal, and business owners are finding new ways to offset the challenges facing today's market.

7-26-2022//7-27-2022 Profit Mastery

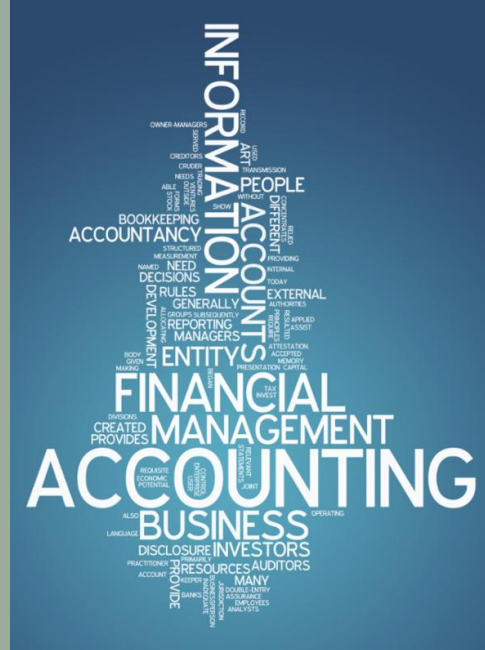
Profit Mastery is a two-day workshop led by Director of Business Development, Rob Sjostrand.

This deep-dive class is built to help clients understand their business financials, learn how to manage their business to increase profitability, and

strengthen the relationship with their lender. The four participants in this workshop learned how to actively manage THEIR business and accomplish THEIR goals.

Alongside other business owners and SBDC consultants, each participant analyzed real-world business problems and uncovered how to:

- Overcome common business problems
- Understand your financial position
- Use tools to take active control of your finances
- Make effective pricing decisions
- Evaluate and manage cost patterns
- Make your business bankable
- Avoid cash crunches
- Plan for transition
- Strengthen your lender relationships

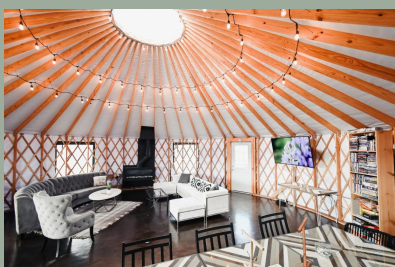


8-16-2022 **IEDC Staff Retreat**

Every summer, the IEDC staff takes a day to unplug, spend the day together, and have fun. This day always gives us a chance to get to know each other better and celebrate all that we have accomplished as a team.



On August 16th, we spent the morning on the ATV trails in our area - truly enjoying the nature that we all love so much. Once we got off the trails, we headed to lunch and were planning on going golfing in the afternoon, however, the rain put a damper on those plans. Aside from the weather in the afternoon, we had a blast and look forward to next summer's adventure!



8-22-2022 **Staff Planning Session**

On August 22nd, IEDC staff met in the yurt at Hotel Rapids to plan for the future. Topics covered were: events, Innovate 218, Thrive Up North, and The Forge. We are excited to get moving on The Forge project, but know that it will require a lot of teamwork and organization.

The team also discussed the current strategic plan for IEDC and how we will move forward into 2023 and beyond. Our team has a strong vision and commitment to this community and we're excited to keep the momentum going.

IEDC would like to thank the staff at Hotel Rapids for the amazing service.

8-24-2022 Carlton County Networking Event



Innovate 218 was on the road on August 24th in Carlton County! Carlton County partnered with Innovate 218 to broadcast and host a networking event. We were able to connect with folks in this area and showcase some of the programs that Innovate 218 offers. We highlighted how Innovate 218 can help cover the cost of a 10-week virtual lean startup class, and how all dreamers are able to apply for our pitch competitions. It was great to see the excitement and momentum build in the startup entrepreneurial arena of Carlton County!



9-2-2022 First Friday Art Walk

Held on September 2nd, Itasca County residents and tourists were able to enjoy a gorgeous summer evening as they "art-walked" their way through the streets of Grand Rapids.

Quarterly, IEDC participates in First Friday Art Walks and September's event hosted a musical duo, Vocal Perspective (Laurie Antonson & Wayne Leeds). Over 60 people visited our office to listen in and enjoy the talented work of artist, Lea Friesen. Appetizers were catered by Pinched Catering Co.

Special treats were provided by Miss Sara's Northern Treats Cupcakery and as usual, there were none left!

Please mark your calendars and come visit us on December 3rd as we once again celebrate local talent.

9-6-2022 ASBDC California Conference

Held in the always sunny city of San Diego – except for the tropical storm that passed through while we were there.

This conference hosted keynote speakers that engaged, informed, and inspired SBDC consultants from all over the United States. Speakers included the Mayor of San Diego, Chief Economist from Visa Inc, James Rhee; Jon Dorenbos; and Sarah Paul – director of Global Policy and regulatory affairs with Intuit.



Over 120 professional development workshops to choose from. Our consultants attended sessions to sharpen their skills in the areas of:

- Marketing / Social Media
- Financial Analysis
- Business Planning
- Technology to Improve Operations
- Innovation and Technology
- Self Improvement

Northland SBDC had 8 small business consultants in attendance, including IEDC's Rob Sjostrand and Nichole Arbour. It was a wonderful week of connecting, networking, and discussing small businesses with consultants from all over the United States.



9-12-2022 Day of Connections

IEDC has been working on expanding efforts with our rural neighbors! We have asked our local Indian councils if we can join their monthly meetings to listen to their needs and hopefully assist in becoming a catalyst to help strengthen those communities. All District 1 Local Indian Councils (Deer River, Winnie Dam, Inger, Ball club and S. Lake) have been incredibly welcoming to us. We are humbled to be making these connections and happy with the relationships forming through these efforts.

One of the barriers that was brought to our attention was the high cost of internet and how it can be a burden to local families. IEDC reached out to Paul Bunyan and learned about the Affordable Connectivity Program for those who are cost burdened with this expense. This was exciting news, as not having internet can be a struggle in this evolving world. This is especially true for families with students needing internet access.

Paul Bunyan sent six employees to an event we planned in Inger and we were able to help 15 residents apply! The event was planned with the help of Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe (LLBO) members who also suggested coming to the event. Because of the assistance of LLBO, tribal ID's were made on site, transportation was provided to those who needed it, and a meal was served. A total of 33 band members received a replacement ID!

The simple act of meeting our neighbors where they are, hearing a need and helping to organize a critical connection, (such as access to internet) has made a positive impact! We look forward to more events and connections with our rural neighbors and are honored to be welcomed so warmly into their communities.

9-15-2022 GR Chamber Golf Outing

For as long as we can remember, IEDC has taken part in the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce golf outing. This event is held annually and hosted at area golf courses.



This year's event took place at Pokegama Golf Course in Grand Rapids. The theme was, *Around the World in 18 Holes*. Operations & Outreach Manager, Kayla Swanson and APEX Senior Business Developer, Matt Shermoen hosted Hole #12. Their hole theme was "Fiesta Time!"

IEDC also hosted a golf team. The team consisted of IEDC President, Tamara Lowney; APEX CEO, Rachel Johnson; Entrepreneur Fund Sr. Business Loan officer, Mike Korte; and IRRR Financial Specialist, Scott Sundvall. The team ended up placing with a score of -9!



9-16-2022 Future Forest Stewards

The Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce - Forestry Affairs Committee invited area high school students to the Future Forest Stewards event to learn about careers in Minnesota's forestry industry at the Minnesota Timber Producers Association's 68th Annual North Star Expo.

This year we hosted more than 185 students and teachers from area high schools, including: Grand Rapids, Coleraine, Bigfork, Deer River, Chisholm, Hill City, Mesabi East, and Nashwauk. In addition, there were 44 volunteers from area businesses and organizations. It was a tremendous effort that will have lasting impressions on area students. We are so grateful for partnerships across public and private sectors that come together to put on this event.

At each Future Forest Stewards session, the students heard from industry professionals and learned about many aspects of the forestry industry. From foresters to loggers to operators and educators - students were able to ask questions and explore future career opportunities. With the addition of the two simulators this year it was great to get students into the seat and see what these machines can do. Seeing them live at the harvest site, the students could really understand what goes into working these machines.

Photo provided by: John Connelly

9-19-2022

Love Where You Work



LOVE WHERE YOU WORK

Understanding Workforce Culture in Itasca County

How often have you heard “sorry we are short staffed,” when picking up your morning coffee? Being short staffed is reality for businesses throughout our nation, let alone in rural Minnesota. But what can we do about it? Pay more? Work less hours? How about more vacation? Could it be our *Workplace Culture*?

IEDC’s Workforce Advisory Committee asked themselves these questions again and again as we discussed the endless array of information about workplace culture. Until we realized, it was time to go to the source. Time to ask people, “what makes a great workplace?”

Our group pulled together a series of questions to gauge how Itasca County workers feel about their employers. These questions have been developed to help understand why employees choose to stay or not stay with their current employers, as well as what they are seeking in a workplace environment.

This information will be used to gather real time information from people working in Itasca County to:

1. Share this information with employers in our community. We know many larger employers may survey their staff already, but this bundled information could be shared with all employers, large and small, giving great insights into what today’s worker is looking for in an employer.
2. Utilize the data to develop a “Workforce Summit” in early 2023, where local employers can come and hear from experts about the topics highlighted in the survey.
3. Use the data to set a baseline for workforce in Itasca County. Conduct the survey annually to capture changes in our local workforce and their ideas of a great workplace culture.



9-26-2022

September Lyceum, Self-Transcendence

Stemming from Itasca Summit Advisory groups, The Itasca Lyceum came to fruition. According to the Lyceum movement, "A Lyceum is a place for adults to come together to

think, learn, and talk with their neighbors, to explore the deep questions about what it means to be human. We host speakers and conversations on the things we're all curious about."

We wanted to host these monthly conversations with the hopes of bringing in keynote speakers that are relevant not only to the topic, but to our area. The conversations are supposed to be transparent, allowing neighbors to come together and discuss real-life scenarios in real time. That's exactly what happened at our first event.

The event took place on Monday, September 26th from 6-7:30 pm at Rapids Brewing Co. The theme provided by The National Lyceum organization was Self-Transcendence: "This month's topic is about what it means to live a good life. Self-transcendence means making our lives

about something besides ourselves. How do we find meaningful things to give our lives to, what are the habits that can bring us to a flourishing that is focused on others?"

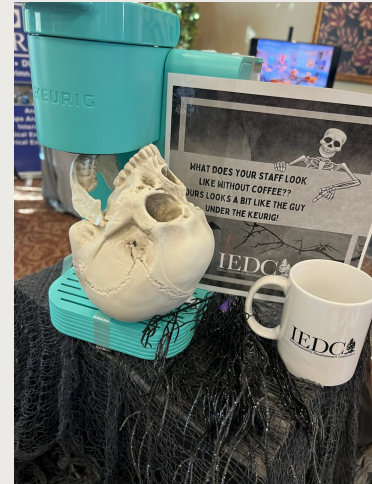
Pat Mathias, ICC English Emeritus & ICC Foundation Board Member, presented alongside Zach Holsman, RJEMS Teacher & Youth Coach. The presentation was better than we could have imagined and the conversation to follow was enlightening. There were 33 attendees, and the staff at Rapids Brewing deserves a giant THANK YOU for the outstanding service they provided.

Join us for our next Lyceum event on October 24th, 2022 from 6-8 pm at Rapids Brewing Co. The theme is, "October: The Importance of Physical Work." Head to our website for more information: <https://www.itascadv.org/lyceum>.

9-28-2022 GR Chamber Taking Care of Business

Itasca Economic Development Corporation partakes in the Grand Rapids Area Chamber's Taking Care of Business event every year.

This year's event took place on Wednesday, September 28th from 4-7 pm at the Timberlake Lodge. Many organizations participated in this year's event. The IEDC team was able to network and get the word out about the various events that are forthcoming, along with the link to the *Love Where you Work* survey. We gave out a Keurig in our drawing, and our Halloween theme was a big hit!



It was a fantastic event and we look forward to participating again next year.



Welcome, Stacia Rom!

Stacia Rom joined our team in August of 2022 as our Office Assistant. Stacia grew up in the area and considers herself a product of Cohasset Elementary. She graduated from GRHS at the early 2000's. After graduation, she attended college in the Twin Cities and landed a job in Best Buy. After working for several years in the hectic world of corporate video production, she moved back north to be near family. She spent a long stint of her working career here in Itasca County at the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce. Aside from her professional life, Stacia resides in Bovey and is proud to be a mom to her incredible son, Jacob. Stacia loves the lakes and the woods - true Itasca County living. You will always find Stacia with a coffee in hand and a smile on her face. Stop in and say "Hi!"



Welcoming Communities of Itasca County

IEDC has been increasingly interested in Welcoming Communities work in our area. We recognize that the challenges of diversity, equity, and inclusion effect many areas of our work, especially areas such as workforce attraction and retention, meeting the needs of our clients, and opportunities for our community to grow. Thanks to funding from our McKnight Foundation Grant, we were able to bring together a group to engage around a mutual desire of

“welcoming.”

Many area community members have joined us, bringing their experience and expertise from many similar groups in our area. Today we have around 60 people on our engagement list, and 30-35 attending our meetings. We started meeting earlier this year to discuss a path forward.

A clear message from IEDC from day one and repeated at every meeting, is that we do not have the expertise to lead this effort, but with the support of this group and hired consultants, we hope to assist in shaping a strategy for our community moving forward. Our first action as a group was to hear presentations from several organizations about this work. From there, we selected, *The Promise is You* to support our activities. *The Promise is You* is a BIPOC lead organization from Chisholm and Duluth that has brought great facilitation experience to our group. Their leaders, Carl Crawford and Keith Turner, are long time members of our region and have vast experience in this work.

The Promise is You will be working in our community over the next few months engaging in 10 community forums, one-on-one interviews, and helping to launch a Welcoming Communities Survey. This research and outreach will help us to better understand the situation for many marginalized members of our community and help us to engage expertise to create a strategic plan for the future.

While Promise is conducting their research, our Welcoming Communities group will be engaging in a series of educational and facilitated discussions. We hope to help our group and others better understand how to work with and engage marginalized members of our community. We meet monthly, with topics around accessibility, racism, poverty, mental illness, etc. We welcome new members at any time. There is no set commitment. We simply ask that you show up with an open mind, ready to engage and learn. Please reach out to Kayla Swanson (kswanson@itascadv.org) if you would like more information.

Aside from the Welcoming Communities Taskforce, IEDC is committed to continuing to learn and grow as an organization. Our staff attends many types of training each year to develop skills to help best serve our clients. Most recently, IEDC is going through IDI, Intercultural Diversity Inventory training, that includes both self-evaluation and group dialog. This training challenges our team to look through the equity lens and our approach to serving our community and our clients. It has been a great opportunity to engage in an open dialog about how this impacts both our internal and external relationships. It also helps to set our team up for a more open approach to our Welcoming Communities. While this work is ongoing, IDI, through the direction of consultant, Kevin Skiwra-Brown, is a great experience.



ITASCAM Updates

The ItasCAM taskforce was started in hopes of helping developers see all that the Itasca area has to offer. Since it's creation, members of the taskforce have been compiling information on assets here in Itasca County.

Truly a team effort, some members have been identifying developers, some have been identifying assets and some are coordinating ItasCAM 2023, to come in the Spring of 2023. The summit will host cities and relevant entities with morning sessions around topics such as TIF 101, housing studies and panel discussions around rehab. Attendees will hear success stories from area cities and have time to ask questions from present developers on what they are looking for while considering local locations as their next development site. The afternoon session will include tours of sites for the developers and exploring available incentives. Stay tuned for a save-the-date coming next year!



The FORGE: Where Ideas Take Shape

The education center, business incubator and upskilling center has seen a couple of bumps in the road but is still happening! Construction has been delayed, but we are confident work will start soon and progress will be swift in phase 1 for the education center. Phase 2 design is ramping up, and new smaller manufacturing businesses that need a space will be excited to see the progress.

Our partners at Minnesota North Colleges, JET and Career Pathways are all engaged, and this project is picking up steam with discussions, tenants that are interested and others coming together to help in the process.

Please watch for more announcements and for construction to start in the coming Quarter!

Innovate 218 Updates

Things have been busy for Innovate 218. We started our next virtual lean-canvas cohort on September 12th, 2022! We have 19 entrepreneurs scattered throughout our nine counties taking part in these exciting classes. They are taking their ideas and coming out better prepared for the journey of business ownership upon graduation. We are currently offering this class series two times a year.

We also have another The RINK pitch competition coming



up! Save the date for November 29th at Pier B in Duluth, MN if you want to see some great live entertainment. Anyone who has an idea can submit it and the finalists will be chosen by November 18th.

Only five finalists are invited to come and pitch their ideas in front of a live audience. Cash Prizes are given out in a total of \$10,000 to help with the costs of starting an entrepreneurial journey. If you are interested in either a cohort or pitch competition, visit our website today! <https://innovate-218.com/>

Thrive Up North Updates

Thrive Up North is continuing to make headway with encouraging new residents to come live, work, and play in Itasca County.

Since releasing our incentives package on June 1st, 2022, we have received 18 applicants. Of those applicants, 12 have been accepted with a wide range of careers from childcare teachers to foresters to mental health practitioners.

We still have three under review and a few denials based on the failure to meet eligibility requirements laid out in the package.

It has been extremely enlightening to meet those who were awarded and get to know them. Many have been enjoying the outdoors, nervous about the snow, but excited to start a new life in Itasca County. Please continue to watch our website and help us spread the word to anyone that you might know who is looking to take the leap and come Thrive Up North. Help us welcome our newest community members!



APEX Updates

New Leadership Announced -

The APEX Board and Executive Committee is pleased to announce Rachel Johnson as the next APEX President and CEO. We are very excited to accept Rachel's leadership and vision for new possibilities within the region.

Rachel comes to APEX from Precision Pipeline, LLC, where she has served as Public Relations Manager for the past three years, playing a key role on Enbridge's Line 3 Replacement Project. She has been building relationships with key community stakeholders throughout the APEX region for over 20 years. We believe her ability to bring people together to drive impactful change will be a powerful catalyst for advocacy and economic growth in the region.

Regional Impacts and Partnership:

On Thursday, July 7, 2022 Deb DeLuca, Executive Director of the **Duluth Seaway Port Authority** (DSPA) provided valuable

background on port operations and shared details on the DSPA's functional strategic plan – **Under Full Sail**. “The Port of Duluth-Superior is a critical asset that connects the entire region to the world,” explained DeLuca. “We’re governed by a diverse, 7-member board of directors that is truly representative of the entire region. Our new strategic plan is designed to help us advocate for our vision of a healthy regional economy supported by a vibrant industrial port.”

APEX is pleased to share the results of a July 2022 economic impact study regarding the Enbridge Line 3 Replacement project. This recent study, commissioned by APEX and conducted by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (**BBER**) at the **University of Minnesota Duluth's Labovitz School of Business and Economics**, found the project supported, on average, **4,157 jobs** per year in the region and had a total impact of over **\$5 billion**. Read the study and view the Executive Summary at: www.APEXgetsbusiness.com.

On Thursday, September 1, 2022, at the APEX Investor Member Meeting, Doug Loon, President and CEO of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce provided the meeting's keynote address titled - **Minnesota's Economic Position and Outlook for Progress**. Doug highlighted the Chamber's 100+ year history and detailed how they work with over 2,300 companies and local chambers to promote business growth throughout Minnesota by providing a unified voice at the Capitol.

CEDA Updates

This year has been a busy one for the CEDA staff in Itasca County! As the 3rd quarter comes to a close, CEDA has been able to assist their communities in receiving over \$1.9 million in grants or other funding opportunities, and it isn't over yet. As the summer season comes to a close, many projects continue to gain momentum in our assisted communities. To date, we currently have over 80 project in motion!

This quarter, CEDA has been able to kick start several playground projects with the Cities/townships of Northome, Coleraine and Goodland Township. These communities have been able to create playground committees, receive productive feedback from the community, and/or now in the process of finalizing their designs. As these communities look to make big upgrades in their area, CEDA looks to help them make the process as easy as possible from the ground up. The hard work doesn't stop there. CEDA also continues to work with multiple communities, helping them pursue grant dollars and remove any obstacles that may be stifling growth and development within their communities. Often times, this process can start with the community's participation in a community survey that CEDA has tailored to fit each community. A handful of communities in Itasca County have participated in



CEDA's Community Surveys and use this information to organize and focus on their future community wants and needs.

CEDA continues to work on business outreach throughout the entire county. So far this has consisted of in-depth conversations and promoting the resources our partners in the IEDC office offer. These conversations helped Henry Hellmann and Matt Shermoen with Apex develop a BRE Survey that will be given to businesses throughout the county with hopes to help identify positive or negative trends in our local businesses so we can assist them as much as possible.

Stay tuned this spring as Bovey and Deer River have exciting playground projects that we will be breaking ground! If you are interested in volunteering on any projects feel free to contact Sarah Carling at 218-398-6400 or Henry Hellmann at 218-245-9640.



Entrepreneur Fund Updates

Entrepreneur Fund has been extremely busy in third quarter. Check out their updates below.

- In September, EFund was recognized as **Minnesota's 2022 SBA Microlender of the Year**.
- Thus far in 2022, the Entrepreneur Fund has partnered with 45 businesses to support growth in Itasca County.
- **The Stride program** was launched this summer and cohorts are still available throughout the end of the year. The purpose of Stride is to advance economic justice through entrepreneurship. The program provides entrepreneurs the opportunity to gain insights, networks, accountability and individualized support to grow their small business and confidence as an entrepreneur. The Stride program offers opportunities for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) entrepreneurs to access grants, 0% interest loans and one-on-one advising to strategically launch or grow your business. We invite partners to share the program with their networks and invite entrepreneurs to **apply here**.
- **The 2021 Annual Report** was recently released highlighting work and partnerships that support our mission.
- Fall 2022 will be a busy one, check out our **events calendar** that highlights EFund and partner events.

Click Here to Visit Our Events Calendar Today for Future Events!

- **Wednesday, November 9th, 2022:**
 - Digital Footprint Summit
 - Register: <https://bit.ly/dfsitasca2022>
- **Monday, November 28th, 2022:**
 - Itasca Lyceum - Religion and Democracy
 - Register: bit.ly/itascalyceumnov2022

- Friday, December 2nd, 2022:
 - First Friday Art Walk
 - Learn More: IEDC Events Calendar

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