



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **APEX Highlights the Impact of U.S. Manufacturing and Announces 2020 Executive Committee**

**Duluth, Minnesota:** The Area Partnership for Economic Expansion (APEX) hosted its Annual Board of Directors and Investor-Member Meeting and Reception on January 30, 2020, at Pier B Resort in Duluth, MN with more than 100 people in attendance. APEX welcomed Barbara K. Philibert, President and Chief Executive Officer of Chicago, Illinois-based Industrial Technologies Group (ITG), as the keynote speaker. Philibert shared insights about ITG's growth strategy, the impact of the United States' manufacturing industry, and how manufacturing will continue to transform with innovations in technology.

"The impact of manufacturing is critical to the U.S. economy and is a fundamental building block of rural communities," stated Philibert. "Manufacturing is evolving at a rapid pace – it's not dead, and it's not dying."

With 17 global locations and over 1,000 employees, ITG, formerly known as Pettibone, LLC, is an operating platform of the HEICO Companies (HEICO), the parent holding company for a large portfolio of companies that each operate under its own P & L and management team. Superior, Wisconsin-based Barko Hydraulics is one of HEICO's 11 manufacturing-focused companies.

HEICO was founded in 1979 and has forged a path to success by building a diverse portfolio of 73 global companies that specialize in manufactured products, industrial services, or construction services. HEICO employs more than 9,000 people and makes strategic acquisitions every year to expand into and strengthen positions within targeted markets.

This aggressive acquisition model works because HEICO attracts companies that align with the company's unshakable values of integrity, hard work, and safety. Each HEICO company retains a decentralized management team to ensure excellent customer service, deep industry expertise, and the company's original entrepreneurial spirit. Today, 36 HEICO companies are certified women business enterprises, providing clients with supply chain diversity and strengthening inclusion initiatives in the industrial sector.



Manufacturing is a crucial component of the U.S. economy, employing 12.8 million people and representing approximately 11% of the nation's GDP. In 2016, 75% of the nearly 250,000 manufacturing companies in the U.S. employed fewer than 20 people. As these skilled workers approach retirement and the skills gap continues to increase, the manufacturing industry is looking toward technology for automated solutions. "As part of a global economy, small manufacturing businesses face significant challenges regarding logistics and supply chain costs, employee recruitment, finding, and sourcing capital," continued Philibert. "These are very real, yet solvable challenges when we all work together." Philibert cited the importance of organizations like APEX as being part of the solution.

"Manufacturing is a significant and dynamic component of our regional economy. Barko Hydraulics, with their niche position in their industry, is one great example among hundreds of successful manufacturers," said Brian Hanson, APEX President and CEO. "Barb reminded us that we must continue to lead with innovation. We can strengthen the APEX region by employing automation, data management, and the power of artificial intelligence within the manufacturing sector."

Data from Microsoft suggests that although automation will replace 73 million jobs by 2022, over 130 million new jobs will be created and need to be filled in their place. Philibert encouraged investor-members to embrace the digital transformation because finding innovative ways to incorporate automated solutions into the supply chain will ensure the manufacturing industry can weather predicted challenges and continue to grow.

At the Annual Meeting, the APEX Board of Directors also elected the 2020 Executive Committee members.

#### **APEX 2020 Executive Committee Officers and At-Large Members**

Chair: Steve Burgess, National Bank of Commerce

Vice Chair: Lisa Bodine, Giant Voices

Immediate Past Chair: Brian Thun, maurices

Secretary: Brad Beard, Essentia Health

Treasurer: Kevin Nokels, St. Luke's

At-Large: Chancellor Lendley Black, University of Minnesota Duluth

At-Large: Deb DeLuca, Duluth Seaway Port Authority

At-Large: Craig Fellman, The JAMAR Company

At-Large: Frank Frederickson, Minnesota Power, an ALLETE Company

At-Large: Lorraine Little, Enbridge Energy Company, Inc.



To learn more about the APEX Executive Committee members, visit [www.APEXgetsbusiness.com](http://www.APEXgetsbusiness.com).

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### **About APEX**

APEX is a private sector-led business development engine established to promote sustainable growth in the APEX region. APEX investor-members represent many of the largest and most influential organizations in the region with a vested interest in business attraction, expansion, and retention.

APEX business and economic development efforts focus on areas including aviation, technology, manufacturing, professional services, and next generation forest products. Since 2003, the organization has impacted over 4,350 jobs in the region, resulting in a regional payroll of over \$178 million, and contributing to over \$24.6 million annually in state and local taxes.

For more information, visit [www.APEXgetsbusiness.com](http://www.APEXgetsbusiness.com).