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Owens Corning Foundation Commits \$1M to Workforce Development in Toledo with Neighborhood Industries & Bitwise Industries

California-based Neighborhood Industries will partner with workforce development leader Bitwise Industries to support the emerging tech innovation center in Downtown Toledo

TOLEDO, Ohio -- Neighborhood Industries, in partnership with workforce development leader, Bitwise Industries, has received a \$1 million commitment from the Owens Corning Foundation to remove barriers preventing individuals from pursuing a technology career. Recently, Bitwise Industries and ProMedica announced they would be renovating the former Jefferson Center into a business incubator for technology and non-technology businesses to create new opportunities for the region. These funds will further contribute to these goals.

"Neighborhood Industries is a respected Central California non-profit that is putting its energies into enhancing the incredible transformation taking place in our hometown," said Owens Corning Foundation President Don Rettig. "Our commitment will help supply computers and other tools that will be used by individuals in our community to prepare for jobs in the digital economy. We are excited about the vision for Downtown Toledo, which includes corporate, public and nonprofit leaders from across the country coming together for the benefit of our city."

Renovations at the former Jefferson Center are expected to begin in late 2021, and occupancy will start in early 2023. As the new innovation center prepares to open its doors, Neighborhood Industries, Bitwise Industries and the Owens Corning Foundation will help equip individuals in the community who are traditionally excluded from the technology industry for high-growth, high-wage tech sector jobs.

"Neighborhood Industries' mission is to reveal the value in people, so they can be a positive contributor in their homes and neighborhoods," said Anthony "AP" Armour, Executive Director, Neighborhood Industries. "By cultivating the skills needed to effectively and successfully navigate the modern workforce, Neighborhood Industries and the Owens Corning Foundation hope to help people achieve self-sufficiency. We are excited to help disadvantaged members of the community find pathways that will lead to permanent employment, either in the technology industry or in a job that leverages their new skills to improve their socio-economic status."

"I am the daughter of field workers from one of the poorest areas of California," said Irma L. Olguin Jr., CEO and co-founder, Bitwise Industries. "Through a fortunate series of events, I found myself at the University of Toledo graduating with a degree in Computer Science and working in the tech industry with professional possibilities I never could have dreamed of as a child.. This country is filled with stories similar to mine – people from underserved communities, who never thought these kinds of opportunities would be accessible to them. Together, Bitwise, Neighborhood Industries and the Owens Corning Foundation are working to make what was serendipity in my life far more common for the people of Toledo. By connecting people to the skills they need to enter the technology industry, and by surrounding them with a vibrant and inclusive space, we will lift up the entire region."



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About Neighborhood Industries:

"Founded in 2008 in Fresno, California, Neighborhood Industries exists to reveal value in people so they can be positive contributors in their homes and neighborhoods. Neighborhood carries out this work at its social enterprises, creating employment training and job opportunities for people facing barriers to employment. Over the course of its 13 years of operation, Neighborhood has established itself as a local and regional leader in workforce development, social enterprise, and neighborhood enrichment, one equitable transaction at a time."

About Owens Corning Foundation:

The Owens Corning Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that was established in 1978 to enhance lives through charitable contributions. The foundation supports Owens Corning's stakeholder communities throughout the U.S. and across the globe through strategic partnerships. Additionally, the foundation engages employees through multiple programs designed to encourage volunteerism and giving.

About Bitwise Industries:

Bitwise Industries creates a bridge between humans from marginalized communities and stories of systemic poverty to skills and resources necessary to access opportunities in the tech industry. By leveraging public-private partnerships, Bitwise provides paid apprenticeships to students to learn tech skills, connects them to meaningful tech opportunities, and builds vibrant buildings in underestimated cities to house their work. By upskilling disenfranchised humans, it empowers them to change their own lives—which ignites and transforms the regional economies of the cities in which Bitwise serves.

Bitwise has raised more than \$100M in support of this important work; expanded its model to serve five cities (Fresno, Bakersfield, Merced, Oakland, and Toledo); and built a tech apprenticeship engine that will drive national jobs/economic recovery in 2021. To learn more about Bitwise Industries, check out www.bitwiseindustries.com.