

Tyler4Tech consortium heads to SXSW trade show

By Emily Guevara

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Tyler business officials will court the technology community during the upcoming South by Southwest trade show in Austin.

The show is one part of South by Southwest, or SXSW, an annual interactive conference, film and music festival that is expected to draw tens of thousands of people to the state's capital over a 10-day period starting Friday.

Tyler4Tech, a consortium launched last year, is sending about 20 representatives to the show to set up shop and show technology companies, entrepreneurs and skilled tech workers that Tyler is "open for business."

"Tyler is pretty much the best kept secret," said Tommy Martin, president and CEO of Tyler Vault.

People think of the city more for its medical community and roses. But, he said, it has a lot to offer the technology community.

The group and their 400-square-foot booth will tout the city's infrastructure, financial incentives, attorneys skilled in patent litigation, and lifestyle, in their effort to attract new businesses and employees to the area.

Martin said there is a core group of technology people in Tyler who are working to improve the number of technology businesses in the community.

Their goal is to create jobs, and bringing technology companies to Tyler is one way to do that.

In the same way that Silicon Valley in California is a close-knit community so is Tyler, he said.

"We're a great incubator for creating those businesses," he said.

Mike Weiss, president and CEO of PersonalWeb, moved to Tyler from California to start his business and immediately became connected with the tech community.

He said the Tyler area participants are really excited to tell their story to those at the trade show who will listen.

Phil Burks, CEO of Tyler-based Genesis, said this event will provide exposure for Tyler as a technology hub.

"We're poster children for why technology companies should be in Tyler," he said of himself and several other company CEOs.

Beth Womack, senior account manager at ABS Telecom, said Tyler is well positioned to bring technology companies here and the city has many people here who are ready to assist as needed.

"I've never seen a bunch of people more willing to help," she said. "I think it's the right place, the right time to do this."

Tyler4Tech comprises about 50 people from the city's civic, education and private enterprise companies and organizations.