



Todd Battle selected Distinguished Alumni

by Nicole Hamner-Weiss, Cadillac News 05/31/2012)

When Todd Battle, Reed City High School Class of 1994 graduate returns to his former home town Friday to address the Class of 2012 at commencement, he will have a number of familiar faces listening to his speech.

Battle, who has been selected this year's Distinguished Alumni, has a long list of accolades and awards under his belt.

And while honored to have been selected, the thing Battle is most looking forward to is speaking to the class of graduating seniors — and one graduate in particular.

Battle's niece, Jordyn Mason is among those graduating this year.

It is for that reason that the busy executive will be coming to town to receive his award in person, and address the class.

"It will be a neat opportunity to come home, celebrate my niece's graduation, and participate in the event with the class of 2012," said Battle.

The former Coyote has made the most of his time since it was his turn to walk the stage and get his high school diploma.

After graduation, the class Salutatorian, athlete and member of the National Honor Society went on to earn a Bachelor of Science in Political Sciences from Central Michigan University, graduating summa cum laude.

Battle then began a successful career as an economic development executive and business retention specialist in various locales in Michigan, before accepting taking the reigns as president of the Kenosha, WI Area Business Alliance.

The organization is responsible for the Kenosha County business growth with a population of around 153,000 people, handling millions of dollars of business and investment to grow the area.

A recipient of numerous awards for his efforts, in 2011 Battle was chosen for the prestigious Wisconsin "Top 40 Business Professionals under 40" recognition.

The Reed City native said he is still working on remarks for his speech to the class, but that he is looking forward to sharing the evening graduation, scheduled for Friday, June 1 at 7 p.m.

Todd Battle | President | Kenosha Area Business Alliance

Written by Mike Dries, The Business Journal of Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Todd Battle has spent his entire professional life in the economic development field, and for every day of those nearly 14 years, he's known that he would never be promoted. The reason has nothing to do with drive or talent, each of which he clearly possesses. The explanation, in fact, is quite simple.

"I've never been anything other than the top guy," Battle points out.

For the last eight years, he's served as president of the Kenosha Area Business Alliance (KABA), Kenosha County's economic development organization. After earning a degree in political science from Central Michigan University, he was hired to start an economic development group in Iron Mountain, Mich. Two years later, he became president and chief executive officer of Muskegon Area First, Muskegon, Mich.'s economic development organization. He served in that capacity for four years before accepting KABA's top job.

"It wasn't like I started out to be an economic development professional," he says. "But I took the job (in Iron Mountain) and never looked back."

His constituents today are glad he didn't.

"Todd has all the skills you need to succeed in economic development. He's a dynamic strategist and he's a good problem solver. He listens to people, weighs the options and comes up with the most workable solutions," says Jerry Franke, a member of the KABA board of directors and president of Wispark LLC, a Milwaukee-based real estate development firm.

Economic development requires a broad range of skills, Battle says. It's what excites him about the work.

"I really like the diversity of the job. One day I'm a cheerleader and the next day I'm a coach, developer or financier," Battle says. "The thing I bring to the table is the fact that I'm fluid in a lot of the languages associated with economic development — government, finance, work force and others. That's my competitive advantage."

Battle's linguistic skills have served him and Kenosha County well. Under Battle's leadership, the alliance has brought hundreds of jobs to an area that has had its share of economic challenges.

Thus far, the "crown jewel" of his administration has been the recruitment of Uline Inc., Battle says.

In 2010, the global shipping supply giant completed construction of a 240,000-square-foot headquarters building and a 1 million-square-foot distribution facility in Pleasant Prairie, bringing more than 800 full-time jobs to the community.

"Kenosha has a great story to tell," Battle says. "I'm excited to have the opportunity to tell it."