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The advertisement features the Mazda logo and the text "5 to DRIVE SALES EVENT" on the left. In the center, it reads "FIVE GREAT MAZDAS. ONE GREAT EVENT." On the right, it says "Hurry in by March 31st" and "See them all at MazdaUSA.com" with a "GO" button.

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How Toledo can compete and succeed in a global economy

By **MARC LAUTENBACH**

I suppose I was like most kids growing up in Toledo in the 1970s. I was more focused on participating in sports and doing my schoolwork - probably in that order - than on the business environment. But my memories of childhood in Toledo all include the backdrop of a vibrant economy.

My father worked for Owens Corning. There were several other major companies such as Jeep and Owens-Illinois that were driving the economic engine of northwestern Ohio as well. In many ways, Toledo represented all that was good about the Midwest - solid values coupled with hardworking families.

Back then, Japan was the emerging industrial powerhouse. Today, it is India and China. The United States has been the world's pre-eminent economic force. But as the economy becomes truly global, our kids will need to know how to compete effectively on a global stage.

The global economy has provided many benefits to our country. Economists estimate that free trade has generated more than \$1 trillion to our economy, and one in five jobs today are dependant on trade.

However, there are also costs to free trade - costs with a human dimension. The people of Toledo know this all too well. It is evident to Ohioans that the forces of the global economy will not be turned back without considerable cost. So, the question becomes what must we do to ensure that the benefits of a global economy flow to our companies, our communities, and our citizens?

Toledo has learned that it is on the basis of expertise that one competes and wins in a globally integrated economy. You have to have unique skills and better ideas. And in a world that's been rendered smaller and flatter by advances in technology, you have to keep adapting, reinventing, and transforming. You have to keep innovating.

Toledo is doing just that. Drawing on the city's glassmaking expertise, several startups here are finding new ways to create solar panels. Others are using Toledo's fiber-glass competencies to build new types of windmill blades. Toledo also is becoming a center for health-care services. Toledo needs more of this kind of innovative and forward thinking. Going backward is not an option.

According to a recent study, about half of Americans say they want to close domestic markets in response to global pressures. This is shortsighted. Free trade, the Internet, and emerging markets are not going away. So the discussion should not be about how to protect U.S. workers from global competition but how to give them the training and tools they need to compete and win.

We have that discussion every day at IBM, and we are helping companies innovate. For example, we provide systems for the Ohio Supercomputer Center's Blue Collar computing program, which offers supercomputing time to small

companies and others looking to develop new products, compete on a global level, and attract talent.

That is how you build confidence. I see that type of confidence when I visit Toledo today, just as I recall it from earlier days.

The city has skilled, hardworking people. Its government is committed to economic development. Private organizations, like the Regional Growth Partnership, are helping companies succeed and innovate.

I am convinced that this confidence, together with innovative business ideas and a uniquely American entrepreneurial spirit, will spark a renaissance in Toledo that the rest of the country can emulate.

Marc Lautenbach is the general manager of IBM Americas. A Toledo native and a 1979 graduate of St. John's High School, he is scheduled to speak today at a Toledo Regional Growth Partnership event, "Innovation: Capturing Global Opportunity and Building Regional Growth."
