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FEB/MAR 2018

Northwest Indiana Business Magazine

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Entrepreneurial Excellence

Salute to Small Business Leaders Making an Impact

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Korellis Roofing, Inc.
Small Business Person of the Year*

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*Mike Sur (on left) with Brian Rusin,
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Continues to Grow

Northwest Indiana Business Magazine

FEB/MAR 2018

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Publisher/Executive Editor
TROY LINKER

Managing Editor
LOURDES CASTELLANOS

Director, Advertising Sales
TAMMIE REYNOLDS

Contributing Writers
LESLEY BAILEY • JOHN CAIN
LOURDES CASTELLANOS
JERRY DAVICH • BLAIR MILO
BOB MOULESONG • MICHAEL PUENTE
BEN SMITH • JACK WALTON
LAURIE WINK

Editorial Advisory Committee
TOM CARROLL • ERIKA DAHL
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EVELYN MORRISON
MARY JO ORLOWSKI • MICHELLE SEARER
ANDREA K. SHERWIN • MARY WELLNITZ
LAURIE WINK • LINDA WOLOSHANSKY

Photography
JOSHUA ALBANESE

New Media
JANICE L. DIXON-FITZWATER

e-mail: businessnews@nwibq.com
web: www.nwindianabusiness.com
visit us at facebook.com/nwibq

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Lifelong Learners



Troy Linker

Prosper from today's increased speed of change

Long gone are the days when one could learn a profession in their twenties and expect to apply it relatively unchanged for the rest of their work life. Some may lament the good old days when the speed of change was slower, but few think it will or should slow down.

Workers today realize they must continually learn new processes and techniques or be left behind. Successful businesses know they must innovate and improve to compete, and increasingly they recognize that identifying and nurturing lifelong learners in their workforce is as essential to their success as innovation or process improvements. One way or another each article in this issue reinforces the need for lifelong learning.

I try to learn something from every article we publish, but I especially love our articles on the NW-ISBDC's E-day Awards. The 2017 class of E-day entrepreneurs represents a variety of industries reminding us that innovation and entrepreneurship are alive and thriving in our region. Well done and congratulations to the honorees!

Everyone wants an excellent education for our children, and we recognize that well-educated citizens contribute to a prosperous and safe community, which is why we commit public resources to fund education. Bob Moulesong takes us along as he looks at how some of these resources are invested locally in new school construction. He talks with local school leaders and builders who are building or remodeling local schools to meet the needs of today's students.

Business meetings and events are valuable tools for networking with

the community, communicating with customers, and educating and energizing our internal team. Yet, the thought of spending the whole day inside a meeting room or ballroom can make one wish for a trip to the dentist instead. Lesly Bailey suggests meeting planners consider livening things up by holding their next meeting or event at an orchard, lake, farm, prairie, or zoo...oh my!

Traveling around the region, have you noticed an old building coming down or some activity on a vacant piece of land and wondered what is happening? Months go by with little visible action and then suddenly the work gets underway. Jerry Davich takes us behind the scenes of construction projects and introduces us to local engineering firms whose work often goes unnoticed, but who are essential for a successful construction project.

Also in this issue, we meet Mark Fisher, President of Michigan City's Dwyer Instruments. Ron Howard shares *Lessons in the Game of Life*. We learn about a group of volunteers making a difference every day by advocating for children in need. Blair Milo (former Mayor of La Porte) talks about her new position as Secretary of Career Connections and Talent and shares the state's plans to help workers and businesses build the workforce needed for tomorrow's jobs.

Finally, it is time again for you, our readers, to pick the "Best of" local business. Please visit NWIndianaBusiness.com/Bestof to cast your vote for the best businesses in our region. Voting ends Friday, February 23rd. Don't miss your chance to promote our local businesses.

—Troy Linker

AROUND THE REGION

Stay current with local people, news and events

LOURDES CASTELLANOS

BANKING

Centier Bank announced that long-time Senior Partner **Bob Buhle** will retire after a 30-year career serving the family-owned bank based in Merrillville. Buhle leaves a professional legacy as an innovative leader and guiding the bank through a period of “immense technological change” in the banking sector, ultimately leading to rapid growth for Centier.

Horizon Bank announced **James D. Neff** as the president of both Horizon and Horizon Bank effective January 1st, 2018. Neff has worked in banking for 39 years and has been with Horizon since 1999. “Mr. Neff has been an integral part of Horizon’s executive management team since 1999 and a major contributor to Horizon’s success,” said Craig M. Dwight, Horizon Bank chairman and CEO.

BUSINESS

Staci Kroon recently became

president and chief executive officer with **BraunAbility**, a world leader in wheelchair vans, wheelchair SUVs & wheelchair lifts based in Winamac. Former CEO and President, Nick Gutwein retired at the end 2017. Kroon also served as executive president of Eaton Business Systems, a division of global manufacturer Eaton Corp. PLC. Ms. Kroon has held numerous business, manufacturing and plant management positions. Her experience includes General Manager of the Heavy Duty Transmissions business in North America, Director of Business Development, Business Unit Manager and Manufacturing Operations Manager for Eaton’s automotive business.

The Greater La Porte Chamber of Commerce has announced **Todd McWhirter** as its new director of membership and finance. With over 19 years of experience in finance, McWhirter will work to grow and retain chamber membership in addition to various financial responsibilities in

his new role. McWhirter has previously worked with Charles Schwab & Co., the Biltmore Family Office, LLC and Harbour Trust & Investment Management Company. He’s also held positions in financial planning, investment advice and team management. During his previous roles with the chamber, McWhirter served on the retention and expansion committee and organized a chamber luncheon that recognized renowned La Porte baseball player Ron Reed.

CONSTRUCTION

RQAW Corp. added **Trent Montemayor** as a project manager in the firm’s water-resources department. Montemayor is a board-certified environmental engineer and has worked in wastewater collection, treatment-center design and construction projects throughout Indiana and Michigan. Montemayor developed the 20-year master plan for Hobart’s southern corridor and presented the plan at the 2014 Indiana Water Environment



BANKING
Bob Buhle



BANKING
James Neff



BUSINESS
Staci Kroon



BUSINESS
Todd McWhirter

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WHEN YOU RUN
A BUSINESS.

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COMMUNICATIONS
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CONSTRUCTION
Trent Montemayor

Association Annual Conference in Indianapolis. Montemayor is a member of the Water Environment Federation and the Indiana Water Environment Association.

Matt Simoncini is retiring from his role as chief executive officer with **Lear Corp.**, a major automotive supplier in Hammond. For more than 100 years, Lear has made automotive parts, including seats, for over 400 vehicle nameplates and is one of Hammond's largest employers. Simoncini has



CONSTRUCTION
Matt Simoncini

served as CEO, president and as a director of Lear since 2011 and will stay on until the end of February to train his successor, Ray Scott.

EDUCATION

On Nov. 17, **Veronica Tobon**, assistant principal at Valparaiso High School, was named by the **Indiana Association of School Principals (IASP)** as the 2017 District Assistant Principal of the Year for Jasper, Lake, Newton and Porter counties.



EDUCATION
Veronica Tobon

Tobon was elected District Assistant Principal of the Year by her peers. Each of the 12 districts in Indiana honor an assistant principal each year. One of the 12 winners will be elected as the State Assistant Principal of the Year at the annual luncheon.

Ivy Tech Community College has announced three top administrators for its two campuses in NWI. **Lora Plank** was named vice chancellor of academic affairs by Valparaiso campus chancellor Aco Sikoski. Plank has



EDUCATION
Lora Plank



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EDUCATION
Robert Jeffs

been with Ivy Tech for nearly 25 years and has also served as dean of health sciences, interim dean of nursing, adjunct faculty member, and surgical technology program chairperson. Peter Linden, chancellor of the Michigan City campus, announced **Robert Jeffs** will serve as vice chancellor of academic affairs and **Arelia Bradley** as vice chancellor for enrollment services and student success. From 1987 to 1995, Robert Jeffs served as executive dean of the Valparaiso, Gary and former



EDUCATION
Arelia Bradley

Hammond campuses of Ivy Tech. He was responsible for opening the East Chicago location before becoming chancellor of the Muncie region in 1995. Prior to her new role, Arelia Bradley served as associate admissions director for Ivy Tech in Michigan City. She also worked for Southern Illinois University and Everest College for 10 years as an academic adviser and admissions manager.

Bishop Noll Institute has promoted **Jessica Omelanczuk** to dean of



EDUCATION
Jessica Omelanczuk

students from her previous Spanish teaching position in the school. BNI Principal Lorenza Jara Pastrick says the role of principal has changed over the years and believes Omelanczuk's new position better suits the instructional needs of Bishop Noll's administration. Omelanczuk earned her bachelor of arts degree in Spanish and her bachelor of science degree in psychology from Loyola University in Chicago. She also has a master's degree in education. Ms. Omelanczuk is the

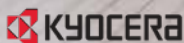


GOVERNMENT
Jim Cline

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GOVERNMENT
Marla Spann

sponsor for the Multicultural Club and Spanish National Honor Society.

GOVERNMENT

After more than 25 years of service with the Porter County Public Library System,

Jim Cline has retired from his position as director. Cline served as director for 10 years.

The **East Chicago Public Library** hired **Marla Spann** as its new director to oversee both the main library on Columbus Drive as well as the Robert A. Pastrick Branch on Chicago Avenue. Spann graduated from East Chicago Roosevelt High School in 1985 and has a master's degree in library science.

The Midwest Urban Strategies Consortium has announced **Linda Woloshansky** will serve as treasurer of the groundbreaking partnership of 13 Workforce Development Boards that formed Revitalize Midwest Economy. Woloshansky also serves as president and chief executive officer of the Center of Workforce Innovations. The Northwest Indiana



GOVERNMENT
Linda Woloshansky

Workforce board is part of the consortium. Participation in the Midwest Consortium, will benefit job seekers in our urban communities such as Gary, Hammond, East Chicago and Michigan City.

The City of Valparaiso has named **Nate McGinley** as the director of Valparaiso's public works. McGinley will replace Matt Evans, who resigned for a position in the private sector. In a press release, Mayor Jon Costas stated, "Nate's management experience and positive work ethic make him a great fit for our leadership team." McGinley has worked for the city for over 10 years, most recently serving as project manager for the engineering department.

Jesse Harper, born and raised in Valparaiso, has announced his intention to seek the Democratic nomination this year for Center Township trustee. Over the years, Harper has lived in Los Angeles and New York City, working in acting and production, and now owns a media company and commercial production business in



GOVERNMENT
Jesse Harper



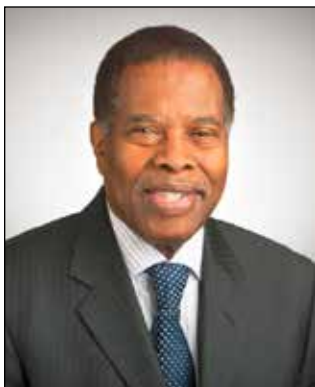
HEALTHCARE
Matthew Burden

NWI. He recently graduated from Valparaiso University School of Law and has expressed his desire to help those most in need in the township.

John Parsons, vice president at the **Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District** has announced his retirement after 25 years of service to the South Shore Line. After running the railroad office for the Indiana Department of Transportation, Parsons began his work for NICTD in 1992. Parsons' career spans four decades in transportation management, including his role as vice president of planning and marketing.

HEALTHCARE

Porter-Starke Services has named **Matthew J. Burden** the new president/CEO. Burden will replace current President/CEO Rocco Schiralli, who will remain with Porter-Starke as chief strategy officer, taking a leadership role in strategic planning. Burden served as executive director/CEO at Swanson Center since 2009. His



HEALTHCARE
Dr Douge Barthelemy



HEALTHCARE
Steve Lunn



LEGAL
Arthur Johnson II



LEGAL
Joe Svetanoff

psychology background includes cognitive neuroscience research related to public health. Burden also serves on the board for the Indiana Council of Community Mental Health Centers.

Dr. Douge Barthelemy will be transitioning to another health care center after more than forty years as a pediatrician with the **Maternal Child Health Care Clinic** in downtown Gary. Due to a loss of state funding, the clinic closed at the end of 2017. Barthelemy will see patients at Marram Health Center in the city's Glen Park neighborhood.

Steve Lunn is resigning as CEO of **Porter Healthcare System** for a position as regional vice president for American Physician Partners in Nashville. Lunn said in a statement that the decision was a difficult one. "I know this is the right decision for me and my family to relocate closer to family in the South and explore this new opportunity," Lunn stated. Since his arrival at Porter Healthcare in March 2014, Lunn has worked to broaden programs and improve services. Lunn also served on the board of the Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce and the Porter County Community Foundation.

LEGAL

Johnson Ivancevich LLP of Merrillville has promoted **Arthur Johnson II** to managing partner. Johnson's responsibilities include client caseload and overseeing day-to-day business operations. Johnson specializes in civil and business litigation, as well as labor, employment and construction litigation. Johnson was nominated and selected as legal counsel for the Northwest Indiana Business Roundtable, an association comprised of business leaders from around the region. In 2010, Johnson was nominated and selected by Indiana Lawyer as one of Indiana's fifteen Up and Coming Lawyers in Indiana.

The Merrillville Town Council unanimously selected attorney **Joe Svetanoff** to provide legal services and representation to multiple panels within the municipality in 2018. According to Councilman Shawn Pettit,

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NON-PROFIT
Shannon Burhans

Svetanoff will represent the Town Council, Redevelopment Commission, Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals. Previously, both attorney **John Bushemi** and attorney **Bill Touchette** represented the various panels, but both have recently resigned from their positions. The Merrillville Town Council also reappointed **Pete Guip** to serve on the police commission and selected **Barbara Ghoston** to continue serving on the stormwater management board.

NON-PROFIT

Shannon Burhans of Portage has been named the **Portage Township YMCA's** new president and chief executive officer. Her predecessor, **Amber Alexander**, resigned in August 2017 to take a position with a YMCA in Arizona. Burhans, formerly a YMCA board member and vice chairperson, volunteered to help manage the daily operations under interim CEO Larry Hemdal from August until she was named the new CEO.

Munster's **Theatre at the Center** has announced Six new community members have volunteered to join the board of directors: **Regina Biddings-Muro**, **Pat Binkley**, **Katie Fesko**, **Mike Palmer**, **Dave Shafer** and **Ginger Watts**. The 18-member board oversees the 310-seat theater for The Center for Visual and Performing Arts, NWI's only professional theatre.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Richard Allen, a 23-year Gary police veteran, was sworn in as the new chief of police with **Gary's Police Department** in January. Former



PUBLIC SAFETY
Capt. Mike Kellems

chief Larry McKinley stepped down from the position but will stay on with the department. Allen is a lifelong resident of Gary and graduated from Roosevelt High in 1983. He joined the Gary Police Department after serving in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1983 to 1987. Allen has served in various areas of the department, including patrol, community policing, crime scene investigations, internal affairs division, and served as commander of the supportive services division. He announced Brian Evans, Special Operations Commander, will serve as his deputy chief.

Lake County Sheriff Oscar Martinez Jr. was given permission by the Lake County Council to fulfill a position within the **Lake County Sheriff's Department**. The position was left vacant after the departure of Mark Back, the sheriff's spokesman under former Sheriff John Buncich. Martinez hired **Emiliano Perez Jr.**, an East Chicago city councilman and career firefighter, as the department's new director of public relations and health care administration for the county jail.

Capt. Mike Kellems, known as the face of the **La Porte County Sheriff's Office**, is retiring after 31 years. Kellems has taken a position as Manager of Safety and Security for the **Duneland School Corporation in Chesterton**. While serving the La Porte County Sheriff's Office, Kellems served as a jail deputy, patrol deputy, DARE Instructor, School Resource Officer, Detective, patrol supervisor and was a former commander of the Warrants Division. He graduated in 1983 from the Howe Military Academy and in 1989 from the Indiana Law



PUBLIC SAFETY
Emiliano Perez Jr



TOURISM
Kailey Davenport

Enforcement Academy's 98th session. He also has a degree in Criminal Justice from Vincennes University.

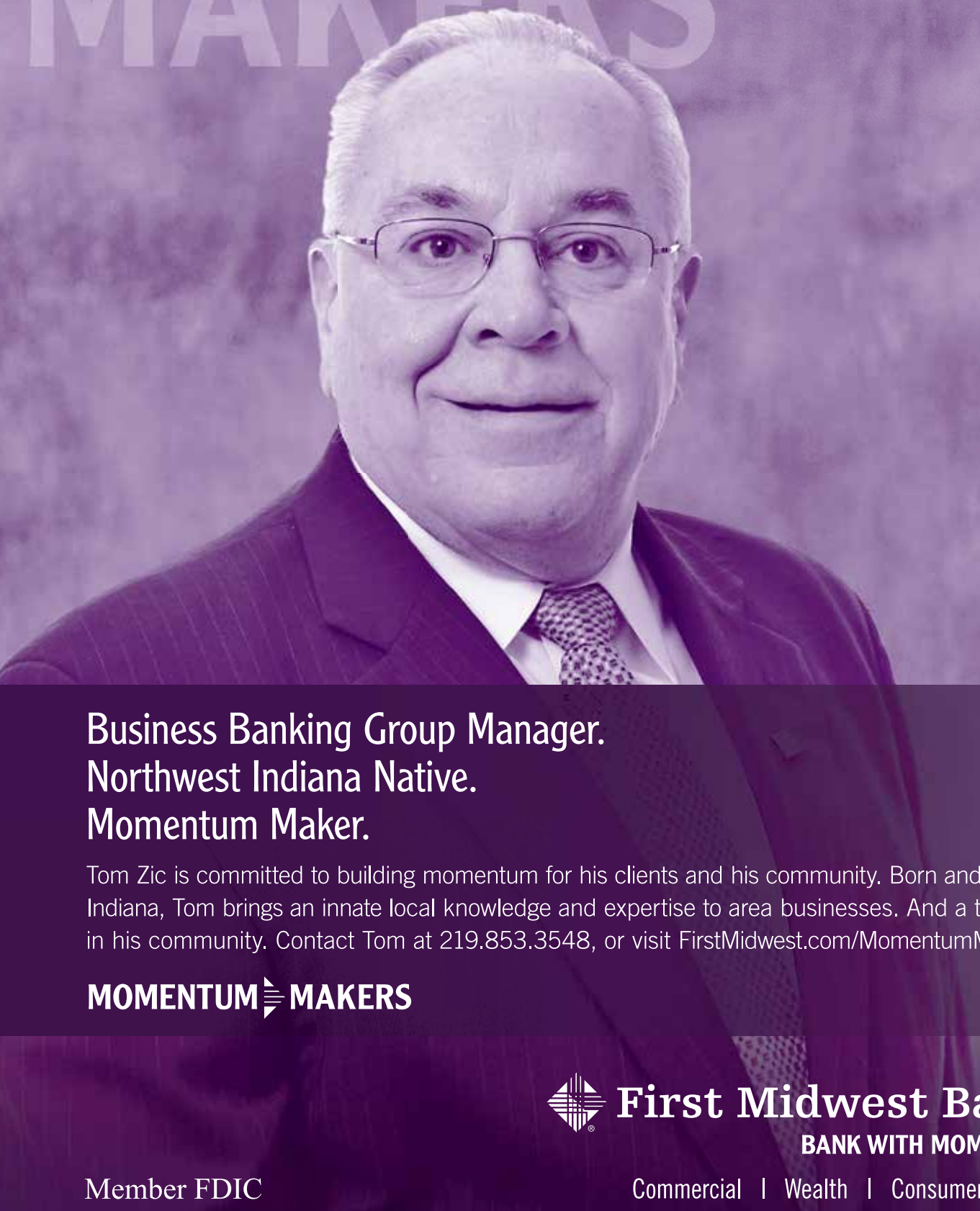
REAL ESTATE

Several new officers have been elected to the **Greater Northwest Indiana Association of Realtors** to take office January 1, 2018. **Saba Mohammed** of Envision Real Estate Services in Merrillville will serve as 2018 GNIAR president. **BruceAnn Singleton** of McColly Real Estate in Valparaiso will be the president-elect, and **Craig Frendling** of Berkshire Hathaway Executive Realty in Schererville was elected treasurer. Members of the Board of Directors will be: **Suzanne Tucker**, Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, Valparaiso; **Christopher Deutscher**, Christopher Michael Properties, Michigan City; **Valerie Rosenblum**, McColly Real Estate, Valparaiso; **Judith Rooney-Davis**, Century 21 Affiliated, Portage; and **Barb Morgin**, Morgin Realty, DeMotte.

TOURISM

Brooke Allen, community engagement director for **Indiana Dunes Tourism**, is resigning from her position at the end of January 2018. Allen oversaw the organization's social media, executed graphic design projects and managed business partnerships and group businesses. Allen has a bachelor's degree in English from Purdue University and was an English and journalism high school teacher for East Porter County Schools. **Kailey Davenport** will take over as community engagement coordinator for IDT.

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E-Day Entrepreneurial Excellence Awards

Salute to small business leaders making an impact



Photographer Norman Turner

The E-Day Class of 2017. The Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center (NW-ISBDC) works with a steering committee to coordinate the nomination and selection process. E-Day honorees back row from left, Pete Korellis, Bill Leep, Scott Yaeger, Justine King, Erica Dombey and Rich Monroe. Front row from left: Fred Leep, Sandy Coolman (for husband, Robert Coolman), Kenneth Leep, Donna Hubinger, Seth Spencer and Leslie Monroe.

LAURIE WINK

One of the highlights for the region's business community is the annual celebration of notable entrepreneurs selected to receive Entrepreneurial Excellence Awards. The E-Day Award ceremony shines a spotlight on individuals who

have built a reputation for business prowess and community service.

The E-Day Class of 2017, honored at a November 8 ceremony at Avalon Manor in Merrillville, joined nearly 200 outstanding entrepreneurs who've received this special recognition over the past 25 years.

The Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center (NW-ISBDC) works with a steering committee to coordinate the nomination and selection process. Lorri Feldt, NW-ISBDC regional director, says E-Day showcases those who exemplify the entrepreneurial spirit.



Seth Spencer, E-Day's Young Entrepreneur of the Year, launched SERA Solutions three years ago at the age of 18. The Michigan City based company specializes in website development and branding, and data analytics services for businesses of all sizes.

Northwest Indiana Business is pleased to join the NW-ISBDC in saluting the 2017 E-Day Award winners.

RICH and LESLIE MONROE **Monroe's Crossing, Inc.** **Emerging Business of the Year**

Leslie and Rich Monroe started Monroe's Crossing on Hudson Lake in New Carlisle five years ago. The business—featuring a lakeside restaurant, bar and banquet center—is a popular spot in a steadily growing rural area.

The couple has infused new life into an 8,000-square-foot former ballroom built in 1914. A previous owner renovated in 1998, and the Lakeside RV Resort sprung up next door.

"New Carlisle used to be a lot of week-enders and retirees from the Chicago area, but now we're seeing more full-time residents," says Rich Monroe.

Rich says the key to success is consistently offering good food, good service and regular hours. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner are served seven

days a week. Some of Leslie's home-made specials are found on the menu, along with a variety of local craft beers, pizza, a Friday fish fry and live music.

Leslie enjoys creating customized menus for special events. "We're affordable," she says. "We work within people's budgets. We try to accommodate everyone's wallet."

The Monroes were nominated for the award by Steve Varela, an assistant professor at Calumet College of Saint Joseph. "The operation gives a renewed sense of energy at the lake and an opportunity for year-round employment for locals," Varela says.

SETH SPENCER **SERA Solutions** **Young Entrepreneur of the Year**

Seth Spencer was an entrepreneur before he knew what the word meant. In his early teens, Spencer started an online computer gaming company. Three years ago, the 18-year old launched SERA Solutions, while

pursuing a business management degree at Purdue University Northwest.

His Michigan City based company specializes in website development and branding and data analytics services for businesses of all sizes. The company has three full-time employees and students from area universities are hired as interns. The students gain practical job experience, and Spencer says he learns as much as they do.

Being a mentor and entrepreneur go hand in hand for Spencer. He works with fourth graders weekly in the classroom of Marty Briggs, a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) teacher at Crichfield Elementary School in La Porte, Spencer's former elementary school.

"Having me going in and saying, 'I sat at the same desk,' is very motivating to them," Spencer says. "I can go into the classroom and change the mentality, (showing them) learning is actually cool. Knowledge is really power."

Spencer sees the same desire to



Scott Yaeger, President and CEO of FAST International, Inc. and E-Day's Small Business Exporter of the Year, services customers in Asia, Australia, North America, Central America, South America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The innovative company markets ultra-filtration electrocoat paint products that inhibit corrosion in automobiles, farm equipment, appliances and a host of other consumer goods.

give back in his SCORE (Counselors to America's Small Business) mentors, including Jim Hubbard, who nominated him for the E-Day Award.

"He started on his own, made his own mistakes, was smart enough to know what he didn't know and sought help," Hubbard says. "Through diligence and hard work, he was able to build a strong marketing services company that has grown quickly over the years based on delivering a level of service few companies do."

SCOTT YAEGER FAST International, Inc. Small Business Exporter of the Year

Filtration and Separation Technology International (FAST), Inc. is an innovative company that markets ultra-filtration electrocoat paint products that inhibit corrosion in automobiles, farm equipment, appliances and a host of other consumer goods. Customers are in Asia, Australia,

North America, Central America, South America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

FAST handles marketing, sales, customer and technical services as well as worldwide distribution from its La Porte facility, a 7,000-square-foot warehouse and distribution center with an on-site lab. President and CEO Scott Yaeger started FAST as a filtration consulting company in 2004. Five years later, he became the exclusive distributor of Parker Hannifin's Electrocoat Paint Ultrafiltration Elements, made in California.

Recently, FAST developed a patented filter that can recycle and reuse industrial wastewater from the electropainting process. In a recent innovation/entrepreneurial competition in China, the company's unique filtration system earned third place in a field of 15 competitors in the renewable energy/green technology category. The company's innovative

wastewater treatment process is being tested at General Motors and Nissan plants. According to auto industry estimates, plants could save millions of gallons of water a year and could lower wastewater treatment costs by 40 percent.

NW-ISBDC's regional director Feldt says FAST International epitomizes the kind of company the E-Day awards are meant to highlight. She says "Scott and his team sell to top auto manufacturers across the globe and are part of a green and sustainable solution for water used in their manufacturing processes."

JUSTINE KING Bilingual Speech Solutions, LLC Women-Owned Business of the Year

Justine King saw a business opportunity while working in her first post-college job. She had earned bachelor's and master's degrees in communication sciences and



Owner of Bilingual Speech Solutions, LLC, Justine King services local school districts providing speech therapy for children whose first language is not English. King says the company offers an array of language services, "We get calls all the time for other languages; just this week, we got calls about working with Vietnamese, Macedonian, and Thai."



President and executive director of the Regional Development Company, Erica Dombey, receives the Garry Bradley Small Business Advocate of the Year Award from Lorri L. Feldt, Regional Director, Northwest ISBDC.

disorders, with a second undergraduate major in Spanish. After graduation, she was worked to provide bilingual evaluation services for elementary students in heavily Spanish-speaking Cicero, IL. Surrounding school districts began contacting King requesting the same services.

In 2013 she started Bilingual Speech Solutions LLC, based in Crown Point. The company focuses on overcoming language barriers by providing speech therapy services for children whose first language is not English. King has eight full-time staff members who work with native speakers of 20 languages.

"We get calls all the time for other languages," King says. "Just this week, we got calls about working with Vietnamese, Macedonian, and Thai."

King's speech language pathologists are trained to evaluate students to determine whether they have a language disorder or whether their primary problem is learning English.

"It can be a really grey area," King says. "They mimic each other. English problems begin to show up when you get into higher level, more cognitively demanding language skills. That usually shows up by third or fourth grade. The sooner we can get to them, the more effective the interventions are."

King was nominated by Kevin Crose, Peoples Bank assistant vice president in Munster. He says, "Justine's passion for helping young children is undeniable. She's able to fulfill her passion while successfully running her own business."

ERICA DOMBEY
Regional Development Company
Garry Bradley Small Business
Advocate of the Year

Erica Dombey has devoted most of her career to advancing small businesses. As president and executive director of the Regional Development Company, based in Valparaiso, she provides business financing through the federal Small Business Development Administration.

Small businesses are those with under \$15 million in net worth and \$5

million in net profit, Dombey explains, and they represent 98 percent of all U.S. businesses. She calls them "the economic engines of the community."

"The majority of high-paying job creation is coming from small businesses," Dombey says. "A lot of communities will focus on getting an Amazon distribution center or a new Cracker Barrel, but you have to have good paying jobs to attract larger

chain businesses."

Born and raised in Portage, Dombey points to the tremendous expansion of that community as evidence of the region's increasing economic vitality. When she was a child, Dombey says, "The only store on U.S. 30 was Toys"R"Us and there was nothing on Hwy. 6 except cornfields."

Dombey began her career in banking, has chaired the Portage Economic

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Pleasant View Dairy's the Leep Family has been processing and bottling milk since 1932, when Nicholas and Hilda Leep started the business. The company now employs its fourth generation and distributes to schools, hospitals, nursing homes, grocery, and convenience store markets.

Development Corp., is chairperson of the Northwest Indiana Forum, and serves on the board of the Lake County Indiana Economic Alliance.

LEEP FAMILY Pleasant View Dairy Family-Owned Business of the Year

Bill Leep, vice president of the family-owned Pleasant View Dairy in Highland, says they were "very honored" to be nominated and enjoyed seeing the other E-Day Award winners.

The Leep family was nominated by Mary Luptak, executive director of Highland-Griffith Chamber of Commerce, because of their successful track record. "I admire the family's service and generosity to the Chamber and the communities in which they serve," Luptak says.

Pleasant View Dairy has been processing and bottling milk since 1932, when Nicholas and Hilda Leep

started the business. From its founding until the late 1970s, Pleasant View Dairy offered home delivery service. Today, it employs its fourth generation and the company continues to distribute to schools, hospitals, nursing homes, grocery, and convenience store markets. The company has 35 employees and processes some 75,000 gallons of milk each week.

Bill Leep recalls working with the family business since the age of 10, "I'd ride along with the home delivery driver and run half gallons of milk up to the house. Back then, Highland was a little farm community. Local farmers grew and distributed food to customers in the Chicago area," he says. "Highland has grown up around us. We're now on the edge of the downtown area."

Leep continues to be enthusiastic about the dairy business. "The business can be different every day," he

says. "We all work together. It's a team atmosphere."

PETE KORELLIS Korellis Roofing, Inc. Small Business Person of the Year

Pete Korellis is president and CEO of Korellis Roofing, Inc., a company started by his father,



George, in 1960. He's built the thriving company on the family's good reputation, which has led to its impressive roster of commercial and industrial customers.

Pete says as an E-Day Award recipient "It's a great honor, but a reflection of team I have around me that makes the company a success in our industry." He says company vice president Jeff Tharp helped build the business over the last 32 years.

One could say Pete started at the top, working on roofs in middle school through college. He joined Korellis Roofing full-time in 1983, after earning a bachelor's in business management from Indiana University. He worked alongside his father, who he says never pushed him into the business.

Korellis Roofing is known for investing in its 150 employees. The company retrofitted an older building for use as a training center after completing a \$2 million facility expansion. As a union shop,

the company also offers a joint apprenticeship program with the roofers union.

"We train workers at a higher level in half the normal time," says Pete. "It's difficult to find skilled roofers. We need to replace retiring workers plus hire additional workers to expand the business. Once we find them (new workers), we want to bring them on board, mentor them and keep them. It's a career not a job." He added that the roofing business is a pretty secure career, "one thing that hasn't changed is people need roofs. It's a business of need not want."

In January, Pete says Korellis Roofing announced it was selling the company to its employees through an employee stock ownership plan. He says the decision fits the employee-centered business culture. "The success of our business has been based on hiring good people and having them engaged," he says. "This rewards employees

who have helped grow Korellis Roofing into what it is today."

DONNA HUBINGER **Hubinger Landscaping Corp.** **Entrepreneurial Success** **of the Year**

Snow and ice removal is a high priority for Northwest Indiana businesses, and they count on dependable, 24-hour-a-day service. That's just one of the ways the multi-generational Hubinger Landscaping business is meeting customer needs.

Dave and Donna Hubinger started their full-service commercial and residential lawn, garden, and landscaping company in Gary in 1968. Ten years later, the business relocated to a 20-acre site in Crown Point. The garden center was added in 1999.

Dave is retired and Donna is the owner and president, with son David as vice president in charge of the landscaping division. The

Congratulations

DONNA HUBINGER

PRESIDENT OF HUBINGER LANDSCAPING CORPORATION

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ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS AWARD

Since 1968, Donna has worked at raising her family and making sure the Hubinger family business runs smoothly in order to meet and exceed customer expectations. As her children have grown and become more involved with the business, Donna has remained steadfast in her work, serving as the company's President and dedicating her time, skills and knowledge to the ever-growing family business. With hard-working owners, it is no wonder Hubinger Landscaping Corporation is one of the biggest landscaping companies in the region.

We at Centier Bank would like to congratulate Donna Hubinger for her achievements and wish Hubinger Landscaping Corporation continued success.



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business has 35 full-time and 29 part-time employees. Many of them have been with the company for decades.

In order to service their clientele through the seasons, Donna says Hubinger Landscaping is a year-round business. "We are open seven days a week until the end of December. From January through March, we snow plow. The garden

center opens up again in March."

Thomas Neuffer, vice president, Business Banking for Centier Bank in Merrillville, nominated Donna for the E-Day Award. He says "the business has grown from just a small start up to one of the largest landscaping companies in the area. They are very highly regarded and a big reason for that is Donna's leadership."

ROBERT COOLMAN **Coolman Communities, Inc.** **Lifetime Achievement Award**

Bob Coolman got early lessons in entrepreneurship when his parents, Robert and Florence Coolman, carved out a piece of their farm land outside of Valparaiso to create a subdivision. Bob went to work at the age of 10, "when I was old enough to reach the pedals on a tractor."

After 62 years in the housing development business, Coolman sold his company in January to eight long-term employees. Coolman Communities, Inc. (CCI) has built more than 1,500 single-family and multi-family homes and developed well-known neighborhoods in the Valparaiso area. Its success has been built on a solid reputation for developing good, livable neighborhoods and making sure customers are satisfied.

Coolman's business acumen includes an ability to see new market opportunities that others miss. For example, at the bottom of the housing market in the 1980s, he began constructing condominiums in Valparaiso after recognizing them as ideal housing for single people.

In 2004, Coolman decided to share his entrepreneurship experience and began working with young people in Sierra Leone and Liberia through Operation Classroom. The nonprofit organization is affiliated with United Methodist Church and its mission is to enhance secondary education, with an emphasis on entrepreneurship.

"Our approach was not to impose a new system on them, but to learn how things are done in their cultures," says Coolman, who had been inspired by working with the young Africans. "We want to assist high school students in thinking like an entrepreneur and to equip them to think for themselves."

Coolman believes the E-Day Lifetime Achievement Award is an affirmation of his life's work and says "the fact that those things that have interested me over the years and the ways I've focused on business and engaged with people have turned out to be viable. They've worked!"

A SECOND CHANCE

"When you use, you have fallen so far that you can't see the light of day. You give up all hope.

I think the only way that people really make it out of that deep pit, is somebody sticks a ladder in there and climbs down there with them.

That's what I really admired most about the 2nd Chance Program.

It amazes me that it works. And I'm amazed with the happiness and joy that I feel in my heart every day."

David



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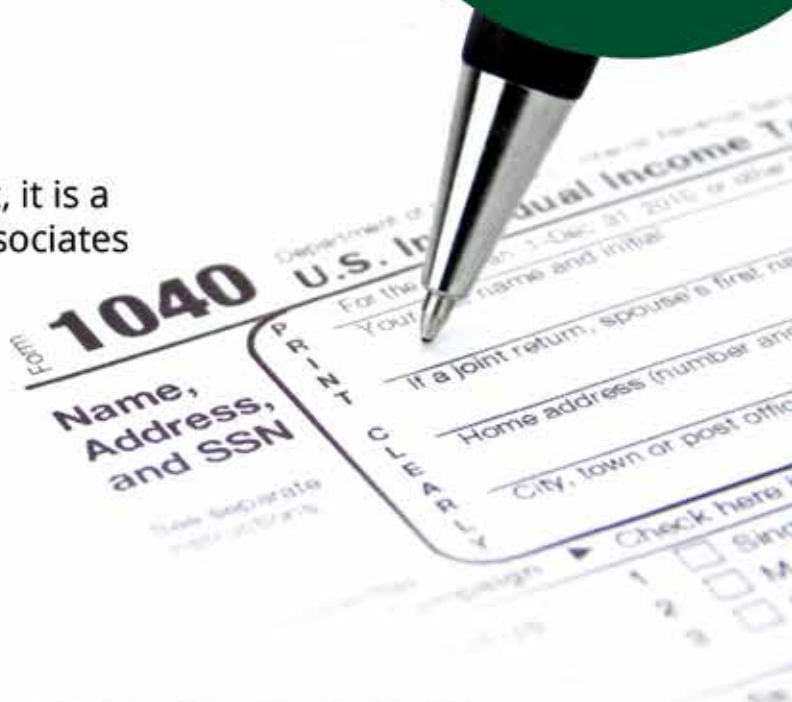
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School Construction Queue Continues to Grow

Northwest Indiana school systems rebuild and rebrand



CORE Construction is the Construction Manager as Constructor (CMc) for the new Illiana Christian school project in Dyer, just over the Illinois state line. It's a \$21.7 million project that will build a 104,000-square foot Christian high school and is scheduled to be completed fall of 2018.

BOB MOULESONG

School construction is at a zenith in Northwest Indiana. Between expansion, renovation, and replacement, school construction projects are doing more than their share to keep the economy moving.

Why? According to the state education department statistics, 23

percent of the state's population is in a K-12 school. Indiana is ranked as the 15th state regarding enrollment, and the 16th state in the number of schools. The Hoosier state is closing in on the 2,000-school mark.

Utilizing new legislation

CORE Construction is the Construction Manager as

Constructor (CMc) for the new Illiana Christian school going up in Dyer. The location is very close to the Indiana/Illinois state line, an attempt to keep current Illinois students coming to the new school. It's a \$21.7 million project that will build a 104,000-square foot Christian high school.

The state legislation passed a bill



The city of Valparaiso passed a \$148 million referendum in 2015 to raise funds for a massive school project. The referendum includes major upgrades and additions to the high school and seven elementary schools. "There's a lot of upfront work to determine the best course of action for a particular school," says Scott Cherry, senior vice president, Skillman Corporation.

in July 2017 that allows a company to act as CMc for public school construction.

"The CMc process is a way of delivering construction projects," explains Seth Beer, the business development director for CORE. "Under the CMc approach, the functions of contractor and construction manager are merged and assigned to one entity."

The process provides control over the construction by having direct contact with the subcontractors that were awarded bids. They also provide a guaranteed maximum price (GMP), which gives the client a firm cost estimate. That's especially important where tax dollars and/or donations come into play.

"This process streamlines the chain of command for the school corporation," Beer says. "It also provides transparency on the money spent."

Beer believes the CMc process

minimizes change orders and overruns. They are still options that can be negotiated, depending on the need and the budget.

"Since we bill a fixed fee for our services, there is no incentive to add on," Beer says. "That's a benefit to the client. The topic of changes only comes up when the client realizes a genuine need for an addition or modification."

By managing the subcontractors, the CMc becomes an agent to keep the project on time and on budget.

The Illiana project has a completion date of fall 2018.

AJ Turkstra, the assistant principal, says that the project has proceeded very well to date.

"I have sat in on several meetings with our school board and CORE," he says. "Things are on schedule and actually below budget."

The age of the existing school, and the absence of land to expand

upon, forced the Illiana Christian school board to make the decision to build new.

"This facility was built in the 1940's," Turkstra says. "We added on to the school in 1967 and again in 1976. But we are landlocked with only six acres, and we need more room for our students."

Core is the 4th largest school builder in the country. Now that the CMc process has been approved in Indiana, they are expanding their presence on projects here. In addition to Illiana Christian, they are negotiating with a public school in Northwest Indiana to lead a project that will build a bus barn and maintenance building.

Facility assessment

The city of Valparaiso passed a \$148 million referendum in 2015 to raise funds for a massive school project. The referendum is funding a



Larson-Danielson is building a new performing arts center at La Porte High that replaces the outdated auditorium.



La Porte Community School Corporation
Handley Elementary School
Architect: Schmidt Associates

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new 550-student elementary school south of U.S. 30, along with major upgrades and additions to the high school and seven elementary schools.

Skillman Corporation is the construction project manager for the Valparaiso undertaking. Scott Cherry, the senior vice president, is the account executive for the overall project.

"The process we established with the school corporation allowed us to become the owners' agent," Cherry says. "Skillman uses its resources to manage each project to ensure they are on time and on budget. Our philosophy is the same regardless of the chosen delivery method. That is, that the needs of the owner are first and foremost, and our services provide measurable value."

"This process provides the school corporation with a direct line of communication to their agent," Cherry continues. "We manage directly to the owner, in this case, the school corporation."

A project manager supervises the work at each school, he explains, handling the interaction with subcontractors who perform the construction. Skillman worked with the school corporation to determine which schools could be renovated, renovated with additions, or replaced.

"There's a lot of upfront work to determine the best course of action for a particular school," Cherry says. "Several of the elementary schools were originally built in the 1970's. We can keep those through renovation/addition. Hayes Leonard was a much older school, and the decision was to replace it with the new Heavilin school."

ADA requirements, square footage guidelines, environmental issues such as asbestos, new IT requirements, security, and the efficiency of current systems all go into the analysis.

"We conducted a thorough facility assessment on each building," Cherry says. "We ask the question – can we get another 30 years out of this building – to determine

options. What's the cost of expanding this gym and cafeteria versus new construction? The foundations and infrastructure help to decide the fate of each facility."

At Lowell, the \$7 million project revolves around a new Advanced Manufacturing Trades (ATM) building. The building will be used for vocational classes for students who have an interest in manufacturing,

skilled labor, and computer numerical control operations.

Derek Anderson, Skillman's onsite project manager, says all exterior lighting fixture heads will be replaced with LED lighting with an estimated \$10K rebate from NIPSCO expected for the transition. The piping in the building will be exposed and color-coded according to its function; distinct colors for



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plumbing, electrical, heating and air condition, so students will easily distinguish among them. That will tie into the industrial-type training offered.

Generational building

While new methodologies in construction and project management stand at the forefront, there remains plenty of room for

school projects that are designed and supervised by generations who have lived in the area they service. In several cases, they attended the school where they now preside over renovations and additions.

David Merkel is a project engineer and manager for Larson Danielson Construction. Headquartered in La Porte, the 110-year-old company is a design-build commercial general

contractor. Their services include construction management, pre-construction planning, and skilled labor in all commercial construction trades.

They are currently managing the \$86 million project to renovate/add-on at La Porte High School, build the new elementary school called Hanley, and add La Porte Intermediate School on to the existing Kessling Middle School.

“Everything about our business is based on high quality and high skill,” Merkel says. “There is also a human side to this business, just like any other. We take great pleasure in being able to hire people when we can.”

Brian Larson is the project manager for the high school’s performing arts center. Kevin Spence is the project manager for the new elementary school. And Merkel is the PM for the intermediate school. In each case, the managers either attended that school or another one in the same community.

“Our children will be going to the schools we build,” Merkel says. “It means a lot to us as individuals that we are still involved in the community where we grew up or where we now live. Many of the subcontractors we hire are locals who take a special pride in working in their home town.”

The intermediate school will house students in grades 7-8, while the middle school will educate grades 5-6. The large land tract at Kessling will allow the schools to expand by 162,000 square feet. At the high school, Larson-Danielson will build a new performing arts center that replaces the outdated auditorium. The new elementary school will house students K-4, which is a growing segment in La Porte.

“A lot of our design encourages student engagement,” Merkel says. “We want the students to enjoy the facility where they spend so much critical time. The learning curve goes up when students feel comfortable in their surroundings.”



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On the horizon

While construction moves along at a brisk pace on the projects detailed above, more school renovations and additions are on the horizon for 2018 and beyond.

The school cities of Hobart and Hammond both passed their referendum questions on the November 7, 2017 ballots. Both school districts are now moving forward with building new schools, renovating existing ones, and maintaining their teaching staff.

Hammond, with close to 14,000 students, asked voters for the authority to borrow \$110.6 million for the construction of a new high school and upgrades to existing buildings, along with \$70 million for operational costs. The new high school will be built behind the current one.

The district has suffered a reduction in funding from the state, state-mandated tax caps, increased costs for health care and continued increases in energy and fuel costs. According to the school district, the state has reduced its revenue by \$5.7 million in the past two years. The district currently spends a total of nearly \$127.9 million annually on student instruction and other daily operating expenses.

The Hobart referendum approved the school corporation to borrow \$41.2 million for construction. The money will be used to build a new elementary school, a swimming pool at the high school and upgrades at other schools. The new school would be built on Wisconsin Street at the site of the former Mundell Elementary.

The operating referendum will allow the district to raise \$2 million a year for six years beginning in 2020. That money will not raise local taxes and won't be used to give pay raises. The district wants to generate the additional funds to maintain its operations budget for student instruction, transportation and other regular considerations, which total \$42.3 million this year.

There will be no tax rate increase in the school's debt service, because the cost of repaying this new construction debt will be more than offset by a refinancing of older high school debt to a lower interest

rate and the anticipated tax cap reduction.

Bids for these new projects will take place once funds have been secured.

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LESLEY BAILEY

In a world where instantaneous is the new norm, even businesses and organizations are taking their events to a new entertainment level by using unique venues.

"We're in a changing time where everything is instant gratification," says Michael Angelo Bernacchi, president and founder of Michael Angelos Events, which is based out of South Bend. "We're so innovative and imaginative now that we need something that creates excitement. It's almost like the movies – they need to be so extreme to be entertaining. With events, you have to take the next step and look to some place unique."

The "event atmosphere company"

has helped orchestrate events in such elaborate locations as right on the track at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Locally, the team has utilized spaces at the Ameristar Casino in East Chicago and the gym at Purdue University Northwest Hammond campus for the commencement ceremony.

"We take an empty space and create a pleasing event environment for our clients," Bernacchi says. Décor and lighting can transform unique spaces even more, he adds.

In the region, event organizers can channel a distinctive vibe from down-home-on-the-farm to room-with-a-train-view by booking these out-of-the-ordinary venues.

County Line Orchard

Amid the apples and big barn At County Line Orchard is an opportunity for organizations and businesses to cultivate creativity during their meetings and events.

"We have seen a trend in businesses looking for a unique venue to encourage their teams to think outside the box, explore creative options and collaborate outside of a traditional or routine office dynamic," says Jen Lefere, events and general manager at County Line Orchard. "It is a refreshing change of pace, and makes for a memorable and impactful meeting, conference or event. We love pairing with businesses to build these experiences for their company."



"It is a refreshing change of pace, and makes for a memorable and impactful meeting, conference or event. We love pairing with businesses to build these experiences for their company," says Jen Lefere, events and general manager at County Line Orchard.

County Line has a full-service event venue from November to August and seasonal fall happenings from September to October that can serve as a backdrop for events. Attractions include apple, pumpkin and sunflower picking, corn maze, Moo Choo, kids farm and campfires.

"There is something special about the rustic, yet elegant charm that County Line Orchard has to offer," Lefere says. "From weekday meetings and conferences to holiday parties or networking events, we are able to accommodate events of all size and with varying needs. Given the nature of our venue, we can help you design small, intimate event settings or large-scale affairs."

The South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority has used the space at County Line for a monthly board meeting. "We look to use space for partnership events that will showcase the venues and the different features they have to offer.

Also, we recommend unique venues to clients who want to break from traditional meeting spaces, such as banquet halls and hotels," says Katie Holderby, executive VP/chief projects officer at the SSCVA.

"These types of venues are great for meetings, but it is different to add an attraction, so attendees can be creative and break from lecture-type areas," Holderby says.

Fair Oaks Farms

Nestled on campus is the Farmhouse Restaurant and Conference Center, which has traditional event amenities along with an American Farm Cuisine menu and farm-filled adventures.

The boardroom can accommodate 25 individuals while the ballroom has 3,500 square feet that can be open for 200 or divided into spaces for 150 or 50.

"We have some unique spaces and opportunities for corporate dinners

and team-building opportunities such as the ropes course in the pig adventure," says Deann Patena, director of private dining, meeting and event sales at Fair Oaks Farms. "We do a lot of corporate picnics where they bring the whole company, including families who can use all of the grounds when they are here."

The campus features the pig, dairy and crop adventures, which bring the sights, smells and sounds of the farm to life. Outdoor activities and a play area make up the Mooville adventure.

"I think people are wanting to incorporate different spaces and engage meeting attendees more instead of just sitting in a traditional space the whole time," Patena says. "Our property lends itself to that."

Washington Park Zoo

The roar of a lion or squawk of a macaw may interrupt the flow of



"I think people are wanting to incorporate different spaces and engage meeting attendees more instead of just sitting in a traditional space the whole time. Our property lends itself to that," says Deann Patena, director of private dining, meeting and event sales at Fair Oaks Farms.

an event, but that's part of the point, according to Washington Park Zoo Director Jamie Huss.

"I think that today's companies are looking to lose the suits and be inspired by a unique out-of-office

experience, and what a better place than here at the zoo in a natural environment to stimulate fresh ideas and innovative thinking," Huss says.

Located in Michigan City, Indiana, off the southern shore of Lake Michigan, seasonal venue options at the zoo include an indoor classroom, covered Discovery Deck for day-time meetings and the chance to rent the whole zoo for an after-hours event. The zoo itself showcases exhibits with more than 90 animal species, historical walkways and buildings and the 70-foot tall observation tower.

"We offer a business room with a zoo. It's a great resource to allow corporations a different, natural atmosphere to host a meeting, a catered lunch and then a relaxing stroll alongside the lions and peafowl," Huss says. "I believe that experiencing nature, animals, trees and plants reinvigorates and connects people."

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"We offer a business room with a zoo. It's a great resource to allow corporations a different, natural atmosphere to host a meeting, a catered lunch and then a relaxing stroll alongside the lions and peafowl," says Jamie Huss, director, Washington Park Zoo. "I believe that experiencing nature, animals, trees and plants reinvigorates and connects people."

Visit Michigan City La Porte, a convention and visitors bureau organization that raises awareness of the county's events and offerings, has brought together its members and the public during an idea and information exchange event at the zoo. "We use as many destination locations as we can," says Jane Daley, community relations manager at bureau. "It gives them exposure to visitors and locals as well. A lot of local people may know about the zoo but haven't been there for a long time," says Daley.

She says the zoo's location is a key component of its appeal. "It's nestled in the sand dunes along the south shore of what we call the Indiana ocean – Lake Michigan," she says. "There's the outdoor venue and the education building, not to mention all of the animals housed there."

Linda Simmons, director of marketing at Visit Michigan City

La Porte, says the animals provide a one-of-a-kind backdrop for events. "The zoo teams will take the time to provide tours," she says.



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Hammond and Westville, Indiana



"They put their heart and soul into the upkeep of the zoo and animals and you always learn something new when you go out there. Everyone is impressed when they see that there is a zoo in a town our size."

"They hit 100,000 visitors this year. We're real proud of that. Next year is the zoo's 90th anniversary. With a five-year strategic plan, it's just going to get better," Simmons says.

Monroe's Crossing

The 1914 building, which now houses the restaurant, bar and banquet facility, was once a hot spot along the railroad system.

"With the 102-year-old building, we have beautiful acoustics and wood floors in the ballroom," says Rich Monroe, who owns the business along with his wife, Leslie.

The venue encapsulates a different era

with one of the last old ballrooms around. It has meeting space for up to 275 individuals and there is outdoor seating available as well as menus customized to each individual event.

"In addition to the large ballroom, we have a smaller room in which we can accommodate up to 50 people with the view of Hudson Lake," adds Leslie Monroe.

Taltree Arboretum & Gardens

Views of the prairie and Railway Garden serve as a singular setting for corporate events and meetings at the depot. The seasonally-available space can accommodate 100 people in a classroom style and 70 for dinner. Model-scale trains chug through water features, more than 500 conifers and woody plants, limestone, and metal and wood bridges.

"Many innovative companies have come to realize that the results of any offsite meeting can be enhanced if attendees are placed in the right environment. That's why they come to Taltree: to be inspired, focused and energized," says Stephanie Blackstock, executive director of Taltree Arboretum & Gardens. "We find that businesses are seeking ways to refresh their team and our breathtaking views of the prairie, ornamental gardens and unique wildlife do just that. We offer versatile spaces for business meetings, conferences and workshops."

Taltree's offerings also include outdoor pavilion venues. The Meyer Memorial Pavilion can seat 70 and has a fireplace and garden surroundings. The new Celebration Rose Pavilion can hold 50 individuals and 200 with the addition of tents. It is located in the Bapst Rose Garden.

The space has been utilized by the Rotary Club of Valparaiso for its annual Changing of the Guard as well as St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church for its Walk for the Poor.

"We also offer corporate memberships, which allow employees to access the arboretum throughout the year. Executives bring clients out to stroll in the gardens and some work with us on a family day for their business," Blackstock says. "We also coordinate group volunteer opportunities."

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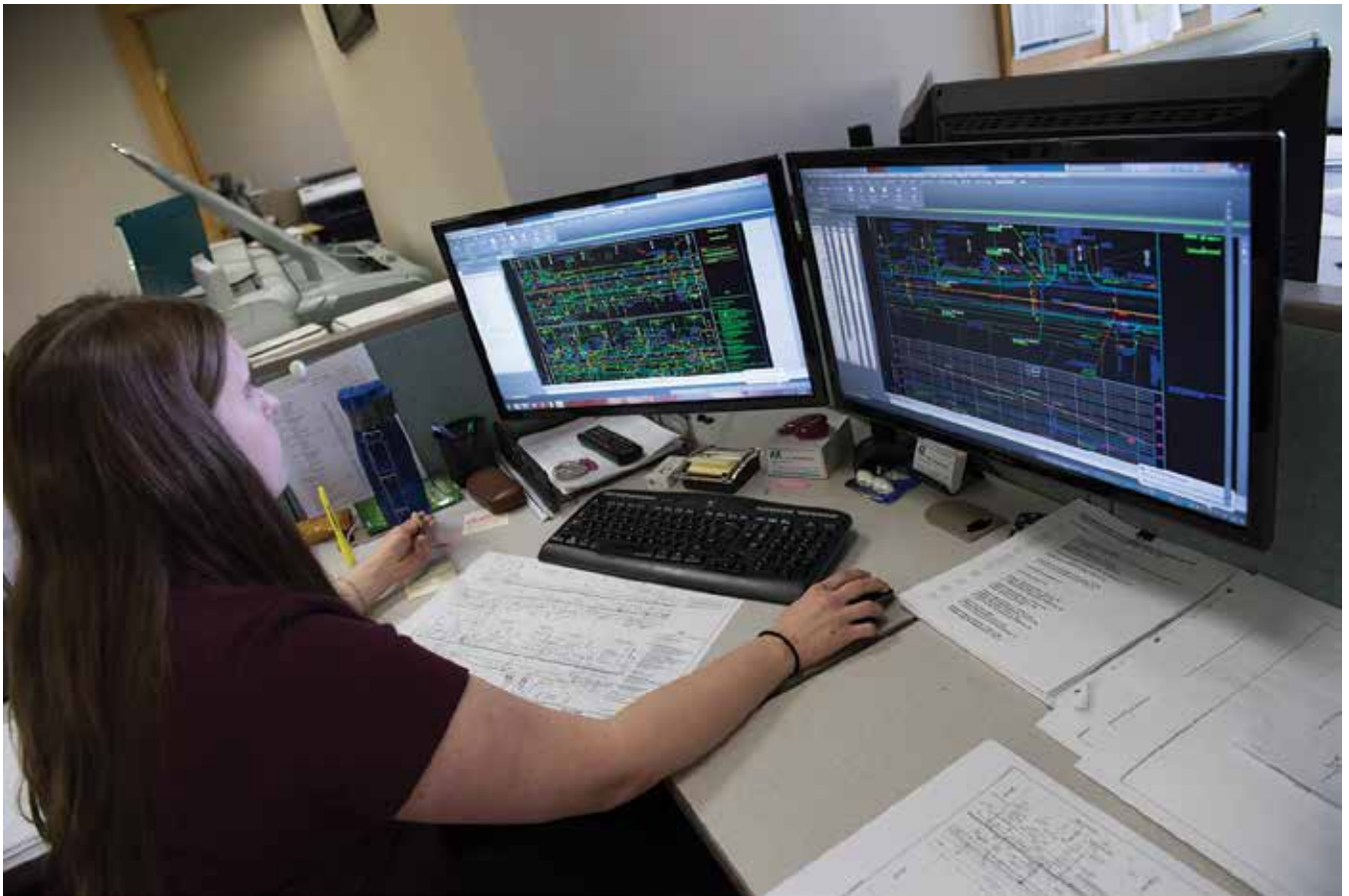
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Behind the Scenes of Construction

Understanding engineering protocol in local projects



A preliminary plan is developed to determine a budget and square footage, based on the type of building, specific client requests, and many other factors

JERRY DAVICH

Admit it, you've driven past a new charter school or public library or professional building and wondered where it came from seemingly overnight. Or you've questioned the necessity for so many workers at a construction site when only a few of

the hard hats are visibly in action. Or you've pondered if a road construction project—paid for with taxpayer dollars—would ever be completed.

You're not alone.

These are all common stereotypes or misnomers about construction

projects, whether they're for road improvements, new developments or expansion endeavors. To the layman observer, it can look like mass chaos or a prime example of wasting time and money at public expense.

"Even my wife has told me, 'It doesn't look like anyone is doing anything,'"

jokes Scott Cherry, senior vice president for The Skillman Corporation, who's been in the construction industry for 33 years.

Cherry is a member of his firm's Indianapolis-based management team, working out of its Merrillville office.

"We understand the stereotypes and the jokes, but there are typically months of planning and designing before any project begins. It's all very detailed," says Cherry, whose niche is public works projects such as police stations, schools and libraries.

Behind the scenes, there is much more getting done than what initially meets the eye from the casual observer or the drive-by critic, according to on-site engineers.

"Typically, the general public only wants to know when a project will be done," says Jamal Anabtawi, owner and director of business development for A&Z Engineering, LLC in Fort Wayne. "I get this question all the time about our road projects."

His firm's marketing tagline is "Your Engineering Solutions... Start to Finish," but there are even some clients who don't understand every step along the way, literally, from start to finish.

"People usually see things at points A and Z, but there are all those other letters in between," Anabtawi says, echoing the dual meaning of his company's name. "The public doesn't realize how many time-consuming phases are involved with each project."

The initial spark for any project is always an idea, ignited by a need. Is a new school needed? Does a strip mall need to be expanded? Is an old police station falling apart? Is a high-rise development needed to enhance a gentrification movement?

"Most clients begin the process by asking for an engineering feasibility study," Anabtawi says. "This step would help the client with findings such as right-of-way needs, any environmental red flag issues, and a more refined total project cost estimate."

For example, a feasibility study for road construction includes:

- A Request for Qualification, or RFQ, and a Request for Proposal, or RFP, in addition to the proposal selection



A&Z Engineering, LLC is currently working on a roadway project involving right-of-way issues with 122 different property owners. "And each one has to be resurveyed and re-platted" says Mark Voss, senior construction manager.

and approval of a consultant firm.

- The scope of work and services, as well as the fee submission.
- A geotechnical analysis of soils in the area.
- A preliminary survey and preliminary estimating.
- Finalization of the study with proposed options for design and construction.
- And identifying sources of funds, possibly including local, state and federal tax dollars.

"This only scratches the surface for this type of project," says Mark Voss, senior construction manager for A&Z Engineering.

Such projects must be repeatedly reviewed by multiple governmental entities at the state level, and additional departments get involved if federal funding is used.

"This is why some road projects take from five to 10 years to fully complete," Voss says.

Not to mention other common challenges, such as addressing right-of-way issues.

"For instance, going through a graveyard or a historic home district," Voss says.

His firm is currently working on a roadway project involving right-of-way issues with 122 different property

owners. "And each one has to be resurveyed and re-platted, and everyone thinks their home is worth more than it actually is," Voss says.

Similar challenges face new construction projects where much of the work must be performed long before any shiny shovels dig into the ground or any ceremonial ribbons are scissored to obligatory applause.

"Work begins between the client and the architect typically months prior to clearing the site for preparation of the building's foundation," says Cleon Stutler, owner of Stutler Architects in Portage.

Preliminary work includes research and design, determination of location, lot size, type of building, and property line setbacks.

"This is the first step to determine the max allowable square footage," Stutler says.

Next, a preliminary floor plan is developed to determine a budget and square footage, based on the type of building, specific client requests, and many other factors.

"Developing an initial floor plan requires extensive coordination and correspondence with the client," says Rachel Miller, a draftsman for Stutler's company. "A plan is proposed, given to the client to review, plan revisions are



Behind the scenes, there is much more getting done than what initially meets the eye from the casual observer or the drive-by critic, according to on-site engineers.

made accordingly, and this process is repeated until an approved plan by the client is formulated.”

Simultaneously, while these meetings are occurring, the architect is arranging meetings with city officials,

utility company and surveyors.

“For a project to be approved for construction, the first step is obtaining city approval,” Stutler says.

The architect meets with city officials during the preliminary stage

to determine what requirements or standards will be enforced, and any specific concerns regarding the proposed project. For example, if city officials have reasons to deny a proposed project, it would be a significant waste of time and money to complete construction documents and obtain state approval if the project is not approved by the city.

“It is crucial to find out concerns and input from the city planning department prior to the bulk of work being done,” Miller says.

On a work site, there will typically be existing utilities and how to navigate them, such as a sewage line coming into the property on the south side, prompting the plumbing to be designed to connect on the south side, not the north side, of the building.

Similar correspondence is essential between the architect and the surveyor. Are soil tests needed to determine if the site contains proper substrate to build on? If not, it could be extremely costly, depending on the



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severity of the situation.

"The client may decide to not move ahead with the project," Stutler says.

Cherry outlined three major phases for most construction projects: design and planning; bidding process for contractors; and the actual construction. By the time the public sees any work being done, a large portion of the project is already completed.

"For an architect, 80 percent of their job is done, but for me, only 20 percent is done," Cherry says.

Several other factors come into play: public safety, workplace logistics, construction scheduling, budget shortfalls, hired contractors and, of course, a client's final satisfaction. Sometimes the client is a private developer, other times the client is a school superintendent, board of directors or a local official.

The bidding process involves separate categories for carpentry, masonry, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, drywall, and so on.

"It's all part of a project manual," says Cherry, whose staff has to analyze up to 60 bidders for a project. "And all in accordance with state laws and rules for public bidding."

The Skillman Corp. was behind development of the Crown Point Public Library, as well as the ongoing \$165 million construction project for Valparaiso Community Schools, including the extensive \$75 million renovation and expansion of Valparaiso High School.

"We're managing the entire program with this project, involving the architect, work schedules, budget issues, construction contractors, and everything in between," Cherry says. "Most people never see these types of high-dollar improvements because they're either covered up by walls or out of public view."

Cherry first got involved in the Valparaiso Community Schools project in November, 2015, with designing its first budget. This came after a public referendum approved the hefty expense. The referendum process alone can take several months, first to address a need for improvements, then analyzing its cost and work-site



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"For these types of projects, approval from the public is needed before any construction can begin," Cherry says.

Roger Stephens, director of business development and marketing for RQAW Corp., says public input is a crucial factor that too many people are unaware about regarding public works projects.

"There are certain procedures we have to legally follow, including a public input period," says Stephens, whose engineering-architectural firm is based in Indianapolis, with an office in La Porte.

"A needs assessment and analysis can take several months. Not to mention attending municipal planning and zoning commissions, and acquiring the needed permits or approvals," says Stephens, who had just returned from a public meeting for a bond resolution towards a public works project.

"That process alone will take typically from six months to a year, and even longer for private developments,"

Stephens says.

RQAW creates innovative, functional solutions for several industries, including municipal, public safety, educational, military and industrial. But the firm specializes in correctional facilities and public safety buildings by providing construction contract oversight and project inspection, while also monitoring construction budgets and schedules.

Its tagline is "Intentional innovation," and this mission is needed as Indiana's correctional facilities continue to expand, partly due to the boom of its female prisoner population, a result of the state's ongoing opioid crisis, Stephens says.

"Once again, a public need typically drives new construction," he says.

A similar need prompted the Valparaiso schools expansion project, with completion expected by the end of 2018, except for a \$17 million natatorium (a building containing a swimming pool) to be completed in 2019.

The massive renovation project is broken down into three phases: schematic design; 50-percent design; and completed design, to make sure it fits into the approved budget.

"Even an extra 2,000 square feet of construction work can add a lot of unexpected funding for a project," says Cherry, whose staff is on site every day for every construction project.

"The Skillman Corporation will typically have one full-time site manager on site, but we have two at Valpo High School because of its size and complexity, so a project manager and a project engineer are directly involved in this project," Cherry says. "Behind the scenes we have a project accountant, estimators and an account executive, me."

Voss insists, "Although it might look like 15 guys are standing around and only one guy is working, I promise this is not the case."


"Everyone has a responsibility and a job to do," Cherry adds. "Otherwise, these projects would never get done."



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Mark Fisher

Dwyer president aims high, dreams big, and gives back

JERRY DAVICH

One of Mark Fisher's smartest business decisions was to drink decaffeinated coffee. The last thing this high-octane business executive needs is an energy boost.

The 52-year-old father of four is in constant motion. Yet when his athletic body takes a rare break, his mind still races. About being a musician, a gardener, a sprint triathlete, a devoted husband, a man of faith and, not coincidentally, president of Dwyer Instruments.

His fingerprints can be found all over the Michigan City-based company.

Fisher began his career there after graduating from Valparaiso University in 1987. He was 22, energized with big plans and even bigger dreams. Fisher has used his dynamic personality to energize others, rather than to solely focus on a specific discipline such as engineering.

"I'm a people person," Fisher says without having to say it at all.

His body language speaks before he does. He converses with steady eye-to-eye contact. His handshake is a professional vice grip. His words are measured and forthright. He's a hands-on, no nonsense, cards-on-the-table kind of guy.

"I have a very strong need for new challenges," Fisher says.

A VU professor couldn't help but notice these God-given traits, suggesting an engineering career in the business world.

"I didn't even know what an MBA was at the time," Fisher admits.

He not only learned about it, he earned one from Cleveland State University in 1995. He has since become the poster boy for what an MBA can do for a goal-oriented executive with big plans and dreams.

"I've always dreamed big," he says without a hint of hyperbole.

Under his leadership at Dwyer, sales



Under Mark Dwyer's leadership, sales have doubled at the multinational company which produces innovative controls and sensors, while also developing instrumentation solutions used for the HVAC and automation markets.

have doubled at the multinational company which produces innovative controls and sensors, while also developing instrumentation solutions used for the HVAC and automation markets. The firm employs more than 700 employees.

Fisher has employed everything he's learned over the past 30 years to not merely climb the corporate ladder, but to help engineer it.

"I hold people accountable," he says flatly. Yet he also holds himself accountable as a self-described "player coach."

Fisher is a prayerful man but not a preachy one. "I pray quite frequently for strength," he says thoughtfully.

His next goal is to become CEO of the company, which is why he's currently searching for his own predecessor. He's secure enough to surround himself with people smarter than him, and he's smart enough to find job security by doing so.

He is a member of the Renaissance Executive Forums Group of Northern Indiana, the Northwest Indiana Society of Innovators, and the Valparaiso University National Council. He was a guest speaker at TedEx 2016 at VU, a

university he often mentions during conversations.

The school not only catapulted his career, it introduced him to his wife of 28 years, Janet, who was a nursing student there. She's the ideal complement to his Type A personality. "She's been amazing," Fisher says.

Born and raised in Buffalo, New York, Fisher uses outdoor athletic endeavors to offset his high-stress indoor job. "I run hot so if I don't exercise, I get fidgety," he says, sipping his decaf coffee.

At this stage in his career, he's looking back as much as looking ahead. Professionally, he's overseeing his firm's community outreach projects throughout Northwest Indiana. He's also a mentor at his former VU fraternity.

Personally, he's acutely aware of all the people's shoulders he has been standing on throughout his life, from high school teachers to college professors to company colleagues.

"I have a genuine appreciation for how I got to where I am today, so my mission these days is giving back. This is my next challenge."

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Things to do and See



John Cain



Jack Walton

An update on art and entertainment options across the region

Northwest Indiana

JOHN CAIN

Lost in the fog, a stranger seeks refuge in a nearby house only to find a man shot dead and his wife standing over him with a smoking gun in Agatha Christie's "The Unexpected Guest." The woman's dazed confession is anything but convincing and the unexpected guest decides to help. Remarkably, police clues point to a man who died two years before, but as the ghosts of a past wrong begin to emerge, a tangled web of lies reveals family secrets and chilling motives, where the real murderer turns out to be the greatest mystery of all. Hammond Community Theatre presents this classic at Beatniks on Conkey, February 9-18. 219/852-0848 or www.beatniksonconkey.com

Nature invades the galleries of the Lubeznik Center for the Arts in a group show called "Birds & Bees." Each artist brings a unique perspective on the subject, revealing their personal connections to insect and avian friends through drawing, printmaking, painting, sculpting, mixed media and installation. The opening reception is February 2, from 5-8pm, and the exhibit runs through June 2. 219/874-4900 or www.lubeznikcenter.org

The Towle Theater presents the Chicagoland premier of "Pageant Play," a comedy by Mark Setlock and Matthew Wilkas that provides a hilarious and terrifying glimpse into the surreal world of child beauty pageants. Pinky Corningfield will do anything to make sure that her little angel, Chevrolet, wins the title of Supreme



South Shore Arts presents Hidden Perspectives: Works by Rine Boyer & Eric Tucker, a contemporary, sculptural exhibit that questions the perception of the environment that confronts both artist and viewer. Boyer paints colorful human figures, depicting the personality of her subjects, their feelings or the essence of their environments.

Queen. When Marge, a newcomer to the circuit, shows up and starts grabbing all the glory, Pinky and her minions employ unorthodox methods to ensure that her darling is victorious. February 23 through March 11. 219/937-8780 or www.towletheater.org

The Northwest Indiana Symphony presents two concerts at Bethel Church in Crown Point to finish out the 2017-18 classical series. Kick off your Valentine's celebration on February 9 with the romantic Rachmaninoff 2nd Symphony. This triumphant work gave the composer the confidence to devote his life to musical composition. Pianist Wael Farouk also returns to perform Beethoven's world-changing

"Emperor Concerto," his last and greatest. On March 16, the Symphony features CSO clarinetist J. Lawrie Bloom performing Mozart's Clarinet Concerto. Written for the rare basset clarinet, it is considered the greatest in the repertoire. Film composer Luis Bacalov's "Misa Tango" sets the classic mass to the rhythms of the Argentinian Tango and features the bandoneon accordion. Two lush and lovely Tchaikovsky ballet suites, "Sleeping Beauty" and "Swan Lake," will complete the program. 219/836-0525 or www.nisorchestra.org

"Steel Magnolias" opens in Truvy's in-home beauty parlor in the fictional Louisiana Parish of Chinquapin, where the regulars are gathered to discuss

Shelby's upcoming wedding. The play covers the women's often-combative interactions over the next three years as Shelby's Type 1 diabetes impacts her life, including her decision to have a child despite the complications that could result. Throughout the drama, the underlying friendship among the group of six women remains prominent. Written by Robert Harling based on his experience with his sister's death, the play's title suggests that the female characters are as delicate as magnolias but as tough as steel. Grab your hankies and stop by Theatre at the Center for this delightful production, February 22 through March 25. 219/836-3255 or www.theatreatthecenter.com

South Shore Arts presents "Hidden Perspectives: Works by Rine Boyer & Eric Tucker," a contemporary, sculptural exhibit that questions the perception of the environment that confronts both artist and viewer. Boyer paints colorful human figures, depicting the personality of her subjects, their feelings or the essence of their environments. Tucker forms steel around enamel to create sculptures that make the viewers more aware of the environment and their perspectives on his work. Both artists work out of studios at the Zhou B Art Center in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood. February 7 through April 4, with a reception for the artists on Sunday, March 4, from 1-3pm. 219/836-1830 or www.SouthShoreArtsOnline.org

Greater South Bend

JACK WALTON

It's a particularly busy stretch at the Morris Performing Arts Center in South Bend. On February 8, NPR's long-running quiz show, "Wait, Wait, Don't Tell Me," will record an episode with a live audience at the Morris. "A Chorus Line" runs for four shows February 9-11. Rain, a Beatles tribute act, performs on March 9, followed by good ol' boy comedian Bill Engvall, who performs stand-up March 10. Ageless rock superstar Alice Cooper brings his band for a concert on March 15. Finally, the big event of the season,



Alastair Willis is currently in his first season as music director of the South Bend Symphony Orchestra.

as the Morris transforms into an old opera house in 1905 Paris for a three-week run of "The Phantom of the Opera," opening March 28. Find out more at morriscenter.org.

He has big shoes to fill, but new South Bend Symphony Orchestra musical director Alastair Willis is off to a great start. After beloved SBSO maestro Tsung Yeh stepped down after 28 years helming the orchestra, a year-long search process resulted in the selection of Willis, who is now in his first full season conducting the group. His first concerts have been met with resounding applause, and he will try to keep the momentum going with a performance on February 17 with works by Modest Mussorgsky and Dmitri Shostakovich framing Ludwig van Beethoven's "Emperor" piano concerto, featuring soloist Vakhtang Kodanashvili. On March 3, actors from the Shakespeare at Notre Dame program will narrate Sergei Prokofiev's children's classic, "Peter and the Wolf," with music by the SBSO. The next day offers a matinee titled "An Afternoon in Italy," highlighting Italian composers such as Ottorino Respighi and Giacomo Puccini. Felix Mendelssohn was not Italian, but his Symphony no.4 earned its nickname -- "The Italian" -- for a good reason, and it serves as the concert's centerpiece. The February performance will be at the

Morris Performing Arts Center. The University of Notre Dame's DeBartolo Performing Arts Center will host the March concerts. Get further details at southbendsymphony.org.

South Bend Civic Theatre is keeping things fresh with two contemporary shows in a row. Running from February 16-25 is "God of Carnage," Yasmina Reza's dark comedy about family squabbles. After that, "Hamilton" fans will rejoice at the opening of "In the Heights," which runs at SBCT from March 9-25. With lyrics and music by "Hamilton" composer Lin-Manuel Miranda, "In the Heights" won the 2008 Tony Award for Best Musical. For tickets, seating charts and more information, consult sbct.org.

Fans of world-class blues rarely have to make the trip to Chicago to get their live-blues fix, because the Midway Tavern in Mishawaka has been bringing A-list blues acts to the local area for decades. In many cases, elite bands are available for an extra gig between Detroit and Chicago and the Midway Tavern -- nicknamed "Martha's" -- has become something of a blues institution. Ray Fuller & the Blues Rockers perform on February 9. On March 10, Mick Kolassa & Endless Blues take the Midway stage, and the Chicago Kingsnakes will play on March 24. To see a full schedule, visit themidwaytavern.com.

Lessons in the Game of Life

Ron Howard leads the way for children's camps

BEN SMITH

Seven years in, they pull up to the door now and out spill the children. Out spill all the things in his life that make Ron Howard smile.

Yet it's not just the children who are his blessing, it's who's behind the wheel of the vehicles that deliver the children to him. Their older brothers and they're reminders, Howard jokes, that "man, we are getting old for real." That's because the Game Day Sports Camp, he and his wife Reesha started seven years ago, has become a generational thing. Back then, Ron, a former standout at Valparaiso, was playing basketball for the Fort Wayne Mad Ants of the NBA Developmental League.

And now the camp, which was the result of the couple searching for a camp for their daughter and couldn't find one to their liking, has grown beyond their dreams. Ninety to 120 children attend every summer. Howard, now retired from a pro career that took him all over the world, started an additional camp over Christmas break. This camp's focus is not just on sports, even though that's Howard's background.

According to Game Day's mission statement, it's about providing an outlet for kids to be kids, to make friends, try new things, and learn valuable life lessons. "We wanted to make sure there was a place where you could send your sport-loving child and your crafting kid or your kid who just wants to come and meet friends," Howard says. "And then we wanted to make sure they were learning something and talking, so there was a character-building aspect."

Grown as has Howard himself. A 6-foot-5 guard with a knack for getting to the basket, his growth as a basketball player began at Whitney Young



Ron and Reesha Howard's Game Day Sports Camp is the result of not finding a camp for their daughter, to their liking. Their camp has grown beyond their dreams and receives ninety to 120 children every summer.

High School in Chicago. The teen continued at Marquette for a year then went on to Valparaiso, where he was coached by the legendary Homer Drew.

Eleven years later, Howard and his family have settled in Fort Wayne, where he is the only player in Mad Ants' NBA D-League history to have his number retired.

But that's only basketball. What he learned beyond the game, and what's made him a revered community figure in his adopted home of Fort Wayne, came from his mother who raised Ron and his brother to never get too full of themselves. That lesson, along with the culture created by Homer Drew at Valparaiso, helped Howard blossom into a two-time second-team all-conference guard.

"You hear people always say (Drew) is the nicest guy you'll meet. And it's the truth. It was like that every day. So just being consistently true to who you are, being kind, putting that first and being very successful at coaching. I

had a great time with the Drew family, felt good about them and how they did things," Howard describes.

When Howard, who still holds Valparaiso's single-game free throw record (18), left just over a decade ago, the Crusaders were still playing in the now-defunct Mid-Continent Conference, one of the lowest rungs in Division I basketball. From there they moved up to the Horizon League, and last spring they joined the Missouri Valley Conference, one of the top mid-major conferences in the country.

That upward mobility was due to the basketball program, which Homer Drew built into a national presence that led to nine trips to the NCAA Tournament, and under the guidance of current head coach Matt Lottich, who as an assistant and head coach has won 82 games across the last three seasons going into 2017-18. "It's great to see," says Howard. "I'm really happy the program is moving forward in the right direction."

Court Advocates Proves Helpful for Children

Care + common sense = CASA volunteer

MICHAEL PUENTE

Sarah Fink says it doesn't take much to become a Court Appoint Special Advocate or CASA for short. "You just have to be a caring person. You have to want to help children," Fink says. "All you need is care and common sense. We teach you the rest."

Fink is program director for CASA of Porter County, a national program with chapters throughout the country. In Porter County, the CASA program is operated through the Family and Youth Services Bureau. CASA volunteers act as advocates for abused or neglected children in the court system and represent the best interest of a child in juvenile court proceedings.

"Our volunteers are just regular community members who are trained by the court system. They represent the best interest and needs of kids. They get to know the children, get to know their parents, everyone in the child's life," Fink says.

In November, Ideas in Motion Media of Valparaiso honored CASA of Porter County with its 6th Annual Good Life Award, one of three Porter County nonprofits recognized at the event. "We recognize nonprofits that have a great story to tell," says Chris Mahlmann, founder, CEO and publisher of Ideas in Motion Media. "It's hard to stand out among nonprofits. There are so many outstanding organizations. With CASA of Porter County, you think of the kids that they are serving. Sometimes those kids, no one is speaking on their behalf."

Judy Hain became a CASA volunteer seven years ago. "It's difficult to see children removed from their families but it's even more difficult to know they are in danger if they stay," Hain says. The



CASA of Porter County was honored as a recipient at the 6th Annual Good Life Awards. "Our volunteers are just regular community members who are trained by the court system. They represent the best interest and needs of kids," says Sarah Fink, program director for CASA. Sarah Fink (Front row, far right)

children she advocates for range from newborn to teenagers, with some cases lasting until the child becomes an adult. "Some children are able to be returned to their parents. Some parents realize that they are not currently in a position to care for their child and they make the heart-wrenching decision to do what is best for their child and let the child be adopted," Hain says. "I research my cases so I can make informed recommendations to the court. We are very lucky that the magistrate values what we do and considers our recommendations when making her decisions."

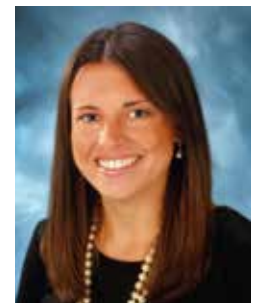
Porter County Juvenile Court Magistrate Gwen Rinkenberger says the role of a CASA volunteer is invaluable. "They are there so they can report back to me what the facts are, how the children, how the parents are doing, are the children safe, can I send them home," says Magistrate Rinkenberger, who has served as judge for six years. She says CASA volunteers are not there to back up decisions from others. "CASA is independent. They may disagree with DCS (Indiana Department of Child

Services), they may even disagree with me, which is fine," Rinkenberger says. "It can take an emotional toll (on the CASA volunteer). It takes an extraordinary amount of time. It has to be somebody who really wants to help children, somebody who is a caring person and willing to give their time to people who need help."

Omi Suiter started with CASA in 2016 because of her passion for children and says it can often be challenging. "There are times you fight anger thinking about how these children are neglected or ignored. I realize when parents are in the midst of issues they don't always see the full picture of what's going on in the hearts of the children so I try to remain objective," Suiter says. "I have to realize that my normal may not be someone else's normal. I can't judge anyone I just have to remain focused on helping the child." Although the job can be difficult, Suiter recommends others volunteer for the CASA program. For information on the CASA of Porter County program, visit fysb.org/casa-program.

Photo Credit: Ideas in Motion

Indiana Can Lead on Workforce Challenges



Blair Milo

Systemic change requires team effort

BLAIR MILO

Across the US, and even the world, the changing nature of work is a critical challenge for workers, employers, educators, policy-makers and others. When I had the opportunity to serve as Mayor of La Porte, Indiana, and work with a community team growing investment and development in our city, our greatest challenge was not in growing the number of job opportunities, but in connecting individuals with growing and changing careers. Our challenge was one held by communities across the world as the influence of technology and global connectedness are changing the landscape of work faster than ever. While I loved my time as a mayor, I was (and am!) excited to join Governor Holcomb's team as Secretary of Career Connections and Talent, in a role addressing our premier challenge and opportunity area of talent development. It's an opportunity where Indiana can lead the nation and world on cracking the code for workforce challenges.

Currently around 92,000 job vacancies exist across Indiana, and as we look ahead to the next ten years, it is estimated Indiana will have one million new job openings. Of these openings 700,000 will be the result of retirements and 300,000 will be entirely new positions. As job opportunities grow, we know Indiana's skilled workforce must as well. Plus, with the uncertainty of forecasting the future, we must build a nimble workforce with strong critical thinking skills and a commitment to lifelong learning to meet evolving employer needs.

Recognizing this call to leadership, Governor Holcomb dedicated pillar three of his five-pillar 2018 Next Level

Agenda to focus on developing a 21st century skilled and ready workforce. The plan outlined in pillar three aims to align education and workforce, with intended outcomes ensuring:

- All Hoosier students receive a base-line education infused with STEM, intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and other attributes that prepare them for lifelong learning
- High school graduates are ready to go to college, pursue meaningful training and employment in a field of their choice, or have skills to go directly into a quality job
- Working age adults are connected to education and career training that is aligned to industry needs and leads directly to employment.

To accomplish this alignment, the state is building the framework for the new system through the Governor's Education to Career Pathways Cabinet, enabling plans, resources and operations to be locally determined and managed. This cabinet, which I chair, brings together the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Commissioner for Higher Education, Commissioner for Workforce Development and the Director of the Indiana Office of Management and Budget.

The plan enables local and regional communities, and their businesses, elected officials, education institutions and other stakeholders, to have the flexibility and funding to design education and workforce training programs that make sense for their economic foundations and employment needs and aspirations.

In addition to the cabinet, the agenda outlines the following steps in 2018 to achieve systemic change in 2019 and beyond:

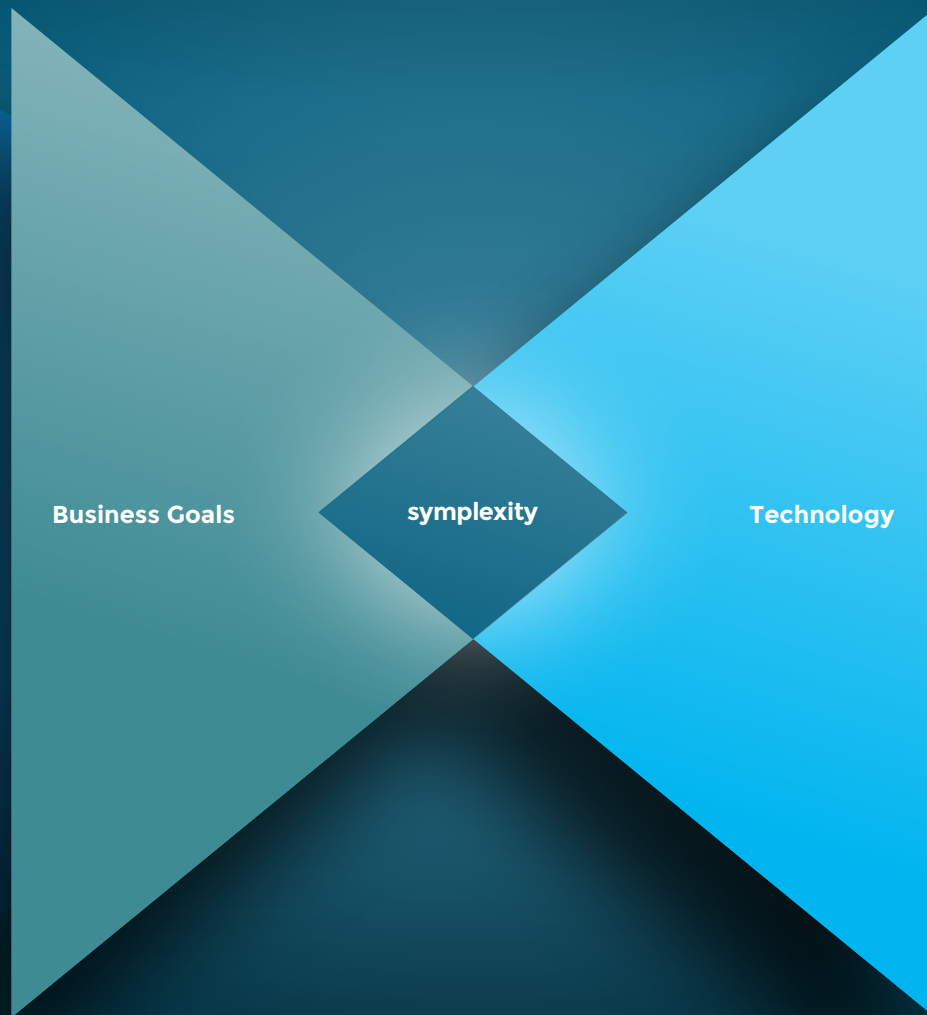
- Require every Indiana school (K-12) to offer at least one computer science course by 2021 and offer teachers professional development in computer science
- Create career pathways for high school juniors and seniors that prepare them for postsecondary options such as apprenticeships, work-based learning, technical preparation, dual credit, college prep and courses that lead to industry credentials and certifications
- Create the state Office of Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning
- Strengthen K-12 STEM curricula and increase license flexibility for K-12 teachers in technology, STEM and career curricula
- Reduce recidivism and prepare offenders for opportunities in today's economy

As we build momentum with the plan, we've adopted programs to address gaps in high-wage, high-demand areas such as Next Level Jobs which offers two grant types. The Workforce Ready Grant offers free tuition to individuals pursuing education in five high-demand fields, including IT and Business Services, Health and Life Sciences, Advanced Manufacturing, Building and Construction, and Transportation and Logistics. Employers in these fields and in agriculture can apply for the Employer Training Grant to upskill new employees.

Accomplishing these goals takes a team effort with help from all Hoosiers spreading the word about great opportunities and connecting individuals and employers with the skills and resources for success. I am excited to be on our Hoosier team to accomplish these goals!

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