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Rex Richards, President



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One thing I've noticed in my time here is a certain spirit that feels like it's been around forever.

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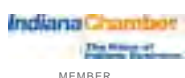
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MEMBER

EDITOR'S NOTE

Who's the Best?



Rick Richards

Our annual reader survey expands to South Bend area.

The issue you hold in your hands represents the very best. Our annual "Best Of" issue is a chance for readers to say "thanks" to the people and businesses they've connected with in the past year.

It's a very public pat on the back, thanking them for the job they did or the service they provided. The annual vote was expanded this year, too. Not only did readers choose the Best of Northwest Indiana, but for the first time, readers also voted on the Best of South Bend/Mishawaka. As *Northwest Indiana Business Quarterly* has grown and embraced St. Joseph County, so have readers and businesses there embraced the magazine.

Take a look at what our readers say are the best restaurants, meeting places, hotels, law firms, accountants, ad agencies and all sorts of other businesses. We think it's a great reflection on the business-to-business relationships that play such a vital role in the economy in each of our eight counties.

Inside you'll also find an amazing group of young entrepreneurs, some of whom are still in college. They are developing new methods of communication via cloud technology, using 3-D scanners to make online shopping for clothes easier and creating new products for track and field athletes so they can compete all year.

We also talk with entrepreneurs who have decided that franchising

is a way to realize their dreams of owning their own businesses. Franchising goes a lot deeper than fast-food restaurants—there are cleaning services, hotels, accounting firms and many other kinds of services that offer franchising opportunities that range from a few thousand dollars to more than \$1 million to get started.

Companies across Northwest Indiana are embracing the concept that a healthy workforce is a happy workforce. And the healthier the workforce, the cheaper it is for health insurance. Businesses from Centier Bank to the Franciscan Alliance network of hospitals, from Prompt Ambulance to Horseshoe Casino, have set up wellness and fitness plans as a way to keep their employees healthy. Each has a unique approach, and we talk a bit about these different approaches and why the trend is becoming so popular.

You'll find a wealth of other information inside the magazine. One story looks at Lake Central High School football standout and former NFL lineman Jared Tomich and how he's made the transition from the gridiron to the business world. Not surprisingly, Tomich preaches fitness and is working with many of the region's businesses and their employees.

Thanks for taking the time to pick up this issue of *Northwest Indiana Business Quarterly*. We think you're going to like what's inside. **BQ**

—Rick A. Richards, Editor

Around the Region

A lot has happened in the Northwest Indiana business community since our last issue. Here are a few bits of news to get you up to date.

BANKING

United Federal Credit Union has acquired **Griffith Savings Bank**. The St. Joseph, Mich., credit union said the bank will be operated as a branch. United Federal Credit Union began in 1949 as a part of **Whirlpool Corp.** ... **Citizens Financial Bank** of Munster has been named by the **Chicago Tribune** as a Top Workplace for 2011. The honor was based on an independent survey of 300 employees on areas such as direction, conditions, careers, education, management, and pay and benefits. ... **Horizon Bancorp**, the parent company for **Horizon Bank** of Michigan City, has acquired **Heartland Bancshares Inc.**, the parent company for **Heartland Community Bank** in Franklin. Heartland will be merged into Horizon, although it will operate in central Indiana as Heartland Community Bank, a Horizon Company. ... **1st Source Bank** has donated \$25,000 to the **Valparaiso Family YMCA** for its Promises Kept capital campaign. Regional president **Bob Ax** made the donation on behalf of 1st Source. ... **Sherry Derosiers** has been named a trust administrator in the **1st Source Personal Asset Management Group** in Valparaiso. She has 20 years of experience in financial services and most recently was vice president and executive director of **St. Mary's Foundation** in Saginaw, Mich. ... **Nikki Moseley** has been promoted to manager of the **Valparaiso West Banking Center**. She has 12 years of banking experience and most recently was operations manager of the Portage Central Banking Center. ... **1st**



Sherry Derosiers

Source Corp. of South Bend and **Horizon Bancorp** of Michigan City have been named to the Bank Honor Roll by **KBW Inc.** for publicly traded banks with more than \$500 million in assets. The honor is based on financial performance. KBW is the parent company for the investment bank **Keefe, Bruyette & Woods**.

COMMUNICATION/MEDIA

Radio One Communications has completed construction of a 500-foot broadcast tower near Cedar Lake. The project took five years from inception to completion. Radio One owns **WXRD-FM 103.9** and **WZVN-FM 107.1**.

CONSTRUCTION

The Ross Group of Portage has been named one of the top 10 design and build companies in the United States by **Ceco Building Systems** of Columbus, Miss. The company was founded in 1994 by **Ross Pangere**. Among the projects in which the company has been involved is the **Monosol** building in LaPorte, **IN/Tek** in New Carlisle, **Round the Clock Restaurant** in Chesterton and the **Peoples Bank** headquarters in Munster. ... **Superior**

Construction Co. Inc. of Gary has marked 13 years of safe operation at the **BP Whiting Refinery**. The company's employees have worked more than 15 million hours without a single lost-time incident. Superior has 26 full-time safety professionals on staff. ... **Chester Inc. Architectural & Construction Services** is involved with two major projects in Northwest Indiana. It recently broke ground for a \$17 million forging facility for **Modern Drop Forge Co.** in Merrillville, and the 7,000-square-foot **Gilmer Park Animal Clinic** in South Bend. ... **Gariup Construction Co. Inc.** of Merrillville has been honored by the Indiana Plan of Northern Indiana for its efforts to support the mission of female and minority hiring.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Lorri Feldt has been named regional director of the **Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center**. She has more than 25 years of business experience, including at Whirlpool Corp. and at Purdue University North Central. ... **Kevin Kieft** has been named interim executive director of the **Michigan City Economic Development Corp.** He replaces **John Regetz**, who left the MCEDC to take a similar position in Pocatello, Idaho. ... The **Portage Economic Development Corp.** has named **Jim Fitzer** its interim executive director. He recently retired from **NIPSCO** after 38 years. Fitzer will oversee day-to-day operations of PEDCO along with economic development activities. ... **Porter County's Economic Development Cabinet** has announced 11 members to the organization. They are **Doug Olson** of **SEH**; **Ronald Belin** of **Frontier Communications**; **Stewart McMillan** of **Task Force Tips**; **Heather Ennis** of **Chesterton Duneland Chamber**

of Commerce; **Kent Meihofer** of UGI Services; **Tim Healy** of Holaday Properties; **Larry Hitz** of Prudential Executive Real Estate Group; **Tom Golab** of Route 6 Development; **Chris Hernandez** of Northwest Indiana Building and Construction Trades Council; and **Harley Snyder** and **Jeff Good** of the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority. ... The Northwest Indiana Forum has announced officers for 2012. They are **Don Babcock** of NIPSCO, chairman; **Jill Ritchie** of U.S. Steel, chair-elect; **Tom Keilman** of BP, secretary/treasurer; **Charles Weaver** of Starke County Economic Development Foundation, Economic Development chairman; **Robert Crookston** of Microbac Labs, Environmental Affairs and Public Policy; **Cal Bellamy** of Krieg DeVault, Audit Committee Chairman; and **Dewey Pearman** of Construction Advancement Foundation, member retention and recruitment. Board members are **James Dworkin** of Purdue North Central; **Joe Coar** of Tonn & Blank; **Speros Batistatos** of South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority; **Ron Bush** of DRD; **Gene Diamond** of Franciscan Alliance; **George Douglas** of North Coast Distribution; **Danita Johnson Hughes** of Edgewater Systems; **Larry Fabina** of ArcelorMittal; **Andrew Fox** of South Shore Freight; **Jim Jorgensen** of Hoepfner, Wagner & Evans; **Mike Lisac** of Chase Bank; **Bill Nangle** of *The Times*; **Dan Nita** of Horseshoe Casino; **Pete Novak** of the Greater Northwest Indiana Association of Realtors; **Erica Passauer** of the Regional Development Company; **Craig Pratt** of Fifth Third Bank; **Matt Reardon** of SEH; **Bill Wellman** of Whiteco; **Curtis Whittaker** of Whittaker & Co.; and **Linda Woloshansky** of Center of Workforce Innovations. ... **Rex Richards**, president of the Greater Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce, has been named Chamber Executive of the Year by the Indiana State Chamber of



Kim Ziegler

Commerce. He has been with the Valparaiso chamber since 2006 and previously was with chambers of commerce in Michigan City, East Chicago, Logansport, Jasper, Sarasota, Fla., and Kansas City, Mo. ... The Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center and the Starke County Economic Development Foundation have formed a partnership to boost regionalism in economic development and job creation. ... The St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce has been named Outstanding Indiana Chamber of the Year by the Indiana Chamber Executives Association.

EDUCATION

Purdue University Calumet has partnered with Tri-State Industries Inc. for a robotics project to teach technology students the latest techniques for robots used in manufacturing. Tri-State recently acquired an Elkhart, Ind., robotics company and by the end of the year will have invested \$1 million in the acquisition. ... **Kim Ziegler** has joined the University of St. Francis-Crown Point faculty as a clinical adjunct member. Ziegler has 32 years of nursing experience in several different areas of health care, management and technology ... A team of five Purdue University Calumet management students tied for the top ranking in an online, simulated business competition involving 4,247 teams from 288 colleges and universities. Team members were **Mary A. Gross** of Valparaiso, **Sarah Moen** of Hobart, **David Ramsey**

of Hammond, **Aaron Schultz** of St. John, and **Allauddin Abdulghani** of Glendale Heights, Ill. ... **Sandra Hall Smith** has been named assistant director of the Center for Urban and Regional Excellence at Indiana University Northwest in Gary. Most recently she was a staff member of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs. ... Purdue University Calumet in Hammond has been certified as a StormReady University by the National Weather Service. PUC was evaluated on its preparedness for severe weather events and training for storm spotters. ... Purdue University Calumet's **Charlotte R. Riley Child Center** has qualified for the Paths to Quality top rating in the state for its child care programs. It was created by the Child Care and Early Education Partnership to help parents identify licensed family child care centers, licensed family child care homes and unlicensed registered ministries that have met state requirements for health and safety. ... Valparaiso University has received an anonymous \$5 million donation that will be used to construct a 15,000-square-foot welcome center at its entrance on U.S. 30. ... Three St. Mary's College students, including one from Valparaiso, have created a new soft drink, as part of an entrepreneurial project. **Hannah Hupp** helped create TOL Soda Co., which is being sold as Twist O'Luck, a green soda and has a soda fountain taste. The effort was put together with a \$1,900 loan from the school's business department. ... Purdue University North Central has been named for the sixth consecutive year to the President's Higher Education Community Services Honor Roll, which recognizes students and universities who participate in community service. ... The Challenger Learning Center in Hammond has received a \$3,000 grant from the Lake County Retired Teachers Association. The center provides programs and educational opportunities to more than 15,000 visitors a year.

HEALT HCARE

Memorial Hospital of South Bend has received a Program of Excellence Award from **Jackson Healthcare** of Atlanta for its program, "Diabeticos Saludables: Sweet Success in the Fight Against Diabetes." It was named one of the top 10 programs in the country. ... **Diane Maas** has been named vice president of man-

aged care and business development for the newly affiliated organization combining **Elkhart General Hospital** and **Memorial Health System** of South Bend. ... Two **Franciscan St. Margaret Health** physicians have received St. Luke awards for service excellence to patients and staff. **Dr. Navin Kumar**, a gastroenterology/internal medicine specialist

for 26 years in Dyer, and **Dr. Urmil Kalokhe**, a radiation/oncology specialist for 38 years in Hammond, received the honor. St. Luke is the patron saint of physicians. ... The **Women's Care Center** has opened on Indianapolis Boulevard in Hammond. It is a partnership between **Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Gary** and the **Dorothy Abel Purcell Pro-Life Foundation**. The center will provide free basic health services and screenings to women. ... **Dr. Suhayl Nasr** has been named a distinguished fellow by the **American Psychiatric Association**. Nasr is medical director of the **Memorial Epworth Center** in South Bend. ... **Methodist Hospitals** in Gary has opened an inpatient **Geriatric Behavioral Health Service** program at its Northlake Campus. The 14-bed unit will complement the existing adult and adolescent inpatient behavioral health units and will provide treatment and services for people 55 and older. ... **Franciscan St. Margaret Health-Dyer** has been designated a **Breast Imaging Center of Excellence** by the **American College of Radiology**. The designation is given only to centers that have achieved ACR accreditation in mammography, stereotactic breast biopsy and breast ultrasound. ... The Schererville office of **Immediate Care Center: The Doctor is In** has announced **Dr. Julie DeRosa** has been certified by the **American Association of Medical Review Officers**. The organization is a not-for-profit medical society dedicated to creating national standards and certification for medical practitioners in alcohol and drug testing. ... **Medical Specialists** in Munster are building a new office at the corner of 45th Avenue and Calumet. The building is expected to open in 2013 and will cover 36,000 square feet over two floors. It will provide services for musculoskeletal and bone and joint needs. ... **Porter Hospital** has received a three-year Gold Standard accreditation from the **American Cancer Society** for its computed technology, magnetic

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resonance imaging and nuclear medicine programs. ... **Porter Hospital** has announced that **Brian Sinotte** is its new chief operating officer. He will oversee the hospital's move from Valparaiso to its new hospital under construction at U.S. 6 and Indiana 49. He also will be in charge of the laboratory, neurology, radiology, oncology, engineering, food and nutrition and environmental services. ... **Ian McFadden**, president and CEO of **Methodist Hospitals** in Gary, has been named Outstanding Chair by the **Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation**. McFadden headed the organization's 2011 campaign in Northwest Indiana, which had 1,500 walkers participating in a fund-raising effort in Wicker Memorial Park last fall. ... **Franciscan St. Anthony Health-Michigan City** has received help in its fight against breast cancer from **Laura and Vic Gerhard**, owners of **Above Board Construction** in Chesterton. They donated \$5,888 to the hospital to help support mammograms. The hospital also received a \$6,750 grant from the **Indiana Breast Cancer Awareness Trust** to provide 50 mammograms for underinsured and uninsured women 40 and older. ... **Dr. Mark Dixon**, a cardiac electrophysiologist at **Porter Hospital**, is the first in Northwest Indiana to implant the **Unify Quadra** cardiac resynchronization therapy defibrillator into a patient. It was implanted in December to regulate the heartbeat of a heart failure patient. ... **Jeff Costello** has been named chief financial officer of the newly affiliated organization that combines **Elkhart General Hospital** and **Memorial Hospital of South Bend**. He has been CFO at Memorial since 1995. Costello is a certified public accountant and a graduate of the **University of Notre Dame** and **Indiana University**. ... **Mark Murray**, president and CEO of **Center for Hospice Care** in South Bend, has been re-elected to a one-year term as chairman of the board for the **National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization**. ... **Community Hospital**

has been named a **HealthGrades** Distinguished Hospital for Clinical Excellence for the ninth year in a row. Community is the only hospital in Indiana to be recognized for the honor, which goes only to the top 5 percent of hospitals in the country. ... **Steve Huffman** has been named chief information officer for the newly affiliated organization

combining **Elkhart General Hospital** and **Memorial Hospital** of South Bend. He has been vice president and chief information officer at Memorial Hospital since 2008. He is a graduate of **Indiana Wesleyan University** and the **University of Notre Dame**. ... **Methodist Hospitals** has opened a \$1.5 million Surgical Navigation Suite at its Southlake

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NOTEWORTHY NEWS BITS

Campus in Merrillville. The suite is in the **Spine Care Center**. Precise maneuvering with the instruments is possible through a GPS locating system. ... The **Women's Diagnostic Center** in Munster has received a \$3,000 donation from **Illiana Heating and Air Conditioning** to help women without insurance to have a mammogram. ... **Fitch Ratings**, one of the three major credit rating agencies, has upgraded **Methodist Hospitals** bond issues to BBB- from BB+ because of improved profitability, healthy liquidity and expense control. ... **Donald P. Fesko**, CEO of **Community Hospital** in Munster, has been named Young Healthcare Executive of the Year by the **American College of Healthcare Executives**. The award is given to healthcare executives under 40 years of age. ... **Indiana University Health LaPorte Hospital** has presented three of its employees with the Giraffe Award for going above

and beyond the call of duty. They are nurse **Ann Mejer** and medical assistants **Tami Yarbough** and **Patricia Schult** for their work in an employee immunization drive. ... **Memorial Hospital and Health System** in South Bend has signed a contract with **FairWarning Inc.** to provide privacy auditing of its systems to make sure information it has on its patients and clients are protected. ... **Community Hospital** in Munster has been named one of the nation's 50 best hospitals by **HealthGrades**, an independent healthcare ratings group. ... **Memorial Children's Hospital** in South Bend has announced the addition of **Wahaj Mustafa Zaidi**, a pediatric gastroenterologist. He completed his residency in pediatrics at State University of New York at Syracuse College of Medicine.

LEGAL

Stephen A. Stitle has joined the Schererville office of **Krieg DeVault**

as a partner. Most recently he was regional chairman for **PNC Bank, Indiana**, for 17 years, and before that spent 25 years as an executive with **Eli Lilly** in Indianapolis. ... Lawyers **Timothy Fletcher**, **Wendy Fletcher** and **Stephen Sullivan** have opened a law office in downtown Valparaiso. **Fletcher & Fletcher LLC** specializes in estate planning, corporate law and mediation. ... **Robert J. Konopa**, a partner at **Tuesley Hall Konopa** in South Bend, has been named to the 2012 Indiana Super Lawyers list as one of the top attorneys in the state. He was recognized for his work in civil litigation defense, personal injury plaintiff and business litigation. ... **Robert F. Parker**, a partner in the law firm of **Burke Costanza & Carberry**, has been named a Fellow of the **American College of Trial Lawyers**. Founded in 1950, the College is composed of the best trial lawyers from the United States and Canada.



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MANUFACTURING

KTR Corp., which manufactures power transmission components

used in wind turbines, will invest \$1.6 million in new computer technology for its Michigan City plant. The company also plans to add 20 jobs by 2014. It currently has 43 employees. ... **Manufacturing Solutions International** of Portage has acquired **Graphic Packaging International**, also of Portage. MSI will move its operations from **AmeriPlex at the Port**, to Graphic Packaging's location on Carlson Avenue. ... **Alcoa Howmet** in LaPorte has received the Lugar Energy Patriot Award for its work to educate employees and students about energy savings. The award, presented by **U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar**, is part of an effort to recognize professionals, scholars, students and businesses demonstrating leadership in reducing the country's dependence on foreign energy. ... **Hoosier Racing Tire** of Lakeville will spend \$8 million to build a 37,000-square-foot plant in Plymouth. When completed, the

company will add 20 employees. Hoosier makes racing and performance tires and has more than 400 employees. ... **Paul Wurth Inc.** is moving its Portage operation to Valparaiso. The company has acquired the former **Task Force Tips** building on Evans Avenue and will move its 13 employees there later this year. The company provides services, machining and parts to the region's steel mills. ... **Bonnell Aluminum** has announced it will close its aluminum extrusion factory in Kentland in Newton County. The closing will put 146 employees out of work. Bonnell, owned by **Tradegar Corp.** in Richmond, Va., said the plant is expected to close Sept. 1. ... **U.S. Steel** will begin using an alternative to traditional coke in the steelmaking process. Gary Works will begin using a carbon alloy substitute produced by **Carbonyx Inc.**, which developed the process. It will produce 1 million tons a year, which



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Rodney Miller

will be used by U.S. Steel's Gary Works and U.S. Steel's Mon Valley Works in Clairton, Pa. ... **Ineos**, a chemical producer in Whiting, has announced it is closing its 29-year-old facility which produces a variety of automotive additives, sealants and lubricants. The closing will

put 40 employees out of work. ... **Ratner Steel Supply** will build a 100,000-square-foot facility at the **Port of Indiana** in Portage, creating 20 jobs by the end of 2013. The company is based in Minnesota. ... **Urschel Laboratories** of Valparaiso has announced its expanding its global operations by opening an office in Italy and Chile and relocating its office in Singapore. The company designs, manufactures and sells precision food cutting equipment. ... **Jeffery Basham** has joined **Schafer Gear Works Inc.** in South Bend as advanced manufacturing engineer. He will be responsible for all advanced planning of new parts, including CNC programming, tooling design and application of the latest technologies in cutting tools and machine tools. ... **Rodney Miller** has joined **Schafer Gear Works Inc.** in South Bend as manufacturing engineer. He will be responsible for engineering support

for all gear manufacturing processes. Most recently he was a manufacturing engineer at **B&J Medical** in Kendallville, Ind.

REAL ESTATE

Northwinds Crossing in Hobart has received city approval for construction of another building at the development at 62nd Street and Northwind Parkway. Plans for a 150,000-square-foot building were announced by developer **Becknell Industrial** of Lyons, Ill. ... **Joe Candella** has joined **CBRE/Bradley** and **Bradley Residential Management**. He has 25 years of experience in real estate and will be executive vice president of asset services where he will oversee commercial property management and maintenance. ... The 25-story **Chase Tower** in downtown South Bend has been listed for sale by **HREC Real Estate Counselors** in Colorado. The listing price for the building is \$8.3 million.



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Brian Daley

... **Century 21 Alliance Group** in Valparaiso has received the Quality Service Office Award from Century 21 for its commitment to providing quality customer service to clients. ... **Prime Real Estate** has opened an office in downtown Valparaiso. The company now has three offices, including one in Chicago and one in Schererville.

SERVICES

Press-Ganey Associates has named **Patrick Ryan** its new chief executive officer. Ryan has 30 years experience in healthcare and most recently was chairman and CEO of **The Broadlane Group** in Dallas. Press-Ganey, founded in 1985, offers services to hospitals, medical practices, home care agencies and other care providers. ... **Steve Patterson**, a former reporter in Northwest Indiana and Chicago, has been named vice president at **Res Publica Group** in Chicago, a strategic communications firm. Patterson, 38, lives in Northwest Indiana ... **Anne Hosinski Watson** has been named director of development for the **St. Vincent de Paul Society of St. Joseph County** in South Bend. Watson is a graduate of the **University of Notre Dame** and most recently was assistant campaign manager for **Marian High School** in Mishawaka. ... **Brian Daley** and **Zac Neulieb** have joined the staff of **Morse & Company Advertising**

Communications in Michigan City. Daley will be an account executive for its online magazine and Neulieb will be an interactive director. ... **Prompt Ambulance** of Highland has acquired **Keeney Ambulance and Transportation Service** offices in Lafayette, Rensselaer and Frankfort. Prompt now provides ambulance service from Lake County east

to St. Joseph County and south to Lafayette. ... **Christine Wallace** has been named vice president of business development at **Staff Source**, a part of the **Business Solutions Group**. Also **Erin Trzcinski**, a recent graduate of **Purdue University**, has been named director of strategic development for **Business Solutions Group**.

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Northwest Indiana Business Quarterly

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NOTEWORTHY NEWS BITS

SPORTS

The **Northwest Indiana Oilmen**, who will play this summer in Whiting in the **Midwest Collegiate League**, have named **Justin Huisman** as their manager. He is a former pitcher for the **Kansas City Royals** in the major leagues and is a graduate of **Purdue University Calumet** in Hammond. ... **Jim Taipalus** has

been named general manager of the **Northwest Indiana Oilmen** in Whiting. He was previously with the **Martinsville, Va., Mustangs** of the **Coastal Plain League**. ... The new ownership of the **South Bend Silver Hawks** minor league baseball team has announced a series of promotional events for 2012 designed to increase attendance for the Class



Justin Huisman

A team. More than 70 home games will have special events including fireworks, flat screen Fridays, Winning Wednesdays and special events aimed at children. ... **Kyle Lundy** has been named director of golf operations for **Sand Creek Country Club** in Chesterton. Most recently, Lundy was head golf professional at **Harrison Lake Country Clubs** in Kokomo. He graduated from Purdue University with a degree in management.

TECHNOLOGY

The **Entech Innovation Center** in Valparaiso will be operated by a statewide not-for-profit organization, **Elevate Ventures**. It will be managed locally by **Charlie McGill**, who will be entrepreneur-in-residence for Elevate Ventures. Most recently, McGill was executive director at Entech. ... **Lincoln Solar LLC** is working with Merrillville officials to operate a solar panel field of up to 10 acres that would produce electricity the company could then sell to **NIPSCO**. Nearly 7,000 solar panels would be installed in Merrillville in a project worth \$6 million. ... The **University of Notre Dame** has announced it will invest \$1 million to build an experimental research and education center at **St. Patrick's County Park**. The university will lease the center for \$1 a year for 49 years from St. Joseph County. The

continued on page 68



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The Best of Northwest Indiana Business

Our readers' picks of the region's top business and lifestyle choices.

COMPLIMENTS OF INDIANA DUNES TOURISM – PHOTO BY CHRISTINE LIVINGSTON

BEST TOURIST ATTRACTION IN NORTHWEST INDIANA The Indiana Dunes National Park.

BY RICK A. RICHARDS

All businesses strive to be the best at what they do. Companies create a culture to nurture excellence in hiring the right employees and providing the services and products customers want, but they seldom receive unsolicited validation that what they're doing works.

Northwest Indiana Business Quarterly's annual reader's survey does that. Our readers take a look at the region's "Best" in several categories, and for the companies chosen, it's a welcomed surprise and nice morale boost to everyone involved.

BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR

Winners: Centier Bank, Munster; Citizens Financial Bank, Valparaiso; Franciscan Alliance, Crown Point; Horizon Bank, Michigan City; Porter Health, Valparaiso; and Peoples Bank, Munster.

"We are proud to be recognized

both locally and statewide as a great place to work," says Mike Schrage, president and CEO of Centier Bank. "Being named as a Best Company to Work For by the readers of *NWIBQ*, and as a Best Place to Work by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce for six years in a row, is an honor for our family organization."

"This is a very humbling honor," says Daryl Pomranake, CEO of Citizens Financial Bank. "For me, it brings a high level of satisfaction because it means the team we have put together has embraced our strategies and they're working."

Gene Diamond, regional CEO for the Franciscan Alliance, says the recognition is a tribute to employees. "We have a very strong mission, we give our employees challenging work and they rise to the occasion."

"It's an honor for readers to acknowledge what we do," says Craig Dwight, president and CEO

of Horizon Bank. "This provides an immense amount of pride for everyone here."

"I am absolutely elated at the results," says Jonathan Nalli, CEO of Porter Health in Valparaiso. "This is a really nice honor. It's phenomenal and it underscores our belief in the emphasis on service we've put in place."

Dave Bochnowski, chairman and CEO of Peoples Bank in Munster, says the honor is gratifying because it represents all of the things the bank believes in as a company. "I'm very proud of the award. This validates what we do."

BUSINESS MEETINGS AND ENTERTAINMENT BEST MEETING SITE FOR SMALL GROUPS (UNDER 100)

Winner: The Inn at Aberdeen, Valparaiso.

Runners-up: Harre Student Union, Valparaiso; Strongbow's, Valparaiso;



BEST GOLF CLUB FOR A CHARITABLE BUSINESS OUTING **Briar Ridge Country Club, Schererville**

Gamba Ristorante, Merrillville; and Gino's Steakhouse, Merrillville.

BEST MEETING SITE FOR LARGE GROUPS

Winner: Star Plaza, Merrillville
Runners-up: Center for Visual and Performing Arts, Munster; Avalon Manor, Hobart; and Blue Chip Casino Hotel & Spa, Michigan City.

"This helps solidify everything that we do," says Deann Patena, director of sales and marketing for the Star Plaza. "We take great pride in serving our guests."

BEST CONVENTION SITE

Winner: Star Plaza, Merrillville
Runners-up: Porter County Expo Center, Valparaiso; and Blue Chip Casino Hotel & Spa, Michigan City.

"We're honored to be selected by the local community," says Patena. "We definitely stress service and quality. We're not always the cheapest, but we won't compromise on service and quality."

BEST SITE FOR A CORPORATE RETREAT

Winner: Blue Chip Casino Hotel & Spa, Michigan City.
Runners-up: Inspiration Wood, Michigan City; Sand Creek Country Club, Chesterton; and Swan Lake Golf Resort, Plymouth.

BEST CASINO FOR BUSINESS PARTIES AND EVENTS

Winner: Blue Chip Casino Hotel & Spa.
Runners-up: Ameristar, East Chicago; Horseshoe Casino,

Hammond; Four Winds Casino, New Buffalo, Mich.; and Majestic Star Casino, Gary.

"We're honored to receive these awards, and it's especially gratifying because they were based on votes from *Northwest Indiana Business Quarterly* readers," says Ted Bogich, vice president and general manager of Blue Chip Casino, Hotel & Spa. "Groups of all sizes are able to enjoy our luxury accommodations, state-of-the-art facilities and vast array of guest amenities. We know Blue Chip's team members will be delighted that the Northwest Indiana business community has recognized their efforts."

BEST RESTAURANT FOR BUSINESS ENTERTAINING

Winner: Gino's Steakhouse, Merrillville and Schererville.
Runners-up: Gamba Ristorante,

COVER STORY

Merrillville; Lighthouse Restaurant, Cedar Lake; Lucrezia's, Chesterton and Crown Point, Don Quijote, Valparaiso.

BUSINESS SERVICES **BEST ACCOUNTING FIRM**

Winner: Terry McMahon & Associates, Munster.
Runners-up: Laciak Accountancy Group, PC, Valparaiso; Swartz Retson & Company, Merrillville; Rowley Bushue, Michigan City; and Prasco & Snearly, Crown Point.

BEST ADVERTISING AGENCY

Winner: Group7even, Valparaiso.
Runners-up: AC Inc., Valparaiso; Morse & Company, Michigan City; and Via Marketing, Merrillville.
"Certainly this is exciting news for us," says Michelle Andres, president of Group7even. "It's flattering to find people think you're the best when you're a relatively new company. I feel like, gosh, we're doing the right thing."

BEST WEBSITE DESIGN COMPANY

Winner: AC Inc., Valparaiso.
Runners-up: Atom Groom Design, LLC, Crown Point; The Grossbauer Group, Chesterton; and VIA Marketing, Merrillville.



BEST BANK FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE Peoples Bank, Munster

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COVER STORY

BEST COMMERCIAL PRINTER

Winner: Accucraft Imaging, Inc., Hammond

Runners-up: Home Mountain, Valparaiso; Largus Printing, Munster; and Lithographics Communications, Munster.

BEST BANK FOR BUSINESS

Winner: Centier Bank, Merrillville.

Runners-up: Citizens Financial Bank, Valparaiso; Horizon Bank, Michigan City; Peoples Bank, Munster; JP Morgan Chase, Crown Point; Fifth Third Bank, locations in 13 communities; and First Midwest Bank, locations in three communities.

"Centier is honored to be recognized by the readers of *NWIBQ* for 10 years as the area's Best Bank for Business," says Mike Schrage, president and CEO. "We are proud to help grow, support and maintain strong businesses throughout Northwest Indiana."

BEST BANK FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

Winner: Peoples Bank, Munster.

Runners-up: Centier Bank, Merrillville; JP Morgan Chase, Crown Point; Horizon Bank, Michigan City; Citizens Financial Bank, Valparaiso; First Financial Bank, locations in four communities; Fifth Third Bank, locations in 13 communities; and First Midwest Bank, locations in three communities.

"We have a tremendous amount of pride in ourselves on being a local company," says Bochnowski. "That means doing the things our customers expect and having our employees deal with customers on a one-on-one basis."



BEST ADVERTISING AGENCY Group7even, Valparaiso



BEST PLACE TO PURCHASE OFFICE FURNITURE Kramer & Leonard, Chesterton (pictured: the Envelop chair from Herman Miller)

BEST BANK FOR OBTAINING A BUSINESS LOAN

Winner: Citizens Financial Bank, Valparaiso.

Runners-up: Centier Bank, Merrillville; Horizon Bank, Michigan City; Peoples Bank, Munster; and JP Morgan Chase, Crown Point.

"We always ask ourselves how successful we are in delivering our products and services. This honor helps answer that question," says Daryl Pomranke, CEO of Citizens Financial Bank.

BEST CREDIT UNION

Winner: Tech Credit Union, Valparaiso.

Runners-up: Advance Financial

Credit Union, Hammond; Federal Credit Union, Merrillville; Allegius Credit Union, Michigan City; First Trust Credit Union, LaPorte; and Members Advantage Credit Union, Michigan City.

BEST INVESTMENT FINANCIAL ADVISORY COMPANIES

Winners: Centier Bank Investment Services, Merrillville; Edward Jones, locations in 12 communities; Horizon Trust and Investment Management, Michigan City; and Peoples Bank Wealth Management, Munster.

BEST COMMERCIAL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

Winner: Larson Danielson Construction Inc., LaPorte

Runners-up: Tonn and Blank, Michigan City; Berglund Construction, Chesterton; and Hasse Construction, Calumet City, Ill. and Hammond.

"We are certainly honored to be chosen by your readers," says Tim Larson, president and CEO

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BEST HOSPITAL Porter Health,
Valparaiso. CEO Jonathan
Nalli shows off plans for a new
hospital that opens in August.

COVER STORY

of Larson Danielson. "I think this sends a strong message that we're providing great service."

BEST COMMERCIAL ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN COMPANY

Winner: Design Organization, Valparaiso.

Runners-up: Carras-Szany-Kuhn, Crown Point and Schererville; and Gerometta and Kinel, Chesterton.

BEST COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE COMPANY

Winner: Commercial In-Sites, Merrillville.

Runners-up: Century 21 Middle-

ton, Michigan City; Coldwell Banker, Michigan City; and Prudential Executive Group, Valparaiso.

BEST COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPING COMPANY

Winner: RV Property Enhancements, Valparaiso.

Runners-up: Lakeshore Landscaping, Valparaiso; Hubinger Landscaping, Crown Point; Tim's Landscaping, Griffith.

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BEST CATERER FOR BUSINESS

Winner: Comforts Catering, St. John.

Runners-up: Bistro 157, Valparaiso; Lucrezia, Chesterton and Crown Point.; Great Lakes Catering, Michigan City; Strongbow, Valparaiso; and Strack & Van Til, locations in 11 communities.

BEST CORPORATE LAW FIRM

Winner: Burke Costanza Carberry, Valparaiso.

Runners-up: Hoeppner Wagner & Evans, Valparaiso and Merrillville; Krieg DeVault, Schererville; Newby Lewis Kaminski & Jones, LaPorte; Hodges and Davis, Merrillville and Portage.

BEST LAW FIRM FOR BUSINESS ACQUISITIONS AND MERGERS

Winner: Burke Costanza Carberry, Valparaiso

Runners-up: Hoeppner Wagner Evans, Valparaiso and Merrillville; Krieg DeVault, Schererville; Hodges and Davis, Merrillville and Portage.

BEST LAW FIRM FOR LITIGATION

Winner: Burke Costanza Carberry, Valparaiso.

Runners-up: Hoeppner Wagner Evans, Valparaiso and Merrillville; and Krieg DeVault, Schererville.

BEST ESTATE PLANNING PRACTICE

Winner: Burke Costanza Carberry, Valparaiso.

Runners-up: Hoeppner Wagner

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Evans, Valparaiso and Merrillville; Krieg DeVault, Schererville; Horizon Trust and Investment Management, Michigan City; and Peoples Bank Wealth Management, Munster.

Upon learning that his law firm had swept the four legal categories in the annual readership survey, George Carberry searched for words. "This is very humbling. It's validation of and a testament to the hard work that everybody at the firm puts in," says the partner with Burke Costanza Carberry in Valparaiso. "A lot of it has to do with the people we attract. I'm so very proud of the people we have here. This honor is like icing on the cake."

BEST HOSPITAL

Winner: Porter Health, Valparaiso.
Runners-up: Community Hospital, Munster; Franciscan St. Anthony Health-Crown Point; Franciscan St. Margaret Mercy-Dyer and Hammond; and St. Mary's Medical Center, Hobart.

"This is another milestone for us," says Jonathan Nalli, CEO of Porter Health. "We're all about service to patients and this speaks well that they have spoken up about what we do."

BEST URGENT/IMMEDIATE CARE CLINIC

Winner: Franciscan Express Care, Franciscan Point, Crown Point.

Runners-up: Care Express, Porter Hospital, Valparaiso; and Franciscan Hammond Clinic.

BEST SPECIALTY HEALTH CARE CLINIC

Winner: Franciscan Hammond Clinic.

Runners-up: Cancer Health Treatment Centers, Valparaiso and Chesterton; Medical Specialists, with clinics in Dyer, Munster, St. John and Schererville.

BEST INSURANCE AGENCY FOR BUSINESS

Winner: General Insurance Services, Michigan City.

Runners-up: State Farm Insurance,



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– Jonanthan Nalli, CEO



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COVER STORY

Merrillville, Griffith, and Hobart; Farm Bureau, locations in 15 communities; and American Family Insurance, locations in eight communities.

BEST COMMERCIAL INTERIOR DESIGN COMPANY

Winner: HDW Commercial Interiors, Schererville.

Runners-up: Design Organization, Valparaiso; Kramer & Leonard, Chesterton; and McShane's, Munster.

BEST UNIVERSITY TO OBTAIN AN MBA

Winner: Purdue Calumet School of Business, Hammond.

Runners-up: Indiana University

Northwest, Gary; Mendoza School of Business, Notre Dame, South Bend; and Valparaiso University, Valparaiso.

BEST UNIVERSITY FOR A TECHNOLOGY DEGREE

Winner: Purdue Calumet School of Technology, Hammond.

Runners-up: Ivy Tech Community College, Gary, Hammond, Valparaiso, and Michigan City; Indiana University Northwest, Gary; and Valparaiso University, Valparaiso.

BEST UNIVERSITY BUSINESS ONLINE DEGREE PROGRAM

Winners: University of Phoenix, Merrillville; and Indiana Wesleyan University, Merrillville.

Runners-up: Purdue Calumet, Hammond; and Indiana University Northwest, Gary.

BEST PLACE TO PURCHASE OFFICE EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Winner: McShane's Business Products & Solutions, Munster.

Runners-up: Kramer & Leonard, Chesterton; Office Depot, Michigan City, Merrillville and Highland; and Office Max, Michigan City, Merrillville and Highland.

"This is the eighth year in a row we've won, but we certainly don't take it for granted," says Brian McShane, president and CEO of McShane's Business Products and Solutions. "This is a great reflection on our employees and we're honored to receive this award. It keeps us on our toes and raises the bar for us each year."

BEST PLACE TO PURCHASE OFFICE FURNITURE

Winner: Kramer & Leonard, Chesterton.

Runners-up: McShane's Business Products & Solutions, Munster; and HDW Commercial Interiors, Schererville.

"We are so grateful to our customers for expressing confidence in us and voting for us," says Mary

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Leonard-Fox, CEO of Kramer & Leonard. "We're terribly pleased with this. This is something we strive for and we think it represents why our designers are the best in Northwest Indiana."

BEST LOCAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY

Winner: Midwest Telecom of America, Merrillville.

Runners-up: AT&T; Comcast; Frontier; and Verizon.

BEST CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Winner: Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce

Runners-up: Crossroads Regional Chamber of Commerce, Merrillville; and Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce, Hammond.

"We're really humbled that your readership feels that way. We have an outstanding staff and we feel



BEST WEBSITE DESIGN COMPANY AC Inc., Valparaiso

we're responsive to the needs of our members, 85 percent of whom are small businesses," says Valparaiso Chamber President Rex Richards.

BEST BUSINESS LEADER ADVOCATES

Winners: Cal Bellamy, Krieg DeVault; Jon Schmaltz, Burke Costanza Carberry; Mike Schrage, Centier Bank; James Jorgensen,



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COVER STORY

Hoepfner Wagner & Evans; Gregg Holley, Citizens Financial Bank; Jonathan Nalli, Porter Health; and Mark Maassell, Northwest Indiana Forum.

BEST WOMAN-OWNED BUSINESSES

Winners: Group 7even, Valparaiso; HDW Commercial Interiors,

Schererville; Life Strategies, LLC Schererville; Morse & Company, Michigan City; and VIA Marketing, Merrillville.

BEST AUTOMOBILE LEASING COMPANY

Winner: Enterprise Leasing, Merrillville, Valparaiso and Highland.

Runners-up: Art Hill Ford, Merrill-

ville; Bosak Honda, Highland; and Schepel Buick GMC, Merrillville.

EXECUTIVE LIFESTYLE BEST AUTOMOBILE DEALER FOR BUSINESS EXECUTIVES

Winner: Schepel Buick GMC, Merrillville

Runners-up: Art Hill Ford, Merrillville; Bosak Honda, Highland; and Christenson Chevrolet, Highland.

"Recognition like this is affirmation that we're meeting our customers' needs as we should be," says Tom Van Prooyen, dealer/operator at Schepel Buick GMC. "When we get recognition like this, it means we're accomplishing what we should be in sales, service, parts and our body shop."

BEST RESIDENTIAL HOME BUILDER

Winner: Olthof Homes, St. John.

Runners-up: Katona Builders, Munster; Cook Builders, St. John; Coolman Builders, Valparaiso; and Wagner Homes, Valparaiso.

BEST HOME REMODELING COMPANY

Winner: M&M Home Remodeling Services, Crown Point.

Runners-up: Above Board Construction, Chesterton; Schilling Construction, St. John; and Steel City Home Improvement, Merrillville.

BEST GOLF COURSE

Winner: The Course at Aberdeen, Valparaiso.

Runners-up: Sand Creek Country Club, Chesterton; Pottawattomie Country Club, Michigan City; Lost Marsh, Hammond; Briar Ridge, Schererville; Innsbrook Country Club, Merrillville; Youche Country Club, Crown Point; and White Hawk Country Club, Crown Point.

BEST GOLF CLUB FOR A CHARITABLE BUSINESS OUTING

Winner: Briar Ridge Country Club, Schererville.

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continued on page 44

The Best of Greater South Bend/ Michiana Business

Our readers choose top business and lifestyle options.



BY RICK A. RICHARDS

Unsolicited gifts are the best kind. Just ask several Greater South Bend and Mishawaka businesses. Thanks to readers of *Northwest Indiana Business Quarterly*, several businesses were chosen to be the best at what they do.

For Thom Villing, president of Villing & Co., a public relations and marketing firm, the recognition was both a surprise and humbling. "It makes us feel good knowing that what we do is working," says Villing.

Matt Rose, director of sales and marketing at the Century Center, was more succinct: "That's really cool." We think so, too. Here are the results of this year's annual reader's survey.

BEST COMPANY TO WORK

Winners: Memorial Health Systems, Horizon Bank and U.S. Cellular in Mishawaka.

"At Memorial, we're excited to receive the honor," says Maggie Scroope, manager of communications and media relations at Memorial Health Systems. "We try to go above and beyond to make this a great place to work. We feel as long as our employees are happy at work and happy at home they will continue to provide good quality service to our patients. An honor like this will



BEST RESORT FOR EXECUTIVES Swan Lake Resort, Plymouth

make it easier for us to recruit good people."

Craig Dwight, president and CEO of Horizon Bank, thanked readers. "It is an honor to be acknowledged like this. It is a test of our internal values and for our company. It is a real pleasure to come to work where 99 percent of the people we hire want to come to work."

Dwight says the honor brings a tremendous amount of pride to the bank and its employees. "I'm fortunate to be a part of this team." Because Horizon is a community bank is why readers responded so favorably, says Dwight. "We do a good job of caring for people.

Our customers have real access to decision makers and that makes a huge difference."

Matt Kasper, director of sales for U.S. Cellular, was completely surprised by the announcement. "I'm extremely proud. It helps underscore that the culture we've built in the company for employees to take care of the customers first is working."

Kasper says U.S. Cellular is built on service and providing the opportunity for employees. "This is quite humbling. This will certainly help in our recruiting efforts because it shows working here is a viable career option. Kasper says the recognition provides validation for the company's training and service efforts. "It shows we have the right values in place."

BEST MEETING SITE FOR SMALL GROUPS

Winner: Hilton Garden Inn, South Bend.

Runners-up: Gillespie Conference Center, South Bend; Century Center, South Bend; and Palais Royale, South Bend.

"This is a great honor," says Summer Holman, director of sales and marketing. "This does offer some validation that our programs and training are on track but we're always looking for ways to improve."



BEST GOLF COURSE AND BEST GOLF COURSE FOR CHARITABLE/BUSINESS OUTINGS Blackthorn, South Bend

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BEST COLLEGIATE SPECTATOR SPORT Notre Dame Women's Basketball

BEST MEETING SITE FOR LARGE GROUPS AND BEST CONVENTION SITE

Winner: Century Center, South Bend.

Runners-up: Palais Royal, South Bend; Hilton Garden Inn, South Bend; and Windsor Park Conference Center, Mishawaka.

The 75,000-square-foot Century Center has been a fixture in downtown South Bend for more than 35 years, and Matt Rose, director of sales marketing, says the recognition means a lot to him personally and to the center. "This is the first 'Best Of' we gotten in anything in my two years here. This gives us a real sense of pride for all the hard work we do at the Century Center."

BEST HOTEL FOR BUSINESS EVENTS

Winner: DoubleTree, South Bend.

Runner-up: Hilton Garden Inn, South Bend.

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BEST NEW RESTAURANT FOR BUSINESS ENTERTAINING

Winner: Café Navarre, South Bend.

Owner and chef Kurt Janowsky was stunned that his restaurant was the choice of *NWIBQ* readers. "We've only been open nine weeks. This means people tried us and we served their needs. It means the ambiance was conducive to what they want, the food was good, the service was good and the acoustics worked."

BEST ACCOUNTING FIRM

Winner: Crowe Horwath, South Bend.

"This is exciting news," says Gary Fox, a partner in the firm's South Bend office. "Northwest Indiana is our home and we're still here. I'm excited about being named best accounting firm. I think the fact we get that kind of recognition is because of the hard work our people put in."



BEST PROFESSIONAL SPECTATOR SPORT South Bend Silver Hawks

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COVER STORY

BEST ADVERTISING AGENCY FOR BUSINESS

Winner: Villing & Co., South Bend.

"We work to keep the right balance between the creative process and the fundamentals of marketing," says President Thom Villing. "You can't have one without the other."

BEST BANK FOR BUSINESS

Winner: 1st Source Bank, South Bend.

Runners-up: Horizon Bank, Michigan City, and Key Bank, South Bend.

"We're very delighted and very honored by the selection," says Joe Kuzmitz, manager of the Business Banking Group at 1st Source.

"We're very serious about working with our clients. We have a clear objective to take care of our clients' long term and to understand and help them meet their goals. To hear that we were selected for this honor as the best, that's great feedback that we're achieving our goals."

BEST BANK FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

Winner: Horizon Bank, Michigan City.

BEST BANK FOR OBTAINING A BUSINESS LOAN

Winner: 1st Source, South Bend.

Runners-up: Horizon Bank, Michigan City.

"What's important is what comes with the money," says Kuzmitz. "We keep their best interests in mind. We provide advice. We make sure the money can be repaid. If it doesn't work out then no one wins. Good banking is building a relationship that works to achieve what's right for the client."

BEST CREDIT UNION

Winner: Teachers Credit Union, South Bend.

Runner-up: Notre Dame Federal Credit Union, South Bend.

BEST CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOR BUSINESS

Winner: St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce.

"We're really pleased to hear of this honor," says Paul Laskowski, vice president of the St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce. "This shows we're doing what we need to do to support business. This makes me feel good because it validates what we do every day."

BEST COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE COMPANY

Winner: CBRE/Bradley, South Bend.

Runner-up: Cressy & Everett.

"This is a fantastic honor," says Brad Toothaker, president of CBRE/Bradley. "This definitely means we're impacting business well."

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This makes me real proud of the management team here. To me, I'm proud of all our people because it takes each and every person to get this done."

Toothaker says that building a company that has an attitude of quality and caring for its clients is what makes it successful. "We provide our people with next level opportunities and that keeps us growing," he says.

BEST CORPORATE LAW FIRM AND BEST LAW FIRM FOR MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

Winner: Barnes & Thornburg, South Bend.

Runners-up: Tuesley Hall Konopa, South Bend; and Baker and Daniels, South Bend.

"We are honored to be recognized in this annual rating of law firms throughout your readership," says Philip J. Faccenda Jr., managing partner of Barnes & Thornburg's South

Bend office. "We strive to provide value to our clients for a variety of issues that they may face."

BEST HOSPITAL

Winner: Memorial Hospital, South Bend.

Runner-up: St. Joseph Medical Center, Mishawaka.

"We are honored to be a part of this list, and to provide the best possible care for patients and their families," says Philip A. Newbold, president and CEO of the newly affiliated organization combining Elkhart General Hospital and Memorial Health System. "Our goal is to be a national model for medical excellence; however, our greatest reward is the satisfaction of helping patients return to health day after day."

BEST URGENT/IMMEDIATE CARE CLINIC

Winner: MedPoint, including locations in Granger, Mishawaka, South Bend, Lakeville, Elkhart and Valparaiso.

BEST UNIVERSITY TO ATTAIN AN MBA

Winner: University of Notre Dame Mendoza School of Business.

BEST PLACE TO PURCHASE OFFICE FURNITURE

Winner: Office Interiors, Granger and Mishawaka.

BEST BUSINESS LEADER ADVOCATES

Winners: Jan Fye, director of the North Central SBDC; John Phair of Holladay Corp.; Dave Wood, mayor of Mishawaka; Jeff Rea, president and CEO of the St. Joseph County Chamber of Commerce; and Phil Newbold, president and CEO of Memorial Health Systems.

"I'm a little taken aback by this," says Fye. "I love working with entrepreneurs and to be told I'm helping them and that things worked is validation. Often in this business you don't see an immediate impact. This can't help but make me smile."

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BEST WOMEN OWNED BUSINESS

Winners: Framed, South Bend; Selah Salon, Mishawaka; St. Margaret's House, South Bend; and Valley Screen Printing, Mishawaka.

BEST AUTOMOBILE DEALER FOR BUSINESS EXECUTIVES

Winner: Lexus of Mishawaka.

BEST HOME REMODELING CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

Winner: J.D. Holm & Sons, South Bend.

BEST GOLF COURSE

Winner: Blackthorn, South Bend.
Runner-up: Warren Golf Course at the University of Notre Dame.
"Absolutely we are honored. We try our best to make sure the conditions and service we provide to golfers is the best. This shows us we are doing what we set out to do," says Rich Love, director of golf at Blackthorn.

BEST GOLF COURSE FOR CHARITABLE/BUSINESS OUTINGS

Winner: Blackthorn, South Bend.

BEST RESORT FOR EXECUTIVES

Winner: Swan Lake Resort, Plymouth.

BEST HEALTH & WELLNESS FACILITY

Winner: Memorial Health & Fitness Center, South Bend.

BEST COLLEGIATE SPECTATOR SPORT

Winner: Notre Dame Women's Basketball.

"We're humbled and grateful for the honor the readers have given us, especially from the fans in northern Indiana who have enjoyed the experience here and helped us set an attendance record this year," says Chris Masters, associate athletic media relations director for Notre Dame. "



BEST ADVERTISING AGENCY FOR BUSINESS Villing & Co., South Bend

BEST PROFESSIONAL SPECTATOR SPORT

Winner: South Bend Silver Hawks.

WRITE-INS


Best Hotel for Service and

Amenities: The Inn at St. Mary's,


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Salute to Business

*Success isn't just a matter
of sales and profits.
These standouts are committed
to helping their
communities succeed, too.*

BY BOB KRONEMYER

Investing generous time and creative resources to help make their community a better place to work and live is a common thread among the six major winners of the “Salute to Business” competition, sponsored by The Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County. Recipients were honored in February at a luncheon at the Century Center in downtown South Bend.

“All of the winners have a tremendous ability to recognize needs in the community and a willingness and a real desire to be helpful,” says Paul Laskowski, executive vice president of the chamber. “They have all stepped up and become involved in community boards and other areas of leadership. They truly want to help and use whatever skills and talents they have toward that end.”

Greg Downes, recipient of the W. Scott Miller Distinguished Business Leader of the Year, has been with



NEW JOBS Bipin Doshi,
president of economic impact
winner Schafer Gear Works.

Gibson Insurance Group in South Bend since 1980. “We have a tremendous culture that has been built up over a long period of time and is based very strongly on our core

values,” says Downes, who currently serves as chairman of the board. “Our No. 1 value is the clients come first. We literally live and breathe that every day.”

The company’s second core value is that integrity matters. “Integrity dictates the way we behave professionally and otherwise,” Downes stresses.

He is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and was president and CEO of Gibson Insurance from 2000 to 2011. Downes also has a long and distinguished involvement with United Way. “It takes a little bit from a large number of people to make a big difference. At United Way, we connect people with resources,” explains Downes, who is chairman of the United Way of St. Joseph County board and is campaign chair of the 2012 United Way drive. “I think to be an active participant in the communities in which you do business, you have to

be actively engaged in the not-for-profit world.”

Gibson Insurance also encourages its employees to volunteer. “Get involved in organizations and causes that you really care about,” Downes says. “No matter what business you are in, what is good for the community is good for your business. You develop a reputation and a brand in the community. It also helps you recruit and retain great employees. People want to work for and work with people that share the same values as they do.”

Jacqueline Barton, president and CEO of Specialized Staffing Solutions in South Bend, nominated Downes for the honor because of his “example of a community leader that feels he has been blessed and wants to share those blessings with others to impact the community. I am impressed with Greg’s role as an agent for positive change in St. Joseph County.”

The ATHENA Award is presented to someone who embodies the highest level of professional excellence in his or her career, has devoted time and energy to improve the quality of life for others in the community, and assists women in realizing their leadership potential. Staci Lugar Brettin fits the bill, in large part because of her volunteer commitment in being the driving force behind the 2011 launch of SPARK, an outreach program through St. Mary’s College in South Bend that supports the entrepreneurial capacity of low-income, high-potential women.

“I’ve always been open to any opportunities that come my way,” says Lugar Brettin, a visiting lecturer in management and entrepreneurship at Indiana University South Bend. “I also feel I have the ability to bring together a lot of partners to collaborate, as well as attention to detail.”

Lugar Brettin, who earned a doctor of business management from Anderson University in 2011, urges other entrepreneurs “to invest their idea properly. Speak to people who are in the business that you

want to start. Don’t be afraid, even if they are your competitors. Find out what made them successful.”

A support network also is crucial. “This network absolutely needs to include people who are champions for your success,” she says. “However, championing also means being

The Small Business of the Year is Communication Company of South Bend, founded in 1976 as a communications and sound integrator for the school (K-12) market. Today, the business sells, installs and services life-safety, security and communication systems to the healthcare, edu-

“It takes a little bit from a large number of people to make a big difference.”

—Greg Downes, Distinguished Business Leader of the Year

able to say this is not a good idea. You don’t want a ‘yes’ person as part of your network.”

A board member and president-elect for 2013-14 of Rotary International in South Bend, Lugar Brettin often mentors business owners of the organization, mostly men. “Don’t throw away any ideas because you never know,” she says.

“Staci has a lot of passion for community change and helping women,” conveys Martha Smith, the project director for the Women’s Entrepreneurship Initiative at St. Mary’s College, who nominated her. “Staci is always there to offer advice to women and ready to lend a hand in developing a new business or with entrepreneur expertise.”

cation and industrial/commercial markets.

Growth can be attributed to “getting the right people on the bus and giving them the free rein to do their jobs,” says president and CEO Dan Schmidtendorff, who joined the company in 1996. “Together, as a team, we’ve grown year after year in both revenues and number of employees.”

The company recently launched a paperless service dispatch ticketing system that when combined with vehicle GPS, allows its service team to hasten response time and use real-time inventory, which ultimately translates into a cost savings for customers. “Find out what you do best, streamline and stay focused



“CLIENTS COME FIRST” The Distinguished Business Leader of the Year is Gregory Downes, chairman of Gibson Insurance Group, pictured here with chamber chair Bradley Toothaker and chamber president and CEO Jeff Rea.

BUSINESS PROFILE

at what you do best, and listen to your customers,” recommends Schmidtendorff, who is a member of the CEO-group Vistage. “If you don’t take care of your customers, someone else will. We have also partnered with great manufacturers and customers on innovative projects over the years.”

Moreover, Communication Company is affiliated with several not-for-profits, including the Salvation Army, Hope Rescue Mission, The Center for the Homeless and the American Red Cross. Employees can take time from their regular work day, without losing pay, to volunteer either at the Center for the Homeless or as a student mentor for the South Bend Community School Corporation.

Phil Damico, director of economic development for the chamber, nominated Communication Company because of its “proactive approach to the community. They have been pretty innovative with their business model. I also think they have some of the brightest young leaders in our community and certainly in their industry. When 75 percent of businesses were experiencing major profit loss during the downturn, they actually achieved a revenue gain. They were not going to accept that the economy was going to get their business down. Rather than being reactive, the company has been very proactive.”



STEPPING UP Regina Emberton (center), vice president of brokerage services at CBRE/Bradley, won the Outstanding Young Business Leader award.

her industry that has led to two respected designations: Certified Commercial Investment Member (CCIM) and Society of Industrial and Office Realtors (SIOR).

Emberton joined CBRE/Bradley in 1999 as an intern in the market research department. Through the years, she has also been active in volunteerism. Currently, she serves on the board of directors for Downtown South Bend Inc. and Boys & Girls Clubs of St. Joseph County. “I started my career in the economic development realm, so I have a passion for cities developing. I want to be a catalyst for further area growth,” says Emberton, whose

ley, who nominated Emberton, “Regina’s stature in the company as a top producer, management executive and her sustained involvement in the community demonstrate her overall dedication to excellence. She has distinguished herself by deep commitment and sacrifices, and has taken active leadership roles within many community organizations, doing so with honor, integrity and boundless energy. Her enthusiasm, passion and respect among peers make her an outstanding asset to not only our company, but the community as well.”

There were also two Economic Impact Awards in recognition of a company’s strategic vision and its substantial capital investment in the area economy. And although there is not an official nominator for either recipient, the chamber relies on information gathered about various projects, investments, large hirings and other economic signs.

In 2010, Allied Physicians of Michiana began a \$15 million renovation project of a 100,000 square-foot strip mall at the corner of Hickory Road and State Road 23 in South Bend, which culminated in a state-of-the-art medical plaza. “Probably the biggest obstacle was that we were not building from a grain field. We took an existing

“Speak to people who are in the business that you want to start. Don’t be afraid, even if they are your competitors.”

—Staci Lugar Brettin, ATHENA Award recipient

Outstanding Young Business Leader Regina Emberton is vice president of brokerage services at CBRE/Bradley, a South Bend commercial real-estate firm. “Never shy away from opportunities and always step up to fill a role or a need,” urges Emberton, who has prospered by taking educational classes within

undergraduate and master’s degrees have a concentration in community and economic development. And as far as working with children, “I want to make sure they have mentors and the same opportunities as everyone.”

According to Brad Toothaker, president and CEO of CBRE/Brad-

structure and completely redesigned it within the framework,” says Sherry Purkeypile, CEO of the physicians group. Today, University Commons Medical Plaza consists of three buildings (a main structure and a wing on either side) and has 99 percent occupancy. The first practice moved in May 2011.

Purkeypile’s advice for entrepreneurs is to “trust your vision and instincts.” As is the case with Allied Physicians, “you begin with a run-down, almost abandoned shopping center and you envision a thriving medical community promoting healing and health. You trust that it really exists. There are also people who can share that vision to bring it to fruition.” In addition, she is hopeful that her firm’s recognition will inspire others to look outside the box and pursue a project that is slightly unorthodox.

In early 2011, the other economic impact winner, Schafer Gear Works

in South Bend, announced a joint venture with Somaschini S.p.A. of Italy to produce engine gears for the heavy-duty truck market in North

as out of state,” relates Bipin Doshi, who became president of Schafer Gear in 1988. The plant is expected to be fully operational April 2013.

“Find out what you do best, streamline and stay focused at what you do best, and listen to your customers.”

—Dan Schmidtendorff, Communication Company of South Bend, Small Business of the Year

America. To accommodate increased activity, a new 50,000-square-foot plant was built on the Schafer Gear campus at Nintz Parkway, which began trial production in November 2011.

The new manufacturing facility is part of a total joint venture investment of \$18 million. “We are delighted that we were able to justify building the plant on our existing campus rather than elsewhere, such

By that time, the workforce should increase from 15 to about 25.

Throughout the years of company expansion, “the City of South Bend has been very helpful, including providing us with tax reductions,” Doshi says. “This was one of the factors for us remaining here.” To succeed, “do your homework right and take some chances in life. Also, be as knowledgeable as you can about what you are doing.” **BQ**



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Budding Entrepreneurs

Who says you need years of experience before making a mark in the world? These idea people are getting an early start.



HEAVY Steve Bartholomew's Dominator Athletics LLC is one of the largest suppliers of indoor throwing weights to track and field programs in the country.

BY RICK A. RICHARDS

The idea for the “next big thing” can come from anywhere but a lot of times it’s frustration that leads to inspiration.

That’s the case for John Rocha, who graduated from the University of Notre Dame last spring and already is involved in a startup company that could change the way people buy clothes online.

Instead of going to the mall, Rocha preferred to sit in his dorm room and shop for clothes online. The problem was, he couldn’t always be sure what he ordered was going to fit. So he thought about that for awhile, and with the help of partner Rick Tillie and a mannequin they named Larry, they created myFit, a smart phone app that will be available by the end of this year.

“Ordering clothes online was much more convenient for me because I didn’t have a car when I was on campus,” says Rocha, who has moved only a short distance away to Innovation Park at the edge of campus.

“Fifty percent of all computers

are sold online and 60 percent of books,” says Rocha. “But only 10 percent of the \$250 billion clothing market is sold online. That’s because people aren’t sure the clothes will fit.” And a lot of those clothes don’t fit. About 40 percent of online clothing orders are returned, says Rocha. “The only winners in this are the shipping companies.”

Rocha, 23, who was a political science major at Notre Dame, never imagined his career was headed in this direction. He says he caught the entrepreneurship bug when he visited the Gigot Entrepreneurial Center at Notre Dame, and after two years of taking classes there, Rocha found he wanted to create a product of his own.

Once the idea of myFit was born, Rocha says the next step was to find a home. He graduated on May 22 and two days later he was back on campus with Tillie and they spent six weeks in the library basement coming up with a business plan.

After looking across the nation for a place to locate the business, Rocha settled on South Bend and Innova-

tion Park. “They have tremendous mentors and tremendous IP access. The building is a great resource and it promotes collaboration. It pushes you every day,” says Rocha.

He’s also been able to tap into the Irish Angel network that helps fund startup companies. Already myFit has gotten help from a national development recruiter from Johns Hopkins University and is in a partnership discussion with Microsoft.

“We’re also talking to several retailers,” says Rocha. “Retailers want to increase their online sales so we hope to see this as the next general step in sales.

Using a 3D camera, which is available at electronic stores, Rocha and Tillie created a program that allows people to take a full body scan of themselves and use it with Microsoft’s motion sensing Kinect program. Then, as you’re shopping online, you virtually try on the clothes you want to purchase.

“When you’re shopping online for jeans, for instance, you never know what the sizes are. Some are sports fit, some are relaxed fit. I have no idea what that means, but myFit will solve that.”

When Steve Bartholomew was a member of the Valparaiso University track team, he was always tinkering with the hammer he threw in competition. “I like being 100 percent in control of everything I do.”

So when his equipment kept breaking—even equipment that was new out of the box from the manufacturer—Bartholomew decided to vent. “I picked up the phone and voiced my opinion to the manufacturer. I told him I wasn’t happy and that it broke right out of the box. I hung up the phone and designed my own fix.”

Today, Bartholomew’s Dominator Athletics LLC is one of the largest suppliers of indoor throwing weights to track and field programs in the country. It didn’t start out that way, though. His first year in business he made only \$300.



A GOOD FIT John Rocha and Rick Tillie created myFit to help online shoppers buy the right size of clothing.

“I came up with a simple, rudimentary design. I figured the more simple it is, the less that can go wrong,” says Bartholomew.

His first order came from two Ohio universities – Ashland and Bowling Green. He manufactured the throwing weights and personally delivered them. “I used all my cash to drive there. They paid me right away instead of sending a check, and I’m glad they did because I didn’t have gas money to drive back.”

But because Bartholomew was a weight thrower, he knew how to talk to other throwers. He convinced them to try his indoor throwing weights, and when they did, they liked them. Through word-of-mouth, orders began coming in. “This past year, I sold more than any other company,” says Bartholomew.

His simple design has already been recognized by the Society of Innovators of Northwest Indiana. The business graduate has gotten advice and help from the Center for Entrepreneurship Success at Purdue University Calumet.

Each order is custom made by Bartholomew, who still competes. He just missed out on qualifying for the U.S. Olympic team trials in 2008,

and his eye is set on trying to make the team this year. “I’m nowhere as good as I was in college, but I’m throwing farther than I was in college.

Bartholomew, 26, who has his MBA from VU, says his business has grown to the point that 50-hour weeks now sometimes are 100-hour weeks just to keep up with demand. “I’m selling to throwers in Europe and Canada and nearly every major track program. I thought this would sell, but I had no idea that people would take to it like they have.”

Kelsey Falter comes from a family of entrepreneurs, which is why she told her mother there was no way she was going to be one. “I told my mom she wasn’t like other moms because she was working all the time.”

Falter, whose family lives in southern Florida, is a senior at the University of Notre Dame, and today is an entrepreneur, just like her grandfather (who invented the flip top box), her father, and her mother. She spends part of her week taking classes at Notre Dame and the rest of the time she’s in New York City perfecting Markover, a real-time communication, editing, video and

conferencing program that's poised to take advantage of the latest cloud technology.

Falter, 22, is a design major and until she got involved with Markover with two other students – Stacey Milspaw and Brenden Kokoszka – worked during the summer for Sak's Fifth Avenue and Coca-Cola. "I found the working world wasn't for me," says Falter. "The communication process was tedious. You'd have to open and look at attachments, edit them and then e-mail them back.

"With Markover, we're bringing chat to business. You can look at images and video and converse over it all at once. It's real-time communication."

Last summer Falter went to New York for the Start Up Weekend event and that's where Markover got a lot of attention. In October, she won a pitch series in New York, got a \$10,000 grant from FedEx and is one

of 14 "tech stars" in the running for a \$120,000 investment.

When Falter isn't in New York or at Innovation Park in her office, she's working at the Gigot Center at Notre Dame, a place she says has helped nurture her entrepreneurship.

"When I'm there, even at 3 a.m., there are engineering students there. It's great to have people around to bounce ideas off of," she says.

Falter has high expectations for her business. "In five years I'd like to be on my way to a \$1 billion business," she says. "When you're building a business like this and dealing with technology like this it's reasonable to say you're going to get millions of users."

In the meantime, she's like a lot of other students who've gotten money from the family and who spends football Saturdays tailgating. "The family comes in for football games and I tailgate, but I think I saw one half of one football last year. I'm

living on a tight budget so it's nice to tailgate and get free food and take leftovers home."

Running his own business is something Doug Meece always wanted to do, even while he worked for Enterprise Rent-a-Car and State Farm Insurance. "I mowed yards as a kid to make money," says the marketing and business graduate of the University of Southern Indiana. "When I was a residence hall assistant at USI, I set up a business called Dial a Dog which delivered hot dogs around campus after hours."

Today, Meece lives in Valparaiso, and with help from the Center for Entrepreneurial Success at Purdue Calumet, has created an online sports camp registration program that is used by nearly all Division 1 universities in the country.

Meece operates ADM Camps and ADM Races, which is an online program for running events.

"The goal of the program is to

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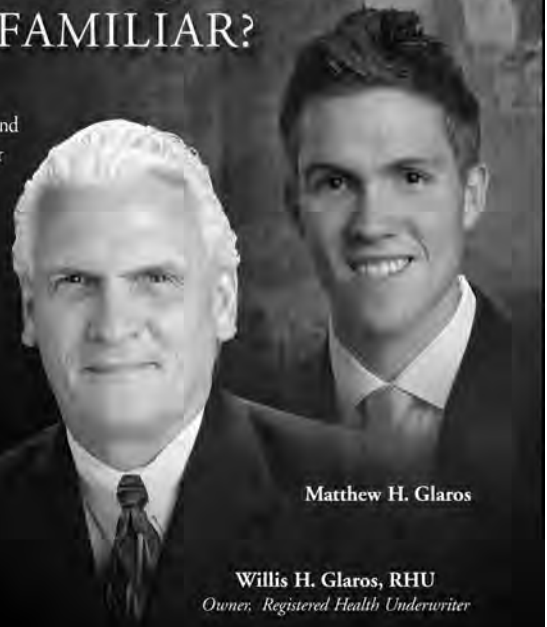
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RACE TO THE TOP Doug Meece operates ADM Camps and ADM Races, an online registration program for running events.

make the camp registration process more streamlined. If VU has a basketball camp, for instance, we do all

the online registration and administration. The coaches want to run the camp; they don't want to get involved with this stuff."

Currently, Meece, 33, has 350 clients, including a deal worth \$25,000 with the University of Notre Dame. Other recent clients include Eastern Michigan University, Purdue University wrestling, Purdue volleyball and University of Michigan wrestling.

"When I worked at Enterprise, it helped me learn the day-to-day operation of business. They have an entrepreneurial approach on how each office is run, so that really helped me in this."

Meece started his business after he was hired by what is today his main competitor. "He hired me and then three days later, his best friend lost his job so he told me that I was being let go so he could hire his friend."

With help from a Chicago web designer, Meece has created a program that allows universities and

coaches to create their own camp web page. Meece not only handles the registration, he handles the registration fees and other administrative responsibilities.

"Coaches only do business with people they trust, so this business is based a lot on personal relationships," says Meece, who has met and talked to coaches all over the country. "I've learned that people like doing business with people they like. People want to put a face to a name."

So even though it's important for Meece to have the latest technology to make online registration and payment as easy as possible, he also needs to make sure he's pressing the flesh with his clients.

"I knew this business would take off because I studied my competitors and learned what they were doing wrong," says Meece. "I found out what people didn't like about a site and then I fixed it on mine. I've streamlined the entire process." **BI**

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COVER STORY

continued from page 26

Runners-up: The Brassie, Chesterton; The Course at Aberdeen, Valparaiso; Pottawattomie County Club, Michigan City; Sand Creek Country Club, Chesterton; Youche Country Club, Crown Point; and White Hawk Country Club, Crown Point.

BEST PLACE FOR A VACATION GETAWAY WEEKEND

Winner: Marina Grand Hotel, New Buffalo, Mich.

Runners-up: Star Plaza, Merrillville; Serenity Springs, Michigan City; and French Lick Resort.

BEST HEALTH AND FITNESS FACILITY

Winner: Franciscan Omni 41 Health and Fitness, Schererville and Chesterton.

Runners-up: Duneland Health and Wellness, Chesterton; Valparaiso

continued on page 76



BEST GOLF COURSE The Course at Aberdeen, Valparaiso.

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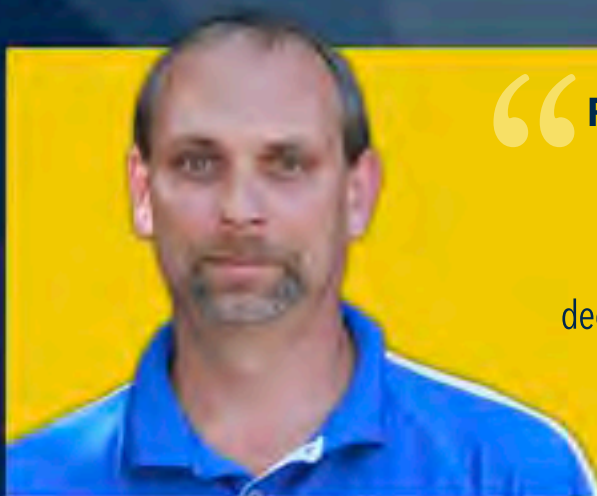
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Workforce 2025

The economy is coming back to life. Is the region's workforce prepared to cash in on the opportunities?

BY SHARI HELD

With the negative press the economy has generated over the last few years, it's easy to overlook the positives Northwest Indiana has to offer – the Dunes, the casinos, the steel mills, a great road and rail infrastructure and power sources.

"Northwest Indiana has some of the greatest assets in the Midwest, and I'm going to argue, some of the best in the nation," says Don Babcock, director of economic development for NIPSCO. "Years ago we had a strong economy and our economy is coming back now because of those assets. As the region becomes

stronger, the opportunities for great paying jobs will be on the rise."

The big question is: Will the workforce be prepared and ready to meet the needs of a rebounding economy?

A report on hiring in Northwest Indiana by The Center of Workforce Innovations projects nearly 27,000 job openings in the next five years. The biggest concentration will be in health care and transportation, distribution and logistics followed by manufacturing and construction and the trades. Many of these jobs will require special skills, and that presents a problem.

"Even with the serious unemployment we have, throughout the state

and the country, there are a number of jobs now that are staying open far too long because employers can't find workers with the right skills," says Michael Baird, a Valparaiso city councilman.

To ensure workforce development is ready to meet the demands of the future, Northwest Indiana educators, employers, economic developers and local politicians banded together to form the Regional Education and Employer Alliance for Developing Youth (RE2ADY) about three years ago. Its focus is to implement programs that will not only prepare students academically, but also teach them the soft skills needed for

success and make them aware of the opportunities in their own backyard.

"We want kids to know that they don't have to go to the East Coast or the West Coast or Texas to get really good jobs," Babcock says.

The emphasis isn't just on the young, however. And for good reason. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that by 2022, the number of workers age 65 and older will reach 13.2 million. Many of them will be better educated (in terms of college degrees) than their younger counterparts.

"The bulk of the employees of the future are already in the workforce today," says Mark Maassel, president and CEO of Northwest Indiana Forum. It's simple demographics. The number of students graduating from high school every year is a very small number compared to the number of adults that are working. We are going to see an ever increasing need for continued learning, life-long learning."

Lifelong learning is here to stay, although the concept may meet resistance, especially from those already in the workplace. "The idea is we will teach people how to learn because we don't know what the future is going to bring and what specific skills people are going to need," says Ralph Rogers, vice chancellor for academic affairs, Purdue University Calumet. That involves teaching people how to ask the right questions and how to find solutions and become problem-solvers. "That's the skill set people want, and that's the basis for preparing people for jobs we don't even know exist yet," he adds.

GETTING SCHOOL KIDS RE2ADY

"The goal of RE2ADY is to make sure that by 2025, 60 percent of the workforce in Northwest Indiana will have the kind of post-secondary education required to be successful in today's world," Baird says.

Schools are attacking the issue on all sides, beginning with assessment of students' skill sets in middle



CHALLENGING COURSEWORK Sarah Heming and Angel McCullough of the School City of Hobart's School of Health and Natural Sciences compare the freezing pointS of various liquids.

school to provide the programming that best fits their needs.

One such program is Reality Store, a partnership between Merrillville middle schools and the local Chamber of Commerce. The hands-on program helps kids tie a job of their choice to a paycheck, showing them the real-life implications a career choice can have on their lifestyle. They are also given situations that they have to work with: marriage,

children, divorce, illness. Students go from station to station where chamber members – bankers, mortgage brokers, insurance agents, Realtors and apartment renters, car dealers, hospital workers and lawyers – give them a reality check about costs and "what-if" situations.

"They have to figure out how they are going to spend their money and how far that money will go," says Tony Lux, superintendent, Merrillville

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Community School Corp. "If they run out of money they have to go back and make other decisions."

"Then, the freshman year we've put a major emphasis on helping students understand how important it is to graduate from high school and get that high school diploma," Lux says. "And that what they do as a freshman has great implications for being able to meet that goal to get that high school diploma. We also go through a four-year plan for identifying their career choices."

The School City of Hobart implemented a program called Career Pathways at the high school level to give students a head start on choosing and preparing for their careers. Students can earn credit toward four-year college degrees, two-year associates degrees or certifications. Students can explore different health care careers at the schools of Human Services and Health and Natural Sciences, earn up to 15 hours of college credit at the School of Pre-engineering and Industrial Technology or earn their CCNA (Certified Cisco Network Associate) from the Cisco Academy in the School of Business and Information Technology. The school also operates its own cookie business and preschool.

"We offer various electives across the different schools," says Peggy Buffington, superintendent, School City of Hobart. "The programs are innovative, challenging and rigorous. They broaden students' horizons because they are experimenting and discovering where their passions lie."

Both Merrillville and Hobart participate in WorkKeys, a national job skills assessment system that measures students' skills in relationship to what employers want. Students are awarded a certificate at a certain level and each level is matched to specific jobs. "The better their skills, the more jobs they qualify for and the higher the level of their certificate," Lux says. "This has really meant a lot to students in terms of having something that demonstrates their skill level when they apply for a job."

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WorkKeys is used by major Northwest Indiana employers. For example, Buffington notes that ArcelorMittal automatically interviews people who have a bronze certificate. "We are starting to see dividends of our work," she says. "At Merrillville and Hobart High Schools, well over 90-percent of our kids were eligible for a workplace certificate. That's pretty amazing."

According to Buffington, only one-third of students make it past their freshman year at four-year institutions, but offering courses for college credit can help turn that statistic around. "If students can get nine to 12 credit hours while in high school, their chance of success is increased because they have experienced the rigor of a college curriculum while in the familiar, nurturing environment of their high school," she says.

Purdue Calumet and Indiana University Northwest have partnered to offer a unique dual-credit program to high school students. High school teachers and university faculty work closely together to ensure the quality of instruction. The program has received recognition from the U.S. Department of Education and other schools nationwide.

"Many colleges have a dual credit program in partnership with high schools," Purdue Calumet's Rogers says. "What is quite a bit different with ours is the way we track data and that we are doing real-time quality control throughout the semester. We think it works very well because of its focus on quality and not just on credits."

A SHOT IN THE ARM

Purdue Calumet requires every student who entered school in the fall of 2008 and after, to take two courses in experiential learning – internships, co-ops, research projects, Capstone projects. "We believe in preparing our students for what comes after college," Rogers says. "To understand what will be expected and what the options are." This program is also doing well.

One student working at a Northwest Indiana hospital developed a color-coded patient banding system that is being adopted statewide and is being considered for adoption nationwide.

It's not all about four-year college degrees, however. Manufacturing is far from dead and two-year degrees can sometimes be obtained through

apprenticeship programs. "There's a strong partnership between the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers here in Northwest Indiana and Ivy Tech," Maassel says. "When you become a journeyman, a fully qualified electrician through the union apprenticeship program, you also have a two-year certification from Ivy Tech. U.S.

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Steel, Mittal, British Petroleum and NIPSCO, have all worked with Ivy Tech to create programs that help provide students with the skill sets necessary to go to work in those kinds of industries.”

“We are really trying to align the education, workforce development and economic development

together to make sure that they are all working hand-in-glove,” says Linda Woloshansky, president and CEO at the Center of Workforce Innovations. “We are continuing those alignments (from RE2ADY) into the adult workforce phase and hopefully right into jobs.”

One new adult education program

is GED Plus, which combines a high school diploma with some type of post-secondary education such as welding or bookkeeping or a certified nursing assistant. It debuted this year. “Getting a high school diploma or a GED isn’t enough anymore,” Woloshansky says. “They are able to acquire that GED and walk away with a marketable skill that they can apply immediately. It’s a little early to tell what the absolute results will be, but so far the folks who are engaged in this are thrilled.”

MOVING FORWARD

Maassel anticipates the trend for new jobs and new roles to continue

“The future is going to be for those people who try to solve problems; people who see opportunities and take risks.”

—Ralph Rogers, vice chancellor for academic affairs, Purdue University Calumet

along with the core manufacturing, petroleum refining, steel production and construction jobs. “I think entrepreneurial skills will grow in significance,” he says. “They are the companies that are growing most rapidly and employing the most new people.”

Rogers cites the potential the transportation, distribution and logistics sector has for the region, but also emphasizes the importance of entrepreneurs. “The future is going to be for those people who try to solve problems; people who see opportunities and take risks,” he says. “What we are looking for is a larger set of risk takers and access to capital. If we have those things, we can grow in many different ways.” **BQ**

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From Scratch or From Franchise?

*It's easy to pick a new business winner
when you choose to franchise.
But you may have to
check your creativity at the door.*

BY MICHAEL PUENTE

Tyler Carter and Lindsay Dudzik are young, ambitious and relatively new owners of businesses. But both took different routes in earning that distinguished title of business owner.

The 30-year-old Carter owns and operates the hottest new franchise restaurant in Northwest Indiana, Chick-fil-A, in Hobart. "The response has been overwhelming," Carter says.

Dudzik, meanwhile, opened her Pure Envy Salon and Spa in St. John last June, hoping her years as a hair stylist pays off. "It's going very well. It's better than I thought it would be," the 27-year-old Dudzik says.

The business model for both outlets, whether it's a franchise or start-from-scratch new business, is vastly different, each coming with its own set of skills, demands and expectations.

In Carter's case, he started working at a Chick-fil-A to make some extra cash while he went to college. That was nine years ago when Carter was studying management and marketing at Anderson University, a small Christian university in Anderson, Ind.

But it wasn't long before his superiors at a Chick-fil-A restaurant in

Anderson noticed just how hard working and dedicated Carter was. After earning his degree and MBA in 2003, Carter didn't bolt for a job on Wall Street or some big firm in Indianapolis. He decided to stay with Chick-fil-A.

"I'm really thankful and blessed to be with a company like Chick-fil-A," Carter says. "The values of Chick-fil-A and its positive influence on its employees and customers keep me motivated."

It wasn't too long before Carter moved up the management chain at Chick-fil-A. Soon, he was managing another outlet in Fort Wayne. Last year, a major opportunity called.

Chick-fil-A, with 1,600 outlets nationwide, offered Carter a chance to become an owner-operator with minimal financial investment for its newest store, near the Westfield Southlake Mall in Hobart. So with his wife and two young children in tow, Carter arrived in Northwest Indiana to open the store.

"We were kind of surprised by the response we received," Carter says of last October's opening of the Chick-fil-A store. Hundreds of customers camped outside the store to become the first in line when the restaurant opened its doors for the first time in Northwest Indiana. "The

response has been overwhelming," says Carter, now a Northwest Indiana resident.

Carter said the Chick-fil-A corporation, based in Atlanta, provides lots of training and support for its owner-operator. About 60 percent of all Chick-fil-A owner-operators come from within the ranks of the restaurant operation. "The other 40 percent come from all walks of life," Carter says.

But because becoming an owner-operator came with only a minimal financial investment, Carter says the company made a chance-of-a-lifetime even easier to achieve. "I didn't have the millions it takes to open a McDonald's or something like that," Carter says.

According to FranNet, a franchise consulting group based in Louisville, Ky., the number of U.S. franchise establishments is expected to increase by nearly 14,000 in 2012 with the number of jobs expected to grow by about 168,000.

Moreover, the economic output generated by franchise business is expected to grow by 5 percent, from \$745 billion to \$782 billion. And, according to World Franchising, there are more than 3,500 active franchise systems in North America.

Some of the top food service



ENTHUSIASTIC CUSTOMERS
Tyler Carter owns and operates
the franchised Chick-fil-A in Hobart.

industry franchises, says World Franchising, are basically those that you find in a typical suburb or mall: Arby's, Applebee's, 7-Eleven, Church's Chicken, Little Caesar's and Auntie Annie's pretzels. For retail, Radio Shack and Snap-On Tools are listed among the top franchises.

FranNet's Chris Coleman, who helps pair the right franchise for

prospective clients, says not all franchises take a huge investment. "Most people, when they think of a franchise, they think of McDonald's, Subway, something like that," Coleman says. "But there's been a pretty good shift in demand for franchise businesses that are very low investment and service based. Maybe something you can run out of your

own home. Fewer employees. Let's just call it more simplified business models."

Coleman says franchises are a great option for entrepreneurs, since "the advantage is that it's already been done before," Coleman says. "There are blueprints, or a road map – a strategy that's in place that you follow vs. going out and starting on your own, from scratch."

But whether it's opening your own business from scratch or investing in a proven franchise model like a Chick-fil-A, there are a lot of decisions that need to be made, says Janet A. Fye, regional director of the North Central Indiana Small Business Development Center in South Bend.

"We help our clients make informed decisions. We are going to do a reality check," Fye says. "We're going to really sit down and talk about what it is you're thinking about and the feasibility of it. Are you going to make money out of it? That's really the point isn't it?"

Fye says the center works with people who want to start a business or to grow and expand an existing business. "About 52 percent of our clients are established businesses," Fye says. "Sometimes people will ask us about a franchise. Franchises are near and dear to my heart."

Fye's family owned an Arthur Treacher's Fish and Chips franchise restaurant in the South Bend area. She said there are pros and cons to investing in a franchise as opposed to a new business.

The benefits, she says, is that most of the hard decisions are already made for you. "The greatest pro is you've got a business model there. Those people researched the suppliers; all the recipes are coming to you, all the business procedures. It's basically a turn-key. You walk in, you pay the franchise licensing fee," Fye says.

"For example, like Subway, people already know you. They expect a certain quality. If I have my own sub sandwich shop, and even if it's 100 times better than Subway, you're not

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going to know that. You've got to spend a lot of money getting people into your restaurant."

Fye says the main drawback is little creativity is allowed in owning a franchise. "The con is the very thing that is also a pro: How much creativity does that allow?" Fye says.

Fye also adds that since a lot of the bigger decisions are made for you, it doesn't prepare a franchise owner well to go it alone. "Owning a franchise does not necessarily prepare you to own a business because a lot of your decisions, a good number of your decisions, were made for you in a franchise," Fye says. "You don't worry about food costs because these things came to you prepared."

But let's say your business is making money and is successful. Does that mean it's ready to be franchised? "No," says Mark Siebert, who founded the iFranchise Group, a franchise consulting firm in 1999. The firm, based in Homewood, Ill., works with some of the top franchises in the country.

"Just because it's profitable, doesn't mean it's going to work as a franchise," Siebert says. The main question a person needs to know about their business is will it work in a different market?

Siebert also says a business has to have that "sizzle." "Is it something that people want to buy as a franchise?" Siebert says. "Is it something that people want to be involved in?"

Siebert also says a business looking to franchise also has to be more successful than the typical business. He says there are three reasons why a business owner may want to franchise their business: speed of growth, motivated management and capital.

He says it's difficult for a business owner to borrow \$200,000 to \$300,000 to start a new store, outlet or restaurant. "That's an awful lot of money. They would have no way to grow that fast. So you use another person's capital," Siebert says.

He says there are people who are ready to learn how to do "what you do." "You expand yourself by teach-

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ing somebody else. It allows you to grow much faster," he says.

That's exactly what's happening to Jim Weaver, who opened his first Wings Etc. Restaurant & Pub in 1994 in Mishawaka.

Weaver didn't come from a restaurant background. In fact, he worked as a public accountant for 14 years, doing computer audits for a company's IT department. "I was doing a lot of traveling and I decided when my last kid was in college that I wanted to make a change. I always wanted to open my own business, but I didn't really know what that was going to be and how I was going to do it. But soon enough, I left my job and became a 'wing slinger.'"

In no time, Weaver opened his second restaurant in South Bend in 1998. But much of the chain's growth came between 2004 and 2007 when Wings Etc. expanded through franchising and pushed the total number

of stores to 20, with most in north central Indiana, a few in suburban Chicago and southwest Michigan.

The weak economy kept more stores from opening but a rebound is leading to new restaurants in Fort Wayne and Indianapolis. Six of the stores are considered "corporate" stores, the rest operated by franchisees.

"The way to grow the business is to get qualified franchisees and that's been tough with the market," says Weaver, who lives in Niles, Mich. "If you want to grow, you've got to do more than just what you can do on your own, that's for sure."

Weaver says the business is looking to expand more in the coming year. "That's primarily because of the rebound in the economy, we hope," he says. "We experienced some really tough times but we're growing again."

Lindsay Dudzik is running her

own business without a background in business but a lot of industry experience. She worked for another salon for eight years and thought it was time to venture out on her own.

"Because I was young, I wanted the freedom of making my own hours. It was kind of a spur-of-the-moment decision," Dudzik says. "I have a big client base and we're just across the street from the high school."

That's Lake Central High School in St. John, where Dudzik graduated in 2002. She says she never thought about opening a chain salon primarily because of the sizeable financial investment that would come with it.

She feels small businesses have an advantage over corporate owned businesses. "You can incorporate your own rules and prices and things like that," Dudzik said. "People in a recession tend to support small businesses before they support a corporation."

Opening Pure Envy in June 2011, Dudzik employs seven people and is gearing up for the all-important prom season. "We can't wait. We do a lot of the services that high school girls like. We have a very young staff who are into the trends and stuff young girls love," Dudzik said. "We're full service. We do massages, facials, manicures and pedicures."

Dudzik has a word of advice for those looking to start their own business. "Keep in mind, it takes a lot of dedication and commitment to get where you want to be," Dudzik says. "Make sure you have the background in that field to support it."

As of now, Dudzik has no plans to franchise her business.

Back in Hobart, Carter says he doesn't feel at all stifled or confined by Chick-fil-A's recipe for success. He hopes to be in a position to own and operate another Chick-fil-A outlet one day.

But first, it's finding a home to settle down with his family in Northwest Indiana.

"It's been tremendous so far," Carter says. 

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Top 20 Franchises

Research conducted by Entrepreneur.com, World Franchising and BusinessInsider.com, shows these were the top 20 franchises that opened in 2011. Complete results of the research were published in Entrepreneur magazine.

1. **Hampton Hotels.** Startup costs range from \$3.7 million to \$13 million.
2. **am/pm.** The startup cost for the convenience store and gas station is \$1.7 million to \$7.5 million.
3. **McDonald's.** The nation's top fast-food chain has startup costs of \$1 million to \$1.8 million.
4. **7-Eleven Inc.** The startup cost for this franchise ranges from \$30,000 to \$604,000.
5. **Supercuts.** A franchise for this hair salon will cost \$112,000 to \$234,000.
6. **Days Inn.** This hotel chain has franchise fees ranging from \$192,000 to \$6.4 million.
7. **Vanguard Cleaning Systems.** A franchise fee for this commercial cleaning business is \$8,000 to \$38,000.
8. **Servpro.** Startup costs for this insurance and disaster restoration/cleaning franchise range from \$127,000 to \$174,000.
9. **Subway.** The franchise fee for this submarine sandwich franchise ranges from \$84,000 to \$258,000.
10. **Denny's Inc.** The startup cost for this full-service family restaurant franchise goes from \$1.1 million to \$2.3 million.
11. **Jan-Pro Franchising International Inc.** Opening a franchise of this commercial cleaning business will cost from \$3,000 to \$50,000.
12. **Hardee's.** This fast-food franchise fee ranges from \$1.1 million to \$1.5 million.
13. **Pizza Hut Inc.** The franchise fee for this iconic pizza place ranges from \$300,000 to \$2.1 million.
14. **Kumon Math & Reading Centers.** This educational tutoring franchise costs from \$36,000 to \$145,000.
15. **Dunkin' Donuts.** The cost of this doughnut and coffee franchise ranges from \$358,000 to \$1.9 million.
16. **KFC Corp.** Startup cost for this fast-food chicken restaurant range from \$1.3 million to \$2.4 million.
17. **Jazzercise Inc.** The cost of this dance fitness franchise ranges from \$2,900 to \$75,000.
18. **Anytime Fitness.** The franchise fee for this 24-hour fitness center ranges from \$44,000 to \$300,000.
19. **Matco Tools.** The fee for this tools and mechanics' service business ranges from \$79,000 to \$188,000.
20. **Stratus Building Solutions.** The fee for this commercial cleaning business ranges from \$3,400 to \$57,700.



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A Successful State of Mind

Salon and spa owner fashions an attractive business story.

BY RICK A. RICHARDS

Keeping up with Patti Kobe isn't easy. She drives herself hard to succeed and the growth of her salon and spa business offers plenty of proof that her formula of pushing herself to the limit is paying dividends.

After working as a hair stylist and a traveling consultant and representative for hair care supplier Redken for several years, Kobe decided she could do it better on her own. In 1999 she opened State of Mind Salon and Day Spa in Crown Point.

"At the time I had two babies and \$100 to my name," says Kobe. But the 600-square-foot salon at 94th Avenue and Broadway in Merrillville proved to be the perfect launching pad for a business today that has grown to 6,000 square feet. That expansion happened in 2003 just two blocks away at 96th and Broadway in Crown Point. She bought land and built a stand-alone operation that some people thought would never succeed because there was nothing else around it. Today, it sits in the middle of a thriving retail and commercial area.

Just last month, Kobe added Inspire Salon and Spa, a 2,000-square-foot salon at Aberdeen south of Valparaiso.

Kobe's business, which generates \$2 million a year, has 30 employees and serves 15,000 guests annually.

"My passion is helping others," says the 42-year-old Kobe. She says she'd like to retire by the time she is 47 or 48, which is one reason she's preparing her company for employee ownership.

"They'll own 49 percent and I'll own 51 percent," says Kobe. "There is an entrepreneurial fire that burns

inside me. When I was 17 or 18 or 19 and working in a salon, I was a bit snot-nosed but there was a group of hairdressers there who took me under their wing. They never asked for anything and they taught me the business. I owe them to pay it back."

Kobe's business, which generates \$2 million a year, has 30 employees and serves 15,000 guests annually.

When she opened her first location, she approached Mercantile Bank (it's now BMO Harris Bank) and asked what she needed to do to get a loan to open her business. The bank told her and a year later, she returned with her checklist completed and got the money.

But when she decided to open her Valparaiso location, she didn't go to a bank. "I was determined that when I expanded I was going to self-finance it. I wanted to do it on my own." And she did.

Kobe's vision, however, was more than just a hair salon. "I went into this with a budget and a plan. We provide hair services, have a corporate meeting room, a men's and women's locker room and a spa."

The smaller location in Valparaiso, which opened in March, isn't a mini version of the Crown Point salon, but a place with an atmosphere all its own. "I needed a place where

some of my overflow guests could go. They're only 13 miles apart, so it was close enough to do that."

Even though Kobe expects to walk away from the day-to-day business world in five years or so, that doesn't mean she's stopped looking ahead.

"I've always looked ahead. I had my one, five, 10 and 20 years goals set when I was 19," says Kobe. "In the fourth grade I decided I wanted to be a hair stylist. While I was in Hebron High School, I was attending beauty school. Right after I graduated from high school, I graduated from Don Roberts Beauty School."

Kobe has no formal business management training, but she does have an innate sense of business. "I study successful people, like Walt Disney. He was so far ahead of his time. I also have experience raising money for other causes. I can look at a P&L statement and tell where the problems are. I can put numbers together.

"I have the ability to take emotion out of the numbers on a P&L sheet. I can tell when it's full of smoke and mirrors. The first time I sat down with bankers it scared the heck out of me. Today, I know what questions to ask and the information they need."

Kobe is the visionary behind her business and its growth, but the day-to-day management, including taking care of the books is done by her husband, Tony, who quit his job at U.S. Steel a few years ago to join his wife in the business. They have two children, Anton, 17, a student at LaLumiere School in LaPorte County, and Kyle, 13, a student at Howe Military Academy in north-east Indiana. **BQ**



"I'VE ALWAYS LOOKED AHEAD."
Salon and spa owner Patti Kobe
would like to retire by the time
she is 47 or 48.

Michael Pound

Head of Koontz-Wagner in South Bend inherited love of engineering from his father.

BY RICK A. RICHARDS

Michael Pound has become fully Americanized since coming here on a two-year temporary work visa 23 years ago. Not the fast-food, shopping mall kind of Americanized, but the full embrace of freedom and opportunity kind of Americanized.

Even so, he still misses the ability to drive his car very fast whenever he wants, dark English beer and Radio 4, the BBC's news and talk channel. He also doesn't get to run as much as he used to (he's completed six marathons) and he misses out on the annual National Three Peaks Challenge in the United Kingdom, a 24-hour marathon that has relay teams climbing the highest peaks in Scotland, the U.K. and Wales.

Even so Pound wouldn't give up the opportunities and experiences he's had in the United States.

He grew up in Nottingham in the industrial midlands of England where his father was a manufacturing engineer for Raleigh Bicycles. That's where Pound got his love of engineering and manufacturing.

As the chief executive officer for Koontz-Wagner in South Bend, Pound is following in his father's footsteps, albeit a few thousand miles from home.

"I grew up from the age of five visiting factories with him every so often," says Pound. "There would always be designs and doodles in the margins of newspapers so I always say I was doomed to be an engineer from day one."

Pound says the word "doomed" with a big smile because he clearly enjoys what he does. He especially likes visiting the production floor and showing visitors the company's

control rooms that are shipped all over the world.

The custom-built control rooms range in size from a phone booth to a small house and are used around the world in oil and gas exploration and electric generation. A typical control room is 15 feet by 60 feet, 13 feet high and weighs about 150,000 pounds. The control rooms are packed with sensitive monitoring devices and inside the control room, they're protected from the harsh elements of a desert or rain forest.

After graduating from Loughborough University of Technology in England, Pound worked briefly for two manufacturers before joining Ohmeda (a division of BOC Group) in 1985. He was on the medical equipment side of the company that designed and manufactured anesthesia vaporizers.

"We had a global strategy meeting for company executives and it ended up in a bar one night with the president," says Pound. "He asked me what I wanted to do next. At the time I was plant manager and I told him I'd like to run the whole thing."

"He said, 'We'll have to get you some sales and marketing experience. How do you feel about coming across to the States?'" Pound said he would, but he didn't think much about the conversation. After all, it was being held in a bar.

Three months later, the president called Pound and he found himself bound for Murray Hill, N.J. "I arrived on a temporary two-year visa. After a year, they asked me to go and run a division in Atlanta," says Pound. He did and wound up spending seven years in Atlanta and when he was asked to return to the U.K. He didn't want to.

"By this time my kids had gone through the education system here and I enjoyed life in the U.S. so I went looking for something else," says Pound. That something else was Koontz-Wagner, so in 1996, he moved to Indiana to run the company's South Bend Controls division.

In 2002, Pound became a U.S. citizen. "That was a big step, but I've always considered myself a kind of global citizen. I enjoy travel and I enjoy other cultures. Like my accent, it's rather difficult to give it up like my roots in England, which I'm always going to have."

Pound says he became fully assimilated seven years ago when he married a Chicago woman. They now live in Michigan City.

Koontz-Wagner is a portfolio of companies that provide industrial maintenance services, industrial controls, aerospace and medical design and manufacturing. "Koontz-Wagner is a diversified electrical engineering company and until recently I would have said they're involved in everything from aerospace to medical to power and gas to steel," says Pound. "Those are the industries we serve."

The array of different businesses has had a moderating effect on the company through the current economic downturn. "We have some businesses that immediately went into recession in 2008," says Pound. "We had a maintenance services business that repairs the big electric motors up to 13,500 horsepower in steel mills. It was like someone switching a light off. Business just stopped."

But other businesses weren't hit as hard. When one segment was down, another was up and when that segment began to fall, another business group was doing well.



PHOTO BY RICK RICHARDS

"I'VE ALWAYS CONSIDERED MYSELF A KIND OF GLOBAL CITIZEN." Michael Pound, who grew up in England, is chief executive officer for Koontz-Wagner in South Bend.

"My challenge is balancing all of that," says Pound. "A lot of the difficulty in the recession is that there is a fair amount of business out there, but customers were slow to pull the trigger. Everybody wanted to do projects, but they weren't sure when and where the money was going to be available."

In spite of the sluggish economy, Pound says Koontz-Wagner is on track for its best year ever. The company has hired nearly 60 people this year, bringing employment up to 327. At the same time, the company sold its South Bend Controls business, even though it was turning in great numbers.

So why sell? "We're owned by an

investment group, and that's what they do," says Pound.

As he walks through the sprawling complex on South Bend's west side near the airport, he says he is excited about the future of the company. "One of the biggest things I have to do is grow the business. We're looking at acquisitions and becoming more diverse geographically.

"Right now we're at probably \$75 or \$80 million in sales and I'd like to see this company over the \$100 million range in sales. I want us to be successful in bringing products to market and in customer service.

"The two things we've built our company on are customers and

employees. It's that simple," says Pound. "I love interacting with customers. This week, I've had three visits from international customers.

"That's when I put my sales hat on. That's really fascinating to me," says Pound. "I never would have been a good salesman; I'm not good at cold calls and I'm not good at rejection. But once the fish is on the hook, I can explain to people why they should deal with Koontz-Wagner. That collaborative work with the customer, that's what turns me on every day.

"On the employee side I've always loved leading a team. I prefer to lead and not tell. That's not to say all interaction is smooth and wonderful, but we have some amazingly loyal people. We had a guy retire today who had been here 41 years. That is so rare this day and age."

Pound says one other responsibility Koontz-Wagner has is to support the community.

"We rely on the community around here to provide our workforce, educate our workforce. It's important to give back to the community. We try to do a few things, especially on the education front like sponsorship of local high school robotics teams and things like that," says Pound.

Beyond that, Pound has become a big booster of South Bend and northern Indiana. "Over and above those kinds of charitable and community things, one of the biggest things I can do is sell the area," says Pound, who points to the University of Notre Dame, Indiana University South Bend and Ivy Tech as valuable assets for the community.

"We still have a fairly thriving manufacturing industry. It's not as large as it used to be, it's not Studebaker and not Bendix, but it's small world leading companies," says Pound. "One of our roles is to make sure the word gets out."

Pound sees that as a duty that comes with the opportunity and freedom he enjoys in the United States. "This country is big in all kinds of ways - geographically and in opportunity. And it's exciting." **EQ**

Winning Team

Former NFL lineman builds fitness business.

BY RICK A. RICHARDS

Jared Tomich is a pretty imposing guy. He stands 6 feet, 3 inches tall and his weight isn't far off from the 283 pounds he carried when he played in defensive lineman in the National Football League.

In the five years since he left the game, he's proud of the fact that he's still fit. "It's what I've done since high school," he says.

Tomich is the owner of Fuel Fitness, which has six locations – five in Lake County and one in Crete, Ill. He was a football standout at Lake Central High School, was a member of the University of Nebraska football team where he was a member of its national championship team.

By the time he graduated from Nebraska, he was a two-time All-American and became a second-round draft pick of the New Orleans Saints, where he played for four years under legendary coach Mike Ditka. Tomich also played two seasons with the Green Bay Packers.

When Tomich, 37, walked away from football in 2003, the advice of one of his coaches was ringing in his ears. "He sat down with me when I got there and told me to get a job every off season. He told me to do something because a football career is short and I needed to have different experiences. It was the greatest advice I ever got," says Tomich.

And while his six-year NFL career appears at first glance to be short, it's far longer than the season and a half average of most defensive linemen.

He took his coach's advice to heart. When he lived in New Orleans, he spent his summers as a Harley-Davidson motorcycle mechanic. When he was with Green Bay, he was a strength coach for a high school.

And that, as it turns out, is where

Tomich found his calling. He knew that once players left the NFL, too many of them became sedentary and overweight and had health problems. He didn't want to be one of them.

That led him to start Fuel Fitness five years ago. His first location was a 16,000-square-foot building in Cedar Lake. His newest location covers 40,000 square feet in Crown Point and includes an indoor soccer field. His other Lake County locations are in Schererville, Highland and Winfield.

Each location is filled with the most up-to-date exercise equipment, has a staff of personal trainers and offers more than 500 classes from martial arts to nutrition.

That's also spawned Ignite Sports Performance, a youth and personal training business that operates as a part of Fuel Fitness. It's a program where high school and college-bound athletes from Northwest Indiana can go to get specialized training and to get in peak condition for the upcoming season.

"When you look at the obesity in the country today – 15 to 16 percent of our children are obese – it makes you want to do something," says Tomich. "We're doing a lot more sitting in front of the TV and computer. You just don't see kids outdoors like you used to."

Tomich has built up a client list of schools from across the region. He says it energizes him when he interacts with youngsters at schools.

"I can go to a school which is a ton of fun. It helps that I played professional football," he says. "That gets their attention. If I didn't have that, it would be hard to get my foot in the door. That's why it's so important to be a good role model."

Tomich says that's why it's impor-

tant for him to set an example when it comes to fitness. "I enjoy it, but it's harder on your own. When I played football, everything was regimented and you knew where you had to be at what time and what you were going to be doing. Now, I have to be self motivated."

And that's part of the message he brings to children and to his growing list of business clients. Fuel Fitness also works with companies across the region to set up fitness and wellness programs. Besides his degree in business and communications, Tomich also is a certified child nutritionist.

His work with children has taken on a whole new meaning now that he and his wife, Michaeline, have a 20-month-old son, Jackson.

Among the dozens of business clients Tomich has are Schilling & Co., Strack & Van Til, ArcelorMittal and UPS. "I don't do this on my own," says Tomich, giving credit to the 175 employees he says play a big role in helping keep his clients fit.

"Businesses have more of a sense of the importance of wellness today," says Tomich. "The health of employees can affect the bottom line, and employers know it. It affects insurance costs and companies are seeing an improvement in reduced costs with fit employees."

Tomich says Fuel Fitness not only visits companies to work with employees on site, but many clients set up membership programs so employees can visit the fitness center when it's convenient for them.

He says he expects the company to continue to grow as more companies embrace fitness and wellness. "One of the things we tell people is to figure out what your goals are. Is it fitness, wellness, or do you want to lose weight? If you know your

IGNITING AN INTEREST IN FITNESS Everyone wants to work out with Jared Tomich, shown here with Dean Ricci at Tomich's Schererville location.



diet isn't in line with what it should be, we can help you with a dietician.

"The more educated a person is about wellness and fitness, the better they will be," says Tomich.

"We've all got excuses on why we're not in shape. What we try to do is make things as convenient as possible and take those excuses away," says Tomich.

He's applied that to his own training routine. "I work out with a trainer because I have a hard time holding myself accountable." ■

Healthy Employees

Wellness programs benefit workers and employers alike.

BY RICK A. RICHARDS

It's hard to find any disagreement with the idea that proper exercise and the right diet can do wonders, and it's a formula Northwest Indiana companies are embracing for their workers.

A growing number of companies are finding that encouraging workers to stay fit can help lower their insurance costs and it makes their workers happier. That's a trend noted prominently in a 2010 study by Dr. Meredith Rosenthal of Harvard University.

Rosenthal's study shows that 63 percent of all companies have some sort of fitness or wellness program for their workers. And to encourage workers to take advantage of those programs, the study shows companies offer a variety of incentives worth an average of \$430.

That's exactly what the Franciscan Alliance has discovered, says Sister Aline Schultz, corporate vice president. "The healthier employees are, the more it reduces expenses. It helps you manage chronic conditions better and it makes employees feel they're doing the best they can," says Schultz.

The Franciscan Alliance has created a program used by employees at all 14 of its hospitals. Schultz says most of the health care facilities it operates have an in-house gym and for those that don't, options are available to use nearby gyms.

"We're a firm believer in a healthy mind, body and spirit," says Schultz. "Staying fit is an integral part of that."

Along with the physical work-



"WHEN EMPLOYEES ARE HEALTHIER IT LOWERS THE COST OF INSURANCE, AND THEY'RE HAPPIER, TOO." Tami Janda is wellness coordinator for Centier Bank.

outs, Schultz says employees receive newsletters and information about nutrition and dietary classes, blood pressure screening and other health-related education classes.

"We have a population who are smokers and obese," admits Schultz. To reach them and encourage them to take part in fitness and wellness programs, the Franciscan Alliance offers incentives that can reduce the monthly out-of-pocket cost for insurance coverage by as much as \$60. Employees who meet the thresholds for controlling blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol and other benchmarks can save as much as \$720 a year.

Carlos Celis helps employees at Franciscan Alliance meet those goals. Celis is in charge of fitness program for five Northwest Indiana hospitals.

"The goal is to get people moving," says Celis, who received his degree in exercise fitness at Purdue University.

One program going on right now at Franciscan Alliance is a 10,000 steps program. All employees, regardless of their physical condition, are encouraged to walk 10,000 steps each quarter. Employees receive a pedometer to count their steps as a way to encourage them to walk more. Celis says 200 employees are participating in the program.

Over the past two years, Celis says Franciscan Alliance offered 63 different programs like that to employees and more than 5,000 people took part. They logged more than 64,000 miles and lost a combined total of 600 pounds.

"I think it's definitely getting more people interested," says Celis.

Gary Miller, the owner of Prompt Ambulance in Highland, has made employee fitness a big part of his corporate philosophy. That comes from a belief that healthy employees are better employees, but also because of an obesity crisis in the country.

"This is a very physical job and I hate to see any of my workers get hurt while on the job," says Miller.

"When I worked an ambulance 25 or 30 years ago, it was rare to get a call for someone who weighed more than 275 pounds. Today, it's a daily occurrence." Some calls have

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been for people 300 or 400 pounds or more.

Prompt Ambulance has six major bases and provides ambulance service in an area extending from Lake County east to South Bend and south to Lafayette. "We've had to buy five special bariatric ambulances with automatic stretchers and wenchers," says Miller.

"We've noticed that our population is getting larger. We've had to change our lifestyle here because of that."

Along with that, Miller says his company is responding to more calls involving diabetes, a symptom of obesity.

"We've partnered with a couple of gyms in the area where our employees can go. If they go regularly, we reimburse them for their fees," says Miller. "We also give discounts on insurance premiums. But there's



HEALTHY MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT Franciscan Alliance employees work on 10,000-steps-a-day program.

only so much I can do. The employees have to be motivated to take advantage of the opportunity."

Of his 200 employees, Miller says half are members of the Omni Fitness Center in Schererville. In the company's regular newsletter, Miller emphasizes the importance of wellness and fitness by including healthy recipes.

Tami Janda is the wellness coordinator for Centier Bank, which has its own fitness gym. "We've seen that when employees are healthier

it lowers the cost of insurance, and they're happier, too."

Janda has been with Centier for 15 years and says the bank was one of the region's pioneers when it came to emphasizing employee fitness and wellness. "It takes time to build a program," she says. "It starts with proper screening. What are we going

to do with the data? What are the employees going to do with the data?"

"There are so many wellness services that are available, the first focus needs to be engagement. You have to get people engaged first."

At Centier's corporate office in Merrillville, employees, their spouses and significant others can take advantage of the onsite gym, says Janda. "We can design programs for each individual. We have trainers who go over your goals to set up something specifically for you."

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Janda says the program also includes education classes on nutrition and services ranging from reflexology to massage therapy. Any costs associated with the program can be included as a payroll deduction.

"We have learned through trial and error that there has to be a monetary commitment from the employees. They have to feel like they're invested in the program in order to take full advantage of it," says Janda.

Over the years, Janda says Centier has seen its insurance costs decline. "There have been a couple of spikes with a bad year or two, but the trend has been going down."

Currently, Centier is focusing on weight loss and obesity. "Weight management programs are important right now."

One benefit of the program, says Janda, is low employee turnover. "Over the last two years, our turnover rate was only 7 percent. "Productivity is part of the reason the bank does this."

At Horseshoe Casino in Hammond, the approach leans more toward education, says Dawn Reynolds Pettit, regional vice president of human resources.

"We have a wellness nurse on staff," says Pettit. "She meets with each employee and their spouse and provides biometric screening and a wellness guide. She hosts brown-bag seminars at lunch and also deals with mental wellness."

While Horseshoe does not have an onsite gym, Pettit says the company provides discounted membership to area gymnasiums.

"For the past three years we've done what we call the Big Melt-down. It's a 12-week program where employees lose weight. We emphasize healthy meals. Diet and exercise go hand in hand. The winning team gets discounted insurance rates and a Wii Fit. Education is a huge part of what we do."

During the spring and summer, Horseshoe Casino hosts a farmer's market where fresh fruit and produce is sold. Pettit says the nurse

holds education classes at the market and explains how the items being sold can be included as part of a healthy diet.

"The bottom line is that employees aren't very educated about wellness," says Pettit. "We think if we educate them it can drive down the cost of insurance. That's why we do screenings."

"And with the screenings, we've been able to do early detection of cancer and it's literally saved a person's life. You can't put a price on something like that," says Pettit. "When folks feel better about themselves, they're happier and when they're happier, they perform better on the job." **EQ**



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NOTEWORTHY NEWS BITS

continued from page 14

center will be devoted to outdoor and environmental research projects. ... **ommyx Ltd.** a water monitoring and management company based in Israel, has opened an office in the **Purdue Research Park** in Merrillville. The company monitors water for flood warnings, sewage systems, water tanks and fuel tanks. The company was founded in 2007 by **Alon Schwartz** and **Aviv Peled**.

TOURISM

A study by the **National Park Service** shows the **Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore** contributes more than \$63 million to the local economy. That's the amount of money spent by

visitors to the park in nearby communities for food, lodging and gasoline. In addition, the park supports 658 jobs. In 2010, the park attracted more than 2.1 million visitors with 24,000 of them staying overnight. ... **Speros Batistatos**, president and CEO of the **South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority**, said in a report that tourism contributed \$1.6 billion to Lake County's economy in 2010 and generated 14,000 jobs. ... The **South Bend/Mishawaka Convention and Visitors Bureau** has awarded \$75,000 in grants to 18 events and organizations. They are the **Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition**, **Stude-**

baker Driver's Club International Meet, **Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure**, **Sunburst Races**, **Downtown South Bend Inc. Artbeat**, **Oliver Mansion**, **Continental Amateur Baseball Association**, **Bike for Hospice**, **South Bend Fire Department River Rescue School**, **IUSB Denyce Graves Weekend**, **St. Joseph County Parks Sugar Camp Days**, **Pastime Tournaments**, **Broadway Theater League "My Fair Lady,"** **South Bend Parks Blues & Ribs Fest**, **Summer Restaurant Week**, **Studebaker National Museum Come See the Muppets**, **Studebaker-Bendix Trail** and **Call to Action Conference: Bethel**.

Building Green

Energy audits, sustainable building and consumer education.

In December, President Barack Obama announced a \$4 billion initiative to increase the energy efficiency of buildings over the next two years. "Upgrading the energy efficiency of America's buildings is one of the fastest, easiest and cheapest ways to save money, cut down on harmful pollution, and create good jobs right now," Obama said in a statement.

According to the United States Green Building Council, buildings in the United States are responsible for 39 percent of carbon dioxide emissions, 40 percent of energy consumption, 13 percent water consumption and 15 percent of GDP per year, making green building a source of significant economic and environmental opportunity.

For businesses, a commercial building energy audit is often the first step toward sustainability. As senior director of sustainability services at Chicago's Delta Institute, Valparaiso resident Abby Corso helps businesses identify energy-saving oppor-



tunities while pinpointing capital costs and implementation payback. Delta also offers assistance with retrofit energy efficiency improvements and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification.

Jeff Eriks, partner and manager/LEED AP Cambridge Construction in Griffith, says that it is relatively easy to integrate sustainable building practices, especially if they are planned into the design process. Some strategies include: encouraging daylighting to minimize interior lighting loads, using high-efficiency HVAC, using bio-swales for natural manage-

ment of runoff, and the list goes on.

The recently formed Northwest Indiana Green Building Alliance focuses mainly on the residential market. Since early 2011 local area home builders, developers, subcontractors, material suppliers and industry representatives, architects, real estate professionals, energy auditors, appraisers and local conservationists and preservationists have been sharing best practices and hosting events.

Sarah Oudman of Treasure Homes in DeMotte serves as the spokesperson for NWIGBA. "Education is key. Consumers will not buy what they do not value, and they do not value what they do not understand." ■

Kathy Sipple, founder and CEO of My Social Media Coach in Valparaiso, offers social media marketing training and strategic consulting services for businesses. Her involvement in sustainability includes work with the Valparaiso chapter of Green Drinks International and 219 GreenConnect.


TRANSPORTATION

The **Indiana High Speed Rail Association** has partnered with business students at **Indiana University Northwest** to provide them with real-world experience in studying transportation needs. The study will look at the potential of high-speed passenger rail service through Northwest Indiana ... The **Gary Jet Center** recently dedicated a new 40,000-square-foot, \$5 million hangar at **Gary/Chicago International Airport**. Gary Jet Center has three hangars at the airport and 48 employees. ... **Gary/Chicago International Airport** has signed an agreement with **Hertz Rental Car** and **Enterprise Rent-a-Car** to serve passengers from **Allegiant Airlines**, which began flying from the airport earlier this year. Both companies signed one-year leases for \$180 a month plus 10 percent of their gross receipts. ... The **Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District**, which

runs the **South Shore Railroad** commuter line, will install free Wi-Fi for passengers. NICTD signed an agreement with **Q Rail LLC** to provide the service, which should be available by the end of the year ... The **St. Lawrence Seaway System** in 2011 reported that its 53rd shipping season posted a 2.5 percent increase in tonnage to 37.5 million tons. It was led by increases in iron ore, bulk liquids, salt and scrap metal, while declines were reported in grain. ... **Greyhound** has announced it is closing its Hammond terminal after 50 years of operation. Although 20 buses a day will continue to stop at the location, the services inside the terminal have been closed. The only full-service terminal in Northwest Indiana is at the **Gary Metro Center**. ... **South Bend Regional Airport** has completed work on a \$14 million upgrade and renovation of its passenger terminal. There will be more amenities for passengers, including a newly designed

security screening area that should make it easier for passengers to get to the boarding area. ... **Napleton River Oaks** has announced it is moving its Lincoln dealership from Hammond to Calumet City, Ill. ... **Gary Chicago International Airport**, the **Canadian National Railway** and the **Regional Development Authority** have reached an agreement that will allow the airport's main runway to be lengthened. Canadian National will move its tracks to allow the expansion, which is a \$166 million project. The RDA is funding \$30 million of the project.

UTILITIES

Kathleen O'Leary has been named president of **NIPSCO** and will oversee all regulatory and economic development efforts. Previously, O'Leary was with **NiSource**, NIPSCO's parent company, and before that was with **Columbia Gas** of Virginia, another NiSource subsidiary. 

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Cubs vs. Sox

Chicago teams playing ball with fresh leadership and rosters.

BY RICK A. RICHARDS

There are barely 10 miles between Wrigley Field where the Cubs play on Chicago's north side and Cellular One Field on the city's south side where the White Sox play. Somewhere between is an invisible boundary that separates fans from both teams.

But in Northwest Indiana there is no boundary. Even though Cellular One Field is closer, White Sox fans and Cubs fans are mixed together. It makes for vigorous debate, but this season fans of both teams are taking second glances to figure out just exactly who is who on their roster.

That's because after both teams completed a disappointing 2011, the front office of both the Cubs and White Sox cleaned house. Both teams have new managers. The Cubs have a new general manager. The White Sox lost their ace pitcher to free agency.

Brooks Boyer, senior vice president of sales and marketing for the White Sox, says marketing a sports team isn't like marketing other products. "I really like Diet Mountain Dew. I know what it's going to taste like every time I drink one," says Boyer. "Baseball isn't like that. We have to look at it differently because it's not the same packaged product from year to year.

"What happens outside the white lines is something we can control. Inside the white lines, it's the ultimate reality television show," says Boyer. "You don't know what's going to happen."

If the White Sox were a TV show, its primary actor, World Series champion manager Ozzie Guillen is gone. In his place, the White Sox have turned to former White



"THE ULTIMATE REALITY TELEVISION SHOW" The pitching ace and manager of the Chicago White Sox are gone, but there are still plenty of familiar faces on the roster.

Sox infielder Robin Ventura.

Although he's never managed before, Ventura spent 16 years with the White Sox and last year was in the front office as an adviser.

But just because Guillen is gone and ace pitcher Mark Beuhrle is gone, there are plenty of familiar

faces on the roster – Paul Konerko, A.J. Pierzynski, Gordon Beckham and pitcher John Danks.

"Our marketing this year is built around the theme 'Appreciate the Game,'" says Boyer. "We have a great following and what we offer fans in Northwest Indiana is conve-



“A LOT OF CUBS FANS IN NORTHWEST INDIANA” Though the Chicago Cubs market the team, for a lot of fans the Wrigley Field experience is enough of a draw.

nience because we’re close and it’s easy in and easy out.”

The White Sox are putting up billboards along the main interstates in Northwest Indiana. “We think the area is fertile ground for us,” says Boyer. “We have a training academy for youth in Schererville. We think it’s important to connect with the next generation of fans.”

And to keep things affordable, Boyer says the White Sox has Kids Day where children get in for \$1 with a paying adult, and Value Mondays where discounted prices are available for families. “We’ve dropped prices by 40 percent at 42 of our games this year,” says Boyer.

For the Cubs, the biggest off-season news was the hiring of general manager Theo Epstein. It wouldn’t be a stretch to call the hiring a media frenzy. Before he was named president of baseball operations for the Cubs, he was general manager of the Boston Red Sox. In 2004, they won Boston’s first World Series championship in 86 years, something the

Cubs hope he can duplicate. It’s been more than a century since the Cubs won a World Series.

Wally Hayward, executive vice president and chief sales and marketing officer, says that while Epstein’s hiring was the biggest off-season news, he’s not being featured directly in any of the team’s marketing efforts.

“But the inspiration for our campaign came from Theo,” says Hayward. “In his first comments in Chicago, he made the statement that baseball is better at ballparks like Wrigley Field.”

So “Baseball is Better” became the Cubs’ marketing theme. “This also shows the commitment the Ricketts family has to improving the team,” says Hayward. The Ricketts family, which owns the brokerage T.D. Ameritrade, bought the team two years ago.

“We know we have a lot of Cubs fans in Northwest Indiana,” says Hayward. “We did a survey last year that shows 4 percent of our ticket buyers

are from Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. They’re very loyal and on average, they’ve attended games for 10 years, and 92 percent of them attend more than one game.”

Like the White Sox, the Cubs have shifted their marketing focus away from print to digital advertising. Pop-up ads featuring players appear on the team’s home page and other sites.

For the Sox, Danks and Konerko, along with Ventura are featured, while the Cubs feature players Starlin Castro, Kerry Wood, and Tony Campana along with new manager Dale Sveum.

“We market the team but a lot of people come just to take in Wrigley Field and its experience,” says Hayward.

The Cubs also are doing everything possible to make a visit to the ballpark affordable for the whole family. “We still have a lot of \$8 tickets available for the season and more than 25 percent of all our tickets are priced under \$25,” says Hayward. **BQ**



Allyson Kazmucha

Head in the Cloud

Businesses should evaluate virtual services and file storage.

Mobile devices like the iPhone and iPad have made technology more mobile than ever. Businesses are ditching laptop computers for smart phones and tablets on an almost regular basis.

Many professionals have also developed a need to access files and information remotely. We live in an information age where we can't afford to be tethered to one computer anymore. Remotely accessing files via a virtual private network (VPN) and other methods have long been the only ways business users could access their files when not in the office. Not only are these methods confusing to an average user but they're tedious to set up and manage for any IT department.

Online file storage services such as Dropbox and Box.net have made it easy for businesses to adopt cloud storage services. Gone are the days of needing to VPN or remote login to your main computer in order to access and edit files when you're out of the office. Most major players offer applications for iOS, Android, and BlackBerry. Users can access all their files from their mobile device or tablet from virtually anywhere.

Setting the convenience factor aside – cloud storage is often more affordable for many small and medium sized companies – there's no need for expensive servers and an IT department to manage them. With minimal startup costs and low monthly fees, cloud storage is a great option for growing companies.

Many businesses now offer BYOD (bring your own device) initiatives and allowing employees to use their own devices at work. It's a way to

cut technology costs even further while allowing the employee to use the platform they're most comfortable with.

Small and medium-sized companies aren't the only ones using cloud storage. Many large corporations have cloud systems in place as well. Box.net currently plays host to over

to employees instantaneous and more cost efficient.

I depend on mobile devices to run my business. I store client files with Dropbox, use apps such as Evernote during consults, and take payments from anywhere directly on my iPhone. When I get back to my desk, all my data is already on my iMac

As mobile technology drives its way into the work environment, the need for businesses to adopt cloud-based services is a must. It's more important than ever for businesses to evaluate their current technology.

100,000 companies including Six Flags, FedEx, and Pandora.

Apple relies on cloud storage in its newest iteration of iOS. iCloud wirelessly stores and syncs data including photos, documents, applications, e-mail and settings between all your mobile devices and computers. Apple's recent announcement of OS X Mountain Lion further shows a commitment to integrate the mobile and desktop experience. The fusion of iOS and OS X shows Apple's reliance on cloud services. Consumers are not only becoming used to the idea of storing their data in the cloud, they've come to expect it.

The iPad has seen a high adoption rate in corporate settings. Most Fortune 500 companies have rolled out iPhones, iPads or both. Ways to access data remotely has never been more important. Enterprise services and automatic downloads have made pushing applications and data

where I can pick up from where I left off.

My clients enjoy the fact that I can share files with them. I can keep them up to date on my progress and they can see changes in real time. They enjoy the experience they get and I get to be more productive by reducing the amount of e-mails I have to send out with project updates.

As mobile technology drives its way into the work environment, the need for businesses to adopt cloud-based services is a must. It's more important than ever for businesses to evaluate their current technology. Is it benefiting you cost and productivity wise? And more importantly, is it benefiting your client base? **BQ**

Allyson Kazmucha is a graduate of Purdue University and currently runs her own IT company, PXLFIX, in Michigan City. PXLFIX specializes in IT consulting and iPhone, iPad and iPod repair.



Paul A. Leonard Jr.

Divorce Flu?

The timing of business valuation is important.

When a business owner divorces in Indiana, the business is most often inventoried as a marital asset, and must be valued for purposes of equitable distribution between husband and wife. The date of valuation can be a critical issue.

Indiana uses the date of filing as the date defining what is in the marital estate, but then traditionally looks to a valuation date closest to the date of final hearing when the actual division of assets is to take place. Justification for this is generally the discretion of the trial court in determining an equitable division of assets between husband and wife.

Evidence developed through discovery while the case is pending, and legal argument based on the evidence, supports a valuation date closest to the date the division of assets is to occur, which is generally final hearing. However, there are good reasons why an earlier valuation date, closer to date of filing, or date of separation, should be used instead with the family business.

Where one spouse is in operational control of the business, there may be the temptation to allow divorce issues to influence business decisions, resulting in a decline in business activity, or the passing on available business opportunities. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence of sole proprietors and other business owners reporting a significant decline in income derived from the business at about the time a divorce is filed, and thereafter. This phenomenon has sometimes been referred to as a case of "divorce flu" from which the business owner not surprisingly rapidly recovers as soon as the final decree is issued. Allow-

ing for an earlier valuation date is a counterbalance to this phenomenon.

Aside from the misbehavior of an owner, another common reason for date of filing valuation is where the financial performance and value of the business is primarily dependent upon the individual efforts of the business owner. Where the parties

period may be considered separate property of the business owner, there is still the question of whether all of the increase in value during the separation period is attributable to the owner, or also to other factors, such as greater demand for the business's services, or greater market share due to the exit of a competitor.

Where one spouse is in operational control of the business, there may be the temptation to allow divorce issues to influence business decisions.

have separated in fact, or where the jurisdiction presumes a separation as a result of filing, such as Indiana, profits or enhanced value resulting from the efforts of the business owner generally are considered separate property, and not part of the marital estate. The justification of course is that with the family business operated by one spouse, its value is generally a reflection of the personal skill, industry and guidance of the operating spouse.

Where both spouses are active in the operation of the business, the same argument now supports the use of the trial date as the valuation date, since the value as of the trial date is a reflection of the joint efforts of both spouses in the operation of the business. Every effort should be made to arrive at an agreed date of physical separation to facilitate a business valuation that both parties can agree upon.

Does this settle the issue of the valuation of the family business for the division of property in the divorce? No, it does not, because even though an increase in value of the business during the separation

If these factors, or others like them, are present, then the valuation must try to isolate the contributions to increased value during separation derived from the owner, and resulting from external business conditions favorable to the business. This can be exceedingly difficult as it is fact sensitive, and may involve both micro and macro economic considerations, such as a move to a more favorable location, or the deregulation of a whole industry. **□**

Paul A. Leonard Jr. is a partner in the law firm of Burke Costanza & Carberry LLP. He practices exclusively in the area of family law, with emphasis on traditional client representation, and mediation. He is a Certified Family Law Specialist by the Indiana Family Law Certification Board, a Fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, Past-Chair of the Indiana State Bar Association Section of Family and Juvenile Law, listed in the Family Law section of The Best Lawyers in America since 2007, and is also listed in Indiana Super Lawyers since 2004.

Songs and Sculptures

“Glee” meets the symphony, sculptors hit the street.

BY JOHN CAIN

Top-level local talent! Smash Broadway hits! Popular contemporary songs! The Northwest Indiana Symphony Orchestra and Conductor Kirk Muspratt present “South Shore Glee!” on Thursday evening, May 17, 2012, at 7:30 p.m., at the Star Plaza Theatre in Merrillville.

Featuring talent galore from area schools, the concert will include the Choralteens of Merrillville High School, Wolfgang of Hobart High School, Counterpoint of Lake Central High School and the Wirt-Emerison Visual and Performing Arts High Ability Academy Concert Choir as special guest artists. The Northwest Indiana Symphony Chorus will also perform on this final Pops presentation of the 2011-12 concert season.

This unique concert experience combines some of the best local talent with Broadway show tunes and generation-spanning American pop hits for a giddy celebration of pop culture. Inspired by the popular Fox TV show “Glee,” this unique concert will be a fun vocal retrospective spanning the decades from the 1930s through today. Selected music includes pieces from beloved movies and musicals like Disney’s “The Little Mermaid,” “Beauty and the Beast,” and “West Side Story” as well as songs made popular by performers such as Bette Midler, Josh Groban, Queen and more.

“South Shore Glee!” has a little something for everyone and is perfect for the whole family. Adult tickets range from \$25 to \$65 and student tickets are priced at just \$10 each.

In Valparaiso, the next big foray into art will be a public display of



“SOUTH SHORE GLEE!” Great local talent in a celebration of pop culture at the Star Plaza Theatre.

large-scale sculptures in an art walk along Cumberland Drive, running between the YMCA and Purdue North Central. The city’s Redevelopment Commission art committee headed by Laura Campbell is planning to bring in up to 10 sculptures from Midwest Sculpture Initiative in Blissfield, Mich., which provides outdoor sculpture exhibitions throughout the Midwest, promoting cooperation among art and civic organizations, advancing the role that the visual arts play in the quality of life and increasing economic development.

The committee is working with sculptor Ken Thompson, who founded the Initiative and who is one of the many artists whose work is represented. Midwest Sculpture Initiative works with a dozen or so communities per year, primarily in Ohio and Michigan, to make art

accessible to large audiences. Stu Summers, executive director of the Redevelopment Commission, says the Cumberland Drive route in Valparaiso was chosen because the City has been so successful in its ability to use art to attract visitors downtown and it’s time to branch out.

South Shore Arts wants to remind you to visit the online Regional Art Calendar at www.SouthShoreArtsOnline.org. The Regional Arts Calendar lists all local arts happenings in Northwest Indiana, and is a great place to plan your cultural activities for the week or month ahead. The calendar lists exhibits, concerts, plays, lectures, film series, dance performances and more, all taking place in or near your neighborhood. You can access the calendar by visiting the South Shore Arts home page and then clicking on Regional Art Calendar on the menu on the left side of the page.

For artists, South Shore Arts also has an “Artist Opportunities” page. This section includes calls for entries and submissions, auditions, workshops, and symposia that are listed six months out to assist local artists in their professional development.

Don’t forget the South Shore Arts Facebook page where you can also keep up to date on exhibit schedules and opening receptions, class sign-ups, outreach programs and special events. Local artists also post their events and share local art experiences. The arts truly are alive in the Northwest Indiana! **BQ**

Find out more about area arts activities and events by watching John Cain on Lakeshore Public Television’s “Eye on the Arts,” every Thursday evening at 9 p.m. on Lakeshore News Tonight.



Susan Riddering

Pre-Employment Screening

Reduce costs and boost productivity, retention and morale.

Test. Just the word may make your palms a little sweaty. But employers have no need to sweat over pre-employment tests. This is a test you want as a strategic part of your hiring process.

Employers face a number of human-resource challenges, a number of reasons to sweat, and recruiting the right employee is one of the most critical. Long gone are the days we can rely solely on a resume and interview.

When used with traditional hiring techniques, pre-employment screening is the single best way to identify the best candidate for the job. These tests help a company's hiring process by increasing the likelihood of hiring candidates who will perform well on the job. In this tight market, hiring the wrong candidate can be detrimental to a business and costly, to say the least.

Pre-employment tests take the guesswork out of hiring. Extensive research supports the use of pre-employment testing, citing major benefits to employers, including:

- Higher productivity.
- Increased employee retention.
- Improved employee morale.
- Reduced costs associated with turnover (hiring and training costs).

Pre-employment tests provide the most accurate means of predicting performance because they measure the candidate's capacity to perform well at a particular job. It also identifies those who may not do so well – and identify slow learners, poor producers and those affected by a stressful environment.

The assessment tool can also be used to benchmark positions and measure how applicants compare to

employees who are already successful. Basically, employers assess the personalities of their star performers and determine which of the traits are most important to be successful in a specific position or even at the company.

Next, each new applicant is given the personality profile as part of the application process and compared to the star performer benchmark. Finally, those test results are used to recognize candidates who are

ing a partner to design and implement professionally developed and properly validated employment tests. Tests are an effective screening tool only if they measure the knowledge, skills, and abilities that will be required for a particular job. A poorly designed test will produce skewed results. And the test must be EEOC-compliant.

Many employers are curious what a pre-employment screening might be like. A simple Google

When used with traditional hiring techniques, pre-employment screening is the single best way to identify the best candidate for the job.

interview worthy and help direct the interviewer to pertinent follow-up questions in the interview process.

Having accurate data leads to more successful decisions. Improving the success rate of your selection methodology leads to higher productivity, better employee retention, and reduced costs associated with turnover.

One recent study compared employees' pre-assessment scores with their hourly sales volume at a clothing store. The employees who received high scores on the test sold, on average, \$106.35 of goods per hour, while those who received low test scores sold only \$83.27 per hour. For this employer, incorporating pre-employment tests into its selection process resulted in a 28 percent increase in sales productivity.

Once your organization has decided to include pre-employment tests in hiring, the next step is find-

search will yield hundreds of sample tests. NorthStar360 offers a complimentary personality profile on its website, www.northstar360.com/assessments.

It's also important to remember the pre-employment test is just one piece of the hiring puzzle. It gives managers and HR professionals additional data to make hiring decisions. Other factors such as references, resumes and interviews are invaluable components. When used together, the results are powerful and can increase productivity and retention while reducing costs. **EQ**

Susan Riddering, vice president of NorthStar360 Business Solutions, helps businesses maximize their success through comprehensive hiring practices and in-depth employee development programs. The Dyer company customizes its training and tailors its development programs to meet the specific business goals of its clients.



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COVER STORY

continued from page 44

Family YMCA; Fitness Point, Munster; and Porter Adult Fitness.

"We're very excited over this honor," says Marci Crozier, regional director of marketing and sales for Omni 41 Health and Fitness. "This takes us to another level. I'm proud of our club and this is validation for our Thin and Healthy program that's encouraging people to walk through the door."

BEST EXECUTIVE MEN'S STORE

Winner: David's Men's Clothier, Valparaiso.

Runners-up: Cicco's Menswear, Merrillville; L.R. Clothier, La Porte; Zandstra's, Highland; and Men's Wearhouse, Hobart and Merrillville.

BEST EXECUTIVE WOMEN'S STORE

Winners: Seasons on the Square, Valparaiso; and Macy's, Chicago and Merrillville.

Runners-up: Ann Taylor, Lighthouse Outlet Mall, Michigan City; and Fashion Affair, Merrillville.

BEST COLLEGIATE SPECTATOR SPORT IN THE REGION

Winner: Valparaiso University Basketball.

Runners-up: University of Notre Dame Football and University of Notre Dame Women's Basketball.

BEST PROFESSIONAL SPECTATOR SPORT IN NORTHWEST INDIANA

Winner: Gary Southshore Railcats

Runners-up: Chicago White Sox; Chicago Cubs; Chicago Bulls; and Chicago Bears.

WRITE-INS

Best Up and Coming Architectural Interior Design Company:

Design House Studio, Valparaiso.

"Small company that offers A+ Service."

Best Automobile Repair Shop:

Bob's Auto, Hammond. "Excel-

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lent service, knowledgeable and honest."

Best Collision Repair Business:

Tom & Ed's Autobody, Merrillville and Schererville. "Quality of work is excellent, repair costs as estimated or lower."

Best Chamber for Business

Networking: Crossroads Regional Chamber of Commerce, Merrillville. "This is very true indeed."

Best Computer Repair Company:

Three Dog Net, Hobart. "Great customer service and affordable repair rates."

Best Title Company: Professionals Title Services LLC, Merrillville and Valparaiso. "Everyone gives 110 percent and goes beyond the call of duty."

Best Clinics for Occupational Health: WorkingWell, Michigan City, Crown Point, Hammond, Munster, and Valparaiso. "Simply the very best in NWI."

Best Professional Staffing Company: Staff Source, Hammond. "Employs over a thousand people a year throughout Northwest Indiana." **EQ**



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A Lasting Legacy

Largest estate gift funds St. Joseph's College scholarships.

BY MICHAEL PUENTE

For two years beginning in 2008, Maureen Egan provided vital information about St. Joseph's College in Rensselaer to a complete stranger. She had no idea what this person was going to do with the information or to whom they were going to pass the information.

She provided details about how the 121-year-old small, private Catholic college helps low-income students pay for their education, how the school maintains its agrarian roots, and its commitment to sustainable living.

"I dealt for two years with a blind inquiry. For two years, they had me doing homework like no other," says Egan, vice president for institutional advancement and marketing for SJC. "The person I dealt with always ended our meetings with: 'Trust me. This is worth it.'"

Turns out, Egan's work was worth it. In December 2009, she and other St. Joseph's administrators found out who was the behind the blind inquiry.

Juanita Kious Waugh lived 30 miles from the college in White County, where her parents were very influential, affluent and above all else, very private. "She was a very private person," says David Bechman, who serves as co-trustee for the Juanita K. Waugh Revocable Living Trust and overseer of Waugh's extensive farm property in White County. "Her family had been in the Brookston area for a long time, several generations. They owned a bank and acquired a lot of land."

Waugh, in fact, owned 7,634 acres of land in White County, right next door to Jasper County, where St. Joseph's College is located. The value of Waugh's land was put at \$40 million.

Bechman says Waugh inherited



POWERFUL GIFT Wind turbines help the land generate \$1.5 million a year for the college.

the land from her parents and grandparents. She graduated from Tudor High School in Indianapolis and later attended Indiana University.

"She lived in Brookston in the very house her grandfather had built. In her younger days, she traveled quite a bit," Bechman says. "But above all else, she was very much a business woman and very interested in agriculture."

Waugh developed a close friendship with SJC President F. Dennis Riegelnegg.

In December 2009, Waugh told Riegelnegg she would gift the college her 7,600-plus acres, the largest in the college's history. Just two months later, on Feb. 6, 2010, a day before her 88th birthday, she died.

"This is an extraordinary gift for Saint Joseph's College," Riegelnegg says. "We are both humbled by and grateful for Juanita's generosity. Naming the college as beneficiary took many years of deliberation and we are also thankful for the wise counsel she sought."


The only stipulation for the college is the land can never be sold and must remain agricultural. Waugh did approve wind turbines being

installed on the land as a way to generate money, and today, 32 wind turbines are scattered over the land, with many easily visible by motorists traveling Interstate 65.

Egan says the land generates about \$1.5 million a year in revenue for the college, which has about 1,000 students. Those turbines generate 1.6 megawatts of electricity, enough to power 12,514 homes.

"We dedicate all of those funds for scholarship aid for poor students," Egan says. "We award about \$14 million a year in financial aid. That \$1.5 million is a tremendous help."

Despite the months and months of negotiations and dealings with the college, Waugh's decision to donate her land to SJC may have ultimately come down to the president of a small bank in White County with whom she dealt.

"She was very impressed with him. She would find out that he was a St. Joe's graduate," Bechman said. "She decided in her mind that 'if he is the type of people they are turning out, this is where I want my farms to go.' So, we never know when our impressions will have a huge impact." 

Short Session, Long on Impact



Sen. Ed Charbonneau

State's legislature worked hard to help Hoosier businesses.

Indiana's recently concluded 2012 legislative session may have been short – just over two months – but it will have a long-term impact on Hoosier businesses.

Chief among major issues taken up by lawmakers this year was passage of a law that, simply put, prohibits any requirement that a person be a member of a labor organization or pay any labor organization fee as a condition of private-sector employment.

While this issue stirred political and public debates throughout much of the first half of the session, after its passage, legislators moved on to consider other policies aimed at creating an environment conducive to economic growth and job creation through legislation focused on tax policies that encourage business investment in our state and ensuring a well-educated workforce in the future.

After decades of failed attempts, lawmakers this year successfully crafted a plan to phase-out Indiana's inheritance tax. Indiana is one of only eight states with such a tax, which places an extra burden on family businesses, farmers and entrepreneurs who stimulate the economy and provide jobs. Our state's sound fiscal position allows us to stop this form of double taxation, while helping Hoosiers pass their assets down from generation to generation without penalty.

Indiana's tax treatment of business investment in personal property is out of step with our neighboring states. We tax it, they don't. In an effort to foster local economic growth and encourage employers to make Indiana their home, I authored a new law expanding the number

of technology companies that may qualify for personal-property tax exemptions.

To receive exemptions, entities must offer high-paying jobs while investing at least \$10 million in Indiana. Equipment qualifying for the

public spaces and work places to be smoke free.

On the education front, several bills were passed that will have long-term implications in helping to prepare students to meet future workforce requirements.

Legislators considered policies aimed at creating an environment conducive to economic growth and job creation.

property-tax exemption includes hardware and networking systems used for computing, networking and data storage, as well as equipment used to supply power to these items. Exempting this equipment will make our state more attractive to technology companies that might otherwise locate to neighboring states where personal property isn't taxed. To remain competitive long-term Indiana needs to eliminate taxation of business personal property.

With the unemployment rate of veterans nearly 40 percent higher than the national average, lawmakers are working to accelerate the hiring of highly trained military members returning from duty to the workforce. Under a new law waiving some training requirements for certain professional licenses, Hoosier businesses will have more opportunities to employ veterans equipped with unique and needed skills learned during their military service.

Many businesses and restaurants that serve people age 20 and younger – including their bar areas – need to prepare for the July 1 statewide smoking ban requiring most

We invested \$80 million to fund full-day kindergarten, promoted faster college completion by ensuring college students will be able to transfer from one state school to another without needlessly repeating certain general education courses, and promoted college affordability and completion by authorizing the Commission for Higher Education to crack down on growing credit requirements at state colleges and universities.

As we move into the summer months when state lawmakers take time to study key issues for future legislative action, I hope area employers – who are also taxpayers, parents and homeowners – will stay in touch and share their views. **EQ**

State Sen. Ed Charbonneau represents Pulaski County and portions of Jasper, LaPorte, Porter and Starke counties. He is the ranking member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations and serves on the Senate Committee on Energy and Environmental Affairs; Health and Provider Services; and Rules and Legislative Procedure. Contact him at 800-382-9467 or by e-mail at Senator.Charbonneau@iga.in.gov.

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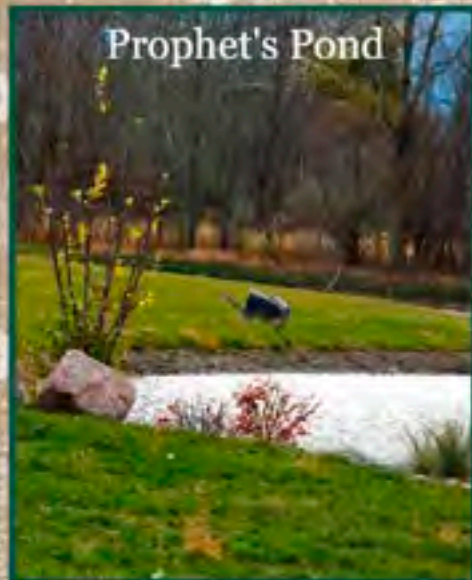
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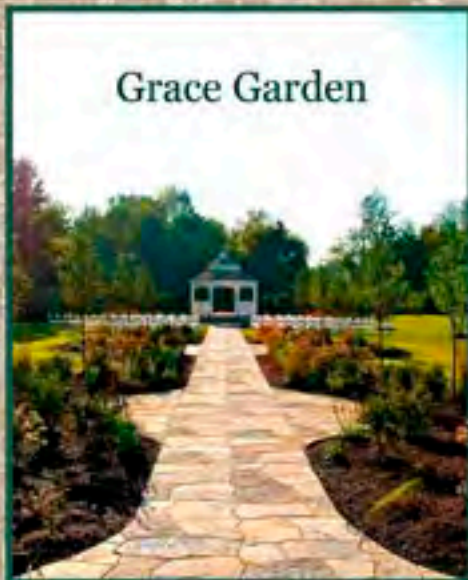
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