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How Safe is Your Food? ■ Easing the Pain ■ Building Boom ■ Manufacturing Rebound

WINTER-SPRING 2012

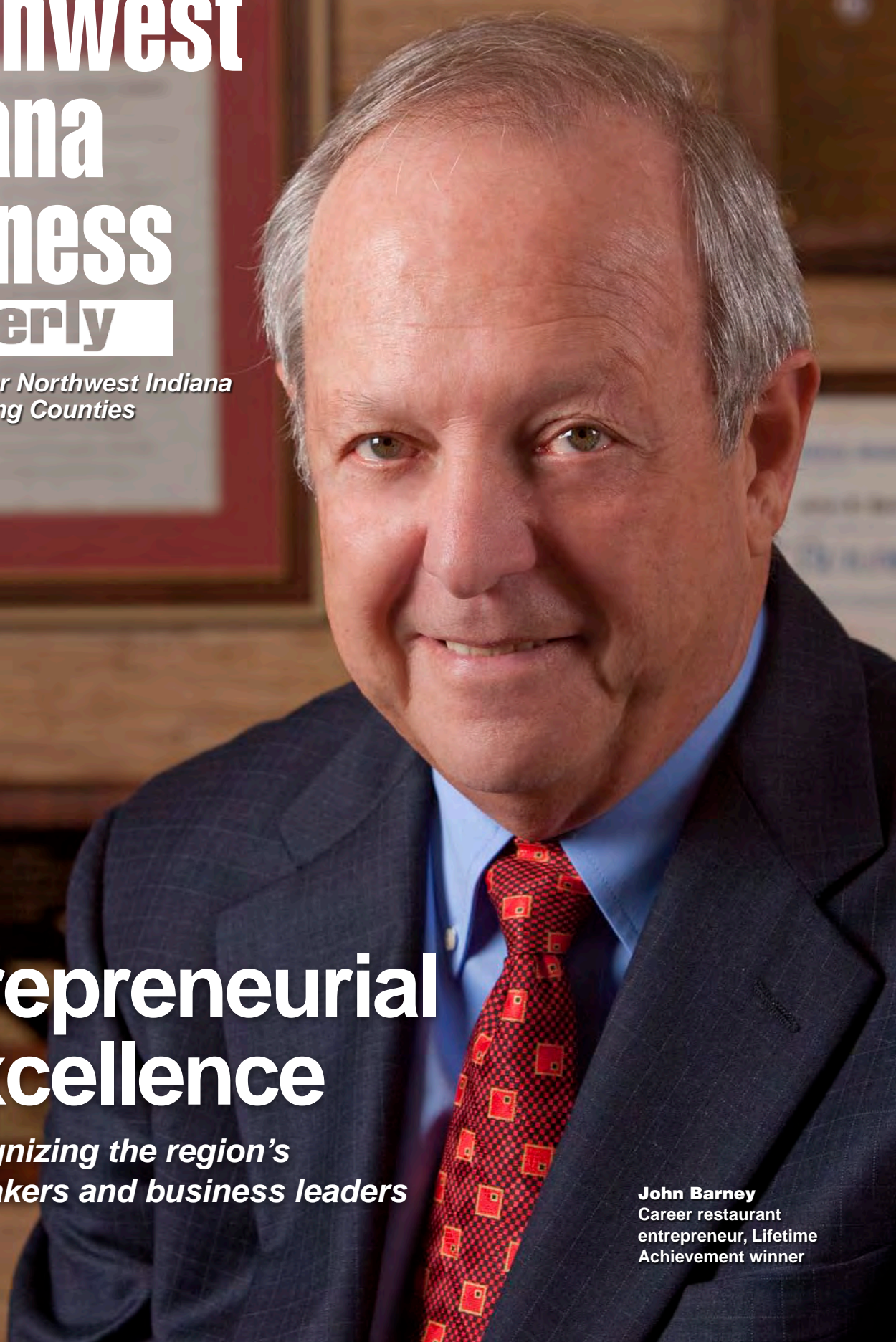
Northwest Indiana Business Quarterly

*Serving Greater Northwest Indiana
and Surrounding Counties*

Entrepreneurial Excellence

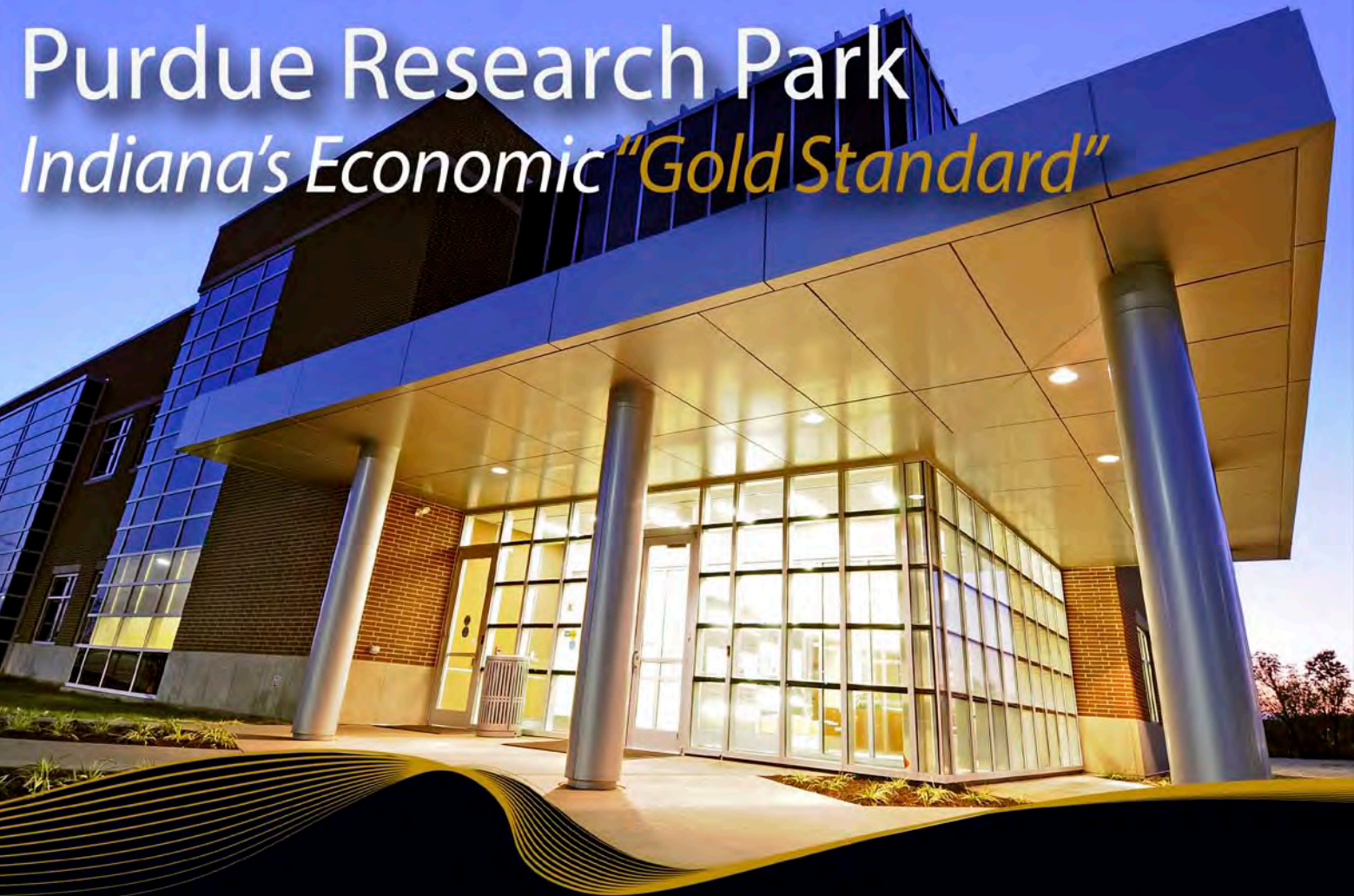
*Recognizing the region's
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John Barney
Career restaurant
entrepreneur, Lifetime
Achievement winner



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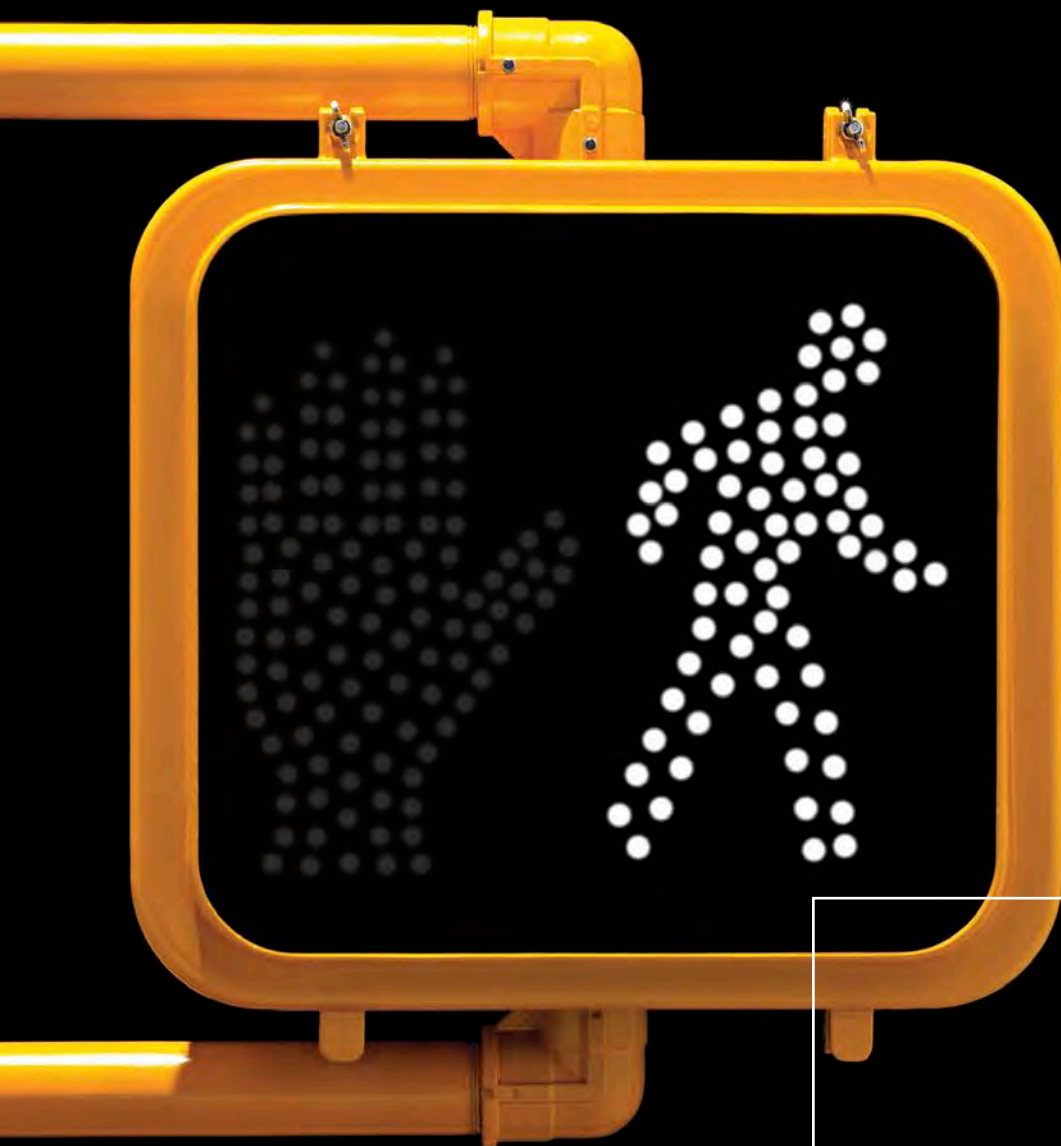
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Talk v. Walk

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Best of Northwest Indiana

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February 20th
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p44 High-tech manufacturer Fronius USA is building in Portage and will eventually move more than 500 jobs from Detroit.



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Winter-Spring 2012

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Covering the New Year

Economic optimism,
a new sister publication
and great reading in 2012.



Glee Renick-May
Publisher

Many well-regarded economists are optimistic that our economy will continue to improve in 2012. That's good news for emerging entrepreneurs and aspiring small-business owners. But cautious optimism is still clouded by uncertainty, with the upcoming election, Wall Street volatility, a steady 9 percent Indiana unemployment rate and Europe's current debt crisis.

As we look forward to 2012, we will continue to grow and improve our magazine. And as the leading regional business publication, we will continue to provide excellent business features, special reports and focus sections. We will continue to expand our readership in the counties we serve and be a positive voice for businesses in this region.

This year we will launch a new niche publication, *Retirement Living*, targeting newly retired Baby Boomers and those planning to retire in the near future. They are reinventing and "changing" the way we view retirement. Current trends show they are staying in the workplace longer, opening new businesses, seeking healthier lifestyles and serving as strong advocates for social change. Many are current caregivers for a parent or other loved one. They also are facing some serious challenges ahead. One huge issue is maintaining financial security upon retirement. Congress faces a daunting task of strengthening our Social Security system before benefits can no longer be 100 percent paid by 2036. Expect *Retirement Living* to offer the same journalistic excel-

lence in reporting and photography, and some added entertainment value with editorial departments. We're welcoming a couple new accomplished writers for this publication, **Susan McKee** and **Lauren Caggiano**.

We begin our first 2012 issue of *Northwest Indiana Business Quarterly* by honoring the 2011 E-day Entrepreneurs. These individuals are self-driven and passionate about their work, and they have a "vision." Read more about these visionaries inside, including IVDiagnostics, named Revolutionary Technology Company of the Year for its unique research to find a cure for cancer.

Coming up in the spring issue is our annual "Best of Northwest Indiana Business" feature, allowing readers such as you to cast votes on the best of the region's business. This year we've added Best of Greater South Bend/Michiana Business, with separate balloting for those business readers residing in St. Joseph County. But act soon—voting ends February 20!

Our summer issue will include a special focus on "Women-Owned Businesses" and a helpful resource guide. And we will recognize those healthcare professionals who are making remarkable contributions to this industry. This issue will also have a Q&A interview with a few political candidates hoping to be re-elected this year.

And in the fall, we honor the next group of inductees into the Northwest Indiana Society of Innovators, honoring greatness in leadership and business innovation.

Enjoy your first issue of 2012! **BQ**

Around the Region

A lot has happened in Northwest Indiana's business community the past three months. Here are some of the highlights.

ACCOUNTING

Peggy Rogers has opened a full-service accounting office in Valparaiso. **Peggy Rogers & Associates LLC** will offer accounting services, assurance, tax services and consulting. Most recently, Rogers was a partner at a firm in Michigan City.



Leslie Lopez



Kathern Nuzzo



Mary T. Burke

ADVERTISING/COMMUNICATION

Whiteco Industries Inc.'s View Outdoor Advertising has acquired 26 billboard locations in Lake County from **Outdoor One**, owned by Lou O'Donnell of Michigan City. O'Donnell will retain ownership of locations in LaPorte and St. Joseph counties. Most of the billboards in the transaction are located along Interstate 94, Interstate 65 and the Indiana Toll Road. ... **VIA Marketing** of Merrillville has announced that **Kathern Nuzzo** has joined the firm as an account executive. She previously was with **Red Lobster Restaurants** in Orlando, Fla. ... **Figment Creative Group** of Michigan City is celebrating its 15th anniversary. Owner Polly Liebig has handled clients such as **Quaker Oats**, **PepsiCo.**, and **NIPSCO**. She is a graduate of the **Art Institute in Chicago** and the **American Academy of Art**. ... **V as in Victor**, a Hobart creative agency, has completed work on a new advertising campaign for **The Lakshore 89.1**, the region's National Public Radio affiliate. The ads emphasize the station's role as "The Voice of Northwest Indiana." ... **Leslie Lopez** has joined **VIA Marketing** in Merrillville as a graphic designer. Lopez, of Hammond, is a graduate of Purdue University Calumet. ... **Clint Damore** has joined

VIA Marketing in Merrillville as a graphic designer. Damore is a graduate of Prairie State College and the Illinois Institute of Art-Chicago. **Mary T. Burke** has joined the staff of **Northwest Indiana Business Quarterly** magazine as director of new business development. She is responsible for new sales development primarily in Porter, LaPorte and St. Joseph counties and throughout Northwest Indiana. Burke, of Porter, is a graduate of Calumet College of St. Joseph with a degree in organizational management. Her sales and organizational skills are impressive including as a member of the Association Forum of Chicagoland, 13 years with the National Association of Realtors and with Indiana Dunes Tourism.

AGRICULTURE

Select Milk Producers plans to introduce a series of new beverages featuring milk produced by **Fair Oaks Dairy**. Steve Jones, CEO of Select Milk Producers, said the first product will be Athletes HoneyMilk, which will be sold in area supermarkets, including **Strack & Van Til** and Chicago-area **Walmart** stores. Jones is a former president of **Minute Maid** and chief marketing officer at **Coca-Cola**. He said Select Milk Producers has created new technology that allows the various milk components to be separated so each can

be included in various beverages without the use of preservatives or chemicals.

BANKING

Centier Bank has been recognized by the Indiana District Office of the **U.S. Small Business Administration** as Third Party Lender of the Year for 2011. The SBA said Centier had taken part in 12 SBA loans, accounting for \$16.2 million in projects. That amount represents 8 percent of all SBA lending in the state. Because of Centier's loans, the SBA said 160 jobs were created or retained. ... **Centier Bank** of Munster has opened a loan production office in Carmel in central Indiana. It is the first office for Centier in Hamilton County. ... **Nancy Naville-Strong** has joined **Centier Bank** as assistant manager/consumer lending officer at the Lafayette branch. She has 25 years of banking experience in Lafayette. ... **LaPorte Savings Bank** has been recognized as a 5-Star bank by **Bauer Financial Inc.** of Coral Gables, Fla. It is the fifth year in a row LaPorte Savings Bank has been recognized as a 5-Star bank. ... **Thomas F. Prisby**, chairman and chief executive officer of **Citizens Financial Bank**, has announced his retirement after 30 years with the institution. Prisby joined the bank in 1982 and served as president and chief operating officer from 1989 to



Clint Damore



Nancy Naville-Strong



Becky Manis



Carin Chuang

1996. Prisby has been president and CEO since 1996. ... **United Federal Credit Union** of St. Joseph, Mich., has completed its acquisition of **Griffith Savings Bank**. The acquisition was announced last fall, but the deal wasn't completed until the FDIC signed off on the deal. According to the **FDIC**, the purchase by United Federal is the first time a federally chartered credit union has purchased a state-chartered mutual savings bank. United Federal, founded in 1949 as the credit union for Whirlpool Corp. employees, acquired the loans, investments, real estate and other assets of Griffith Savings Bank.

CONSTRUCTION

Berglund Construction has named **Scott Olthoff** as project coordinator at its Chesterton office. Olthoff has been involved in projects with Silva International, Faith Church in Dyer, the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, and Plaza 32, a high-rise condominium project in Chicago. ... The **Construction Advancement Foundation of Northwest Indiana** has named officers for 2012. They are **Shawn Kelly** of DLZ Industrial, president; **Joe Coar** of Tonn and Blank Construction, vice president; and **Mark Danielson** of Larson-Danielson Construction, secretary and treasurer. ... The **Northwest Indiana Contractors Association** has named officers for 2012. They are **Mark Grimmer** of Grimmer Construction, president; **Bill Rathjen** of The Pangere Corp., vice president; and **Tim Larson** of Larson-Danielson Construction, secretary and treasurer. ... **Boyd Construction Co.** of Hobart has received the Centennial Business Award from the

Indianapolis Historical Society. The company was founded in 1911 by Vincent R. Boyd. The company is owned today by Richard Boyd, William C. Boyd and Robert W. Boyd.

EDUCATION

Mass. Electric Construction Co. of Irving, Texas, has donated \$52,500 to **Purdue University Calumet's Construction Management and Engineering Technologies** program. The Texas company has employed PUC graduates and is one of the nation's largest electrical contractors. ... **Becky Manis** has been named executive director of the **Challenger Learning Center** in Hammond. She will be responsible for promoting the center as a premier educational destination for corporate and school groups. ... **Purdue University Calumet's Educational Talent Search** program has received a \$5,000 grant from the **UPS Foundation** to help bridge the educational opportunity gap for first generation and low-income students. ... **ArcelorMittal Steel** has provided a grant to **Indiana University's Kelly School of Business** to expand its undergraduate building. Since 2007, ArcelorMittal has provided \$850,000 to IU. ... **Semiconductor Research Corp.** has given two grants worth \$3.5 million to the **University of Notre Dame** for nanotechnology research aimed at the next generation of super-fast computers. ... **Carin Chuang**, an assistant professor of computer and information technology at **Purdue University North Central**, has earned an Indiana Campus Compact Scholarship of Engagement Grant for the spring semester. The grant will allow her and her students to part-

ner with the **Westville Chamber of Commerce** to develop a new information system for the chamber.

ENVIRONMENT

Two Northwest Indiana environmental organizations have merged. The **Hoosier Environmental Council** and the **Legal Environmental Aid Foundation** are now a single organization operating as the Hoosier Environmental Council. The organization will operate out of an office in Valparaiso. ... The **Sierra Club** has come out in support of a plan presented by **Northern Indiana Public Service Co.** to develop a clean energy program that would encourage residents and businesses to install solar or wind energy systems. NIPSCO has endorsed a feed-in program that would allow the utility to buy that energy for use on its grid. ... **Legacy Environmental Services Inc.** is expanding from its office at the **Purdue Research Park** into Fort Myers, Fla. The company provides sustainability consulting and project management for alternative fuels and energy.

GAMING

Majestic Star Casino in Gary has emerged from Chapter 11 bankruptcy. **Wayzata Investment Partners** of Minnesota now owns the casino. At the time Majestic Star filed bankruptcy, Wayzata was the largest investor. Majestic was previously owned by the late Donald Barden. Wayzata also owns the **Fitzgerald** casinos in Mississippi and Colorado. ... **Four Winds Casino** in New Buffalo, Mich., will add a **Hard Rock Café** to its lineup when a remodeling project is completed there in the summer. The project also includes

NOTEWORTHY NEWS BITS

a 1,600-seat entertainment venue and a nine-story, 250-room hotel. ... **Ameristar Casino** in East Chicago has hired **Southeast Cleaning** of Pompano Beach, Fla., to take over the housekeeping needs of its 290-room hotel. The 69 housekeeping employees of the hotel will be allowed to apply for their job after Southeast takes over.

GOVERNMENT

John Swanson, executive director of the **Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission**, has been elected president of the **Indiana Association of Regional Councils** for 2012. He is the first representative from Northwest Indiana to lead the 14-year-old organization. ... The **Regional Development Company** has announced new board members. They are **John Matthiesen** of Clifton Gunderson LLP; **Keven Jennings** of Lafayette Savings Bank; **Bert Cook** of Portage

Economic Development Corp.; and **Don Koliboski** of the Northwest Indiana Forum.

HEALTH CARE

Regional Mental Health in Merrillville has received a \$2.4 million grant from the **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development** to build a 15-unit apartment complex for the chronically mentally ill. The project will be built in Griffith with construction scheduled to begin in the fall. ... **Memorial Hospital** in South Bend has opened a new center dedicated for vascular disease testing and wound care. **Memorial Wound Care Services** will be a part of **The Leighton Heart & Vascular Center** on the first floor of the hospital. ... **Memorial Health Systems** of South Bend and **Elkhart General Health System** have signed an



Kreg Gruber



Greg Losasso

affiliation agreement that will create a new parent company to oversee operation of both hospitals. ... **Clint Bolser** has been named CEO at **Logan Center** in South Bend. He replaces the retiring **Dan Harshman**. Bolser was recently with **Nobel of Indiana**, a similar organization that provides education and programs for the mentally challenged. ... **St. Mary Medical Center** of Hobart will build a 55,000-square-foot outpatient center near Indiana

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49 and Burlington Beach Road near Valparaiso. ... **Community Hospital** in Munster has expanded and renovated MRI services at its new **MRI Center in Crown Point** as well as at the hospital. The project includes the addition of \$1.7 million Panorama 1.0T Open MRI from Philips Medical Systems. ... **Memorial Children's Hospital** in South Bend has opened a new pediatric specialties office, the first multi-specialty pediatric center in the region. Services include pediatric neurology, developmental and behavioral pediatrics, pediatric endocrinology, pediatric pulmonology and infectious diseases. ... **The Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago** and **Franciscan Alliance** have expanded their partnership to **St. Anthony Health-Crown Point** and **St. Anthony Health-Michigan City**. The partnership was launched in 2008 at **St. Margaret Health-Hammond**. ... **Franciscan St. Anthony Health-Michigan City's Duneland Health and Fitness Institute** and **Franciscan St. Margaret Health's Omni 41 Health and Fitness Connection** are the first facilities of their kind to achieve **International Organization of Standardization 9001:2008** certification. ISO is the world's largest developer of international standards that are used in 162 nations. ... **William H. Cummins** has been named president and CEO of **HealtheACCESS Clinics LLC**. He is currently CEO of **Regency Hospitals, Northwest Indiana**, in Portage and East Chicago. Previously, he was CEO at **Porter Hospital**. ... **Sister Aline Shultz**, vice president of marketing and development for **Franciscan Alliance**, has received the Athena Leadership Award from the **Crossroads Chamber of Commerce** in Merrillville. She was cited for bringing on-site nursing programs from the **University of St. Francis** to Crown Point and the corporate re-branding effort of Franciscan Alliance. ... **Greg Losasso** has been named president of **Elkhart General Hospital**. He joined the hospital in 2006 as vice president of

operations. Previously, he was vice president of diagnostic and therapeutic services at **Methodist Hospitals** in Gary. ... **Kreg Gruber** has been named president of **Memorial Hospital of South Bend**. Since 2006, he was chief operating officer of the hospital. Previously he was president of **Doctors Hospital** in Columbus, Ohio. ... **Dr. Raymond Drasga**

has retired after 30 years with **Franciscan St. Anthony Health-Crown Point**. He was medical director of the Burrell Cancer Institute and led efforts in the founding of St. Clare Health Clinic. ... **IU Health LaPorte VNA Services** has opened an office on County Road 600 North in Hamlet in Starke County. The office will provide home health services



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to clients in the rural community, seven days a week. ... **Linda Delunas** has been named director of the **School of Nursing at Indiana University Northwest** in Gary. She has been with IUN since 1984. She will continue in her current position as associate dean of the College of Health and Human Services. ... **Medical Specialists** in Munster has announced it will erect a new building at 45th and Calumet avenues. Dr. Alexander Stermer, CEO, said the new two-story building will contain 36,000 square feet and should open sometime in early 2013. Stermer said the addition will contain services for bone and joint patients. ... **Noel and Marianne Frigo**, the owners of **FirstCare** in Valparaiso, have expanded their business through the addition of a **Home Helpers** franchise. The Frigos founded FirstCare in 1991 to provide contract therapy services for hospitals, clinics and home health agencies. By

adding Home Helpers, they now are involved with in-home health care for Northwest Indiana residents. "As we were working with patients and their therapy needs, we noticed patients required substantial help at home," said Noel Frigo. Home Helpers, founded in 1997, provides assistance with laundry, light housekeeping, grocery shopping, getting dressed and bathing.

HOSPITALITY

The **University of Notre Dame** has announced a \$32 million renovation of the historic **Morris Inn**. The hotel has been on the campus for 60 years. The project includes the addition of 46 guest rooms, a 300-seat ballroom and other amenities. The project will begin in late 2012 and is to be completed by the fall of 2013. ... **Scott Tuft** has been named to the board of directors of **Indiana Dunes Tourism** in Porter County. He is a 20-year resident of

the county and is director of sales and marketing for Accuraft Imaging in Hammond.

INSURANCE

Sandy Junk has joined **Gibson Insurance Group** in South Bend as a client manager in commercial insurance, specializing in business property and casualty accounts. ... **Jocelyn Pollard** of **Gibson Insurance Group** has received the Group Benefits Associate designation from the **International Foundation of Employee Benefit Plans**. She is a financial analyst in employee benefits and provides marketing and service support to new and existing employee benefit clients. ... **Jan Phifer** has joined **Gibson Insurance Group** of South Bend as a client executive in the employee benefits practice. She is responsible for providing support for new and existing employee benefit clients and for working with clients in developing



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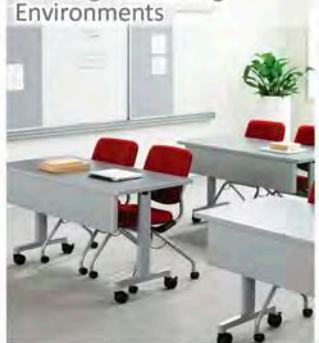
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and implementing their plan renewals. ... **Terry Ford** has joined **Gibson Insurance Group** as a client executive in the property and casualty practice. He specializes in working to identify and address client's strategic, business and hazard risk exposures. ... **Jenn Burton** of **Gibson Insurance Group** has been promoted to client executive for the business and private client group. She will focus on commercial property and casualty accounts. ... **Michelle Wasoski** of **Gibson Insurance** is now a client manager for the business and private client group. She specializes in commercial property and casualty accounts designing risk management and insurance programs for small businesses. ... **Michael Anton Jr.** of **Anton Insurance Agency** in Valparaiso and Chesterton has been named vice president and treasurer of the **Independent Insurance Agents of Indiana's** 2012 Leadership Team. ... **Sandy Vice** has joined **Gibson Insurance Group** in South Bend as claims specialist in risk management services. She is responsible for processing and servicing personal and commercial claims. ... **Shannon Clifton** of **Gibson Insurance Group** of South Bend has been awarded the Associate in Insurance Services designation from the **Insurance Institute of America**. She is client manager in the business and private client group and is responsible for sales and servicing of personal insurance accounts focusing on auto, homeowners, personal umbrella liability, recreational motorcraft and collectibles.

LEGAL

Robert J. Konopa, partner at **Tuesley Hall Konopa** in South Bend, has been named **Best Lawyers'** 2012 South Bend Personal Injury Litigation Lawyer of the Year. Best Lawyers is the oldest peer-review publication in the legal profession. ... **Tony Walker**, a private practice attorney in Gary, has been appointed to the **Indiana State Board of Education** by **Gov. Mitch Daniels**. He also is president of the **Gary Library Board**.

MANUFACTURING

Michigan City Paper Box Co. has received \$725,000 in tax abatement that will be used to upgrade equipment. The project will retain 54 jobs. The equipment is two automated machines that will allow the company to make rigid boxes for commercial and retail customers. ... **Bayer HealthCare** has sold its manufactur-

ing plant in Mishawaka to **Siemens Healthcare Diagnostics**. The plant has 270 employees who manufacture diabetes diagnostic equipment. Siemens is expected to take over the operation and keep it in Mishawaka. ... **Potash Corp.** of Canada will invest \$64 million to build a 136,000-square-foot transfer facility at **Gibson Yard** in Hammond. The company is the

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NOTEWORTHY NEWS BITS

world's largest fertilizer producer. When completed, the plant will employ 25 people. ... **Eckart Effect Pigments** of Wesel, Germany, has acquired the aluminum pigment production line owned by **Avery Dennison Corp.** in Schererville. The 40 employees will be retained by Eckhart. ... **Graphic Packaging International Inc.** has closed its LaPorte operation, putting 100 employees out of work. The company issued a statement saying the economy and a need to reduce expenses were the reasons for the closing. ... **In Touch Pharmaceuticals** in Valparaiso has added 50 people to its payroll in order to keep up with growing sales. The company plans to expand its existing building in the **Eastport Center**. ... **SunCoke Energy Inc.** of Lisle, Ill., has invested \$14 million to increase its partnership holdings with **Indiana Harbor Coke Co.** of East Chicago. SunCoke now owns 85 percent of the operation, which has 1.2 million tons

of capacity. It is a primary supplier of coke to **ArcelorMittal's** Indiana Harbor Works. ... **Munster Steel** is leaving its long-time home in Munster for a 123,000-square-foot building in the **West Point Industrial Park** in Hammond. The company plans to invest between \$5 million and \$6 million in the move. ... **AM General** in Mishawaka has laid off 350 workers because of troop reductions in Iraq. The layoffs are necessary because the demand for Humvees by the military has declined. ... **Modern Forge** has received a zoning variance from Merrillville to build a 65-foot tall addition onto its building on Colorado Street. The addition is needed for specialized machinery, but is twice as tall as local ordinances allow. The project is part of a \$17 million expansion for the company, which recently moved to Merrillville from Blue Island, Ill. ... **Alcoa Howmet** in LaPorte has received the **Lugar Energy Patriot Award** from U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar.

The plant was cited for its work in educating employees and students about identifying potential energy savings. The award is set up to recognize professionals, scholars, students or businesses involved in reducing the nation's dependence on foreign energy. Alcoa Howmet makes castings for aerospace and gas turbine operations. ... **Hoosier Racing Tire** of Lakeville has announced an \$8 million project to add 37,000 square feet of production space to its manufacturing plant in Plymouth. When finished, 20 new jobs will be created. As part of the financing package, the city of Plymouth has provided tax abatement and the **Indiana Economic Development Corp.** is providing \$140,000 in tax credits. Hoosier Racing Tire is the largest manufacturer of racing tires in the world. It has more than 400 employees.

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hold until spring plans to invest \$5.7 million into a project to restore the 25-story **Chase Tower**, the tallest building in Northwest Indiana. Without major repairs, 22 tenants in the building say they will move. **Satish Sunny Gabhawala**, president and CEO of **Care Hospitality** is acquiring the building and has pledged to invest \$19 million into the renovation. ... **Real Estate Management Corp.** has changed its name to **Bradley Residential Management**. The company is led by President and CEO Brad Toothaker. ... **Joe Candella** has joined the commercial real estate firm **CBRE/Bradley** and the residential property management firm, **Bradley Residential Management**. Candella has 25 years of experience in real estate, including asset management of commercial and residential portfolios and has served in executive roles for real estate operations. He will serve as executive vice president of

asset services and oversee commercial property management and maintenance. He is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Chicago and holds an Illinois broker's license.



Tom Julian

not including the cost of equipment, and increase employment from 190 to 210 people. ... **hhgregg Inc.** has opened a store in Highland, taking over the recently vacated Borders book store space in the **Highland Grove** shopping mall. ... **Naple-**

RETAIL

Family Express Corp. has announced it will open three new stores in Lake County in 2012. The company, which operates 57 convenience stores across northern and central Indiana, said the Lake County expansion will give it a higher profile in an area that is in its backyard. The Valparaiso based company was founded 40 years ago. ... **Tire Rack**, a South Bend-based national tire distributor, will add 132,000 square feet of warehouse space to its 532,000-square-foot operation along the Indiana Toll Road. The expansion will cost \$3.8 million,

ton Auto Group in Schererville and Hammond is marking its 80th anniversary this year. The company has 57 new car franchises in 23 locations in the Midwest and Florida. ... **University Park Mall** in Mishawaka, a part of the **Simon Property Group**, has installed electric charging stations for alternative fuel cars. The two charging stations can fully charge a car in 60 to 90 minutes. ... **Tom Julian**, a long-time employee of the recently closed **River Oaks Ford** in Illinois, has been hired as sales manager for **Webb Ford** in Highland. Julian has 34 years of experience in



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auto sales. ... Two days after **Sears** announced it would close its **Kmart** store in Portage, Michigan-based **Meijer Inc.**, announced it would buy the property at U.S. 6 and Airport Road. The purchase price was not disclosed. A spokesman for Meijer confirmed the company was interested in locating a store in Portage, its first in Porter County, but

did not disclose any information on where that store might locate. Last week, Sears, the parent company for Kmart, announced that because of lower-than-expected holiday sales, it was closing 80 stores around the country. The only two locations in Northwest Indiana were Kmart stores in St. John and Portage. ... **Greco Nut and Candy**, a fixture in

Chicago's south suburbs for more than 30 years, will add a new location in Highland. Owners **John and Jean Fager** took over the business four years ago. The store provides a variety of American-made candy, including products made by **Albanese Confectionary Group** in Merrillville. The store will carry some 500 items.



Bill Gregory

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SERVICE

Geisen Funeral Home has been cited by the National Funeral Directors Association with a Pursuit of Excellence Award for its service to clients and its involvement with community activities like Meals on Wheels. ... **Bill Gregory** has been named interim director of the **Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center** in Crown Point. Most recently, he was executive director of the **Center for Management Development** at Indiana University Northwest. ... The **Portage Economic Development Corp.** has named Jim Fitzer its interim executive director. He recently retired from **NIPSCO** as manager of public affairs after 38 years with the utility. "Bringing in Mr. Fitzer is an opportunity for the new mayor and his leadership team to gain critical knowledge and insight about PEDCO, its partner organizations and the work being done to create jobs and capital investment in Portage," said Diane Thalman, board chair of PEDCO. Fitzer is responsible for day-to-day operations, economic development and representing PEDCO at regional meetings.

SPORTS

The **South Bend Silver Hawks** have signed an agreement with the South Bend Parks Department that will keep the team in the city for the next 20 years. Part of the agreement will allow current owner Joe Kernan to sell the team to Chicagoan Andrew Berlin. ... The **Gary**

SouthShore RailCats have named **Kevin Spudic** president and general manager. The Highland native previously was with the **Chicago White Sox**, **Chicago Fire** and **Chicago Enforcers**.

TECHNOLOGY

Triskell, a pharmaceutical systems company, will move to **Innovation Park** in South Bend in 2012. Founder Jean LeFloch, a graduate of the **University of Notre Dame**, is moving the company from Sarasota, Fla., to take advantage of the research and commercialization opportunities provided in Innovation Park. ... **Ignition Park** in South Bend, a technology development business center, is expanding by 23 acres. The expansion involves the acquisition of property by the city of South Bend, which is spending \$2.2 million in acquisition and relocation costs.

TRANSPORTATION

The **Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District** has announced it wants to raise fares on **The South Shore** commuter railroad by 5 percent. The increase would go into effect Feb. 15, but before that can happen, a series of five public meetings will be scheduled to get public input. ... **South Bend Regional Airport** has received a \$750,000 grant to create a low-cost westbound air service. The grant from the **U.S. Department of Transportation** is to be matched with \$475,000 in airport, state and local funds. The money will be used to work with **Frontier** to connect its Denver hub with South Bend. ... **Allegiant Air** will begin twice weekly passenger service on Feb. 15 between **Gary/Chicago International Airport** and Sanford Orlando Airport in Florida. The flights will be on Thursday and Sunday and is the first passenger service at Gary since 2007. ... The project to add a third lane to the **Indiana Toll Road** between Gary and Lake Station has been completed. The \$250 million project

added a third travel lane along 10 miles of the Toll Road.

UTILITIES

Work is underway on the biggest project in **NIPSCO's** history – construction of a 499-foot tall concrete chimney. The project, which costs \$510 million, is part of an \$800 million project aimed at reduc-

ing emissions and pollutants at the R.M. Schahfer Generating Station in Wheatfield. After work there is completed in 2013, work will begin on a similar structure at the Michigan City Generating Station. The chimney is packed with scrubbers and other anti-pollution devices to remove particulates and sulfur dioxide. **BQ**



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Entrepreneurial Excellence

Annual awards honor drive, perseverance and innovation.

BY RICK A. RICHARDS

It might be going too far to describe entrepreneurs as gamblers, but they are risk takers. Bill Gregory, interim director of the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center, says there is something in their nature that pushes them to take risks.

"They all have a drive and perseverance," says Gregory. "They are creative, energetic people."

That's an apt description of each recipient of the 20th annual Entrepreneurial Excellence Awards. "The humility of the winners reflects the nature of the people we chose," says Gregory. "It does my heart good to talk to people like those who won because they're special people."

Gregory says they strengthen the region, they're engaged in their communities and they believe in community service. "It's been a struggle for small business to make it in these hard economic times, but these people made a difference. Quite clearly they are strong leaders, not only in their business, but in their communities."

Following are stories of the honorees. Some information and quotes are reprinted from their nomination forms, with permission from the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center.

RICH THIEL, PRESIDENT

Midwest PGM

NWI SBDC Client of the Year

Rich Thiel was surprised when he found out his Cedar Lake company was being recognized because all Midwest PGM recycles its auto parts plastic, aluminum and other metals.

But in doing so, the company keeps thousands of pounds of material from landfills.

Cindy Bertam of the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center nominated Thiel. "When I first began working with Midwest PGM in 2008 I was thoroughly impressed with their passion for the recycling business."

By continuing to work as a mechanic at a car dealership, Thiel says he's able to plow his salary back into the business. "Financing wasn't as difficult as I thought it would be. We had a lot of support from the family and the town."

He credits partner Jorge Rangel with a big part of the company's success. He is at the business every day while Thiel is either meeting with potential customers or working his day job. "Jorge and I don't always agree; we don't hold anything back. That's a huge deal and I think that's why we're successful. If it was just me or him, I don't think we'd be where we are today. We're a team."

CHRIS MAHLMANN

Valpo Life/Portage Life

Small Business Journalist of the Year

After 20 years in the corporate world of marketing, analysis and finance,



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"I'VE HELPED A LOT OF BUSINESSES SURVIVE BY HAVING THEM TAKE STEPS THEY WOULDN'T HAVE OTHERWISE TAKEN," says Gregg Holley of Citizens Financial Bank, Small Business Financial Advocate of the Year.



“THE ANSWER TO THE NATION’S HEALTH CARE PROBLEM IS TO KEEP PEOPLE AT HOME WHERE THEY WANT TO BE,” says George S. Kucka of Fairmeadows HomeHealth, the Small Business Person of the Year.

Chris Mahlmann went out on his own, starting Ideas in Motion, a business development company in 2006.

Mahlmann was nominated by Lesly Bailey, a freelance marketing professional, who says Mahlmann’s online publications “embody the community journalism concept.” “While they are centered around Valparaiso and Portage, the connections created and the growth and development initiated can be felt throughout the region,” says Bailey.

Mahlmann’s publications focus on positive news that he says is overlooked by mainstream media. “I never thought of doing community news,” he says.

After growing up in Chicago’s northwest suburbs and graduating from Loyola University in Chicago in 1986, Mahlmann moved to the region five years ago. “I fell in love with Valparaiso. After being here awhile I realized there was a lot of good news happening that didn’t make the daily newspaper.”

Mahlmann saw opportunity. “I also saw how the news media in general was slow to adapt to changes in the way news was being delivered.

“I was told good news doesn’t sell, but I’ve found that good news can sell. I’ve never worked harder and never taken more risk than I am right now,” says Mahlmann, who adds he’s also happier than he’s ever been.

THERESA VALADE

Success Trek

Woman-Owned Business of the Year

Theresa Valade is an entrepreneur, author, consultant, and life coach. The CEO and founder of Success Trek helps struggling individuals and companies improve themselves and their operations.

Bill Gregory, the interim director of the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center, nominated Valade. “The most accurate statement I can make about Theresa is that she is the quintessential colleague. I’m very glad we connected about four years ago. We’ve partnered on several projects, she has referred work to me and I’ve returned the favor.”

For her part, Valade says she was humbled by the E-Day honor. “I think what it demonstrates is that I’ve grown as a business.”

Valade says her business “helps people sort things out.” It’s also helped her fine tune her business. “I’ve had to make some decisions on whether to stay the same or grow the company,” says Valade. “I’m going to grow. I want to become an organization with at least five team members and I want to hire independent contractors.”

As a third-generation entrepreneur, Valade says she feels she was destined to go into business for herself. She says that when she started she had no idea what direction this “entrepreneur thing” would take. “I now know there is no one problem I can’t do,” she says.

GREGG HOLLEY

Citizens Financial Bank

Small Business Financial Advocate of the Year

One of the most satisfying things about banking for Gregg Holley is helping others succeed. Holley has been with Citizens Financial Bank for six years.

He was nominated by LeAnn McCrum of InTouch Pharmaceuticals. “To help small businesses secure financing in tough economic times can be a true lifeline for any business. He is an invaluable

SHAWN SPENCE SHAWNSPENCE.COM

resource for so many businesses in Northwest Indiana.”

Holley says he was surprised because there are other people who put in a lot of time and energy doing what he does. “I try to do as much as I can to make clients the best they can be. I also try to keep in touch with them over time.”

Holley says the key to building a relationship is to treat clients as he wants to be treated. “When you do that, you become a trusted advisor.”

At the same time, Holley is helping the bank. “By helping small businesses, I’m helping the bank spread its risk and be more profitable. I want to foster relationships. I want to see them all succeed and grow in the community.”

In this difficult economy, Holley says he’s learned a lot. “I’ve helped a lot of businesses survive by having them take steps they wouldn’t have otherwise taken. We’ve learned a lot together and we’ll be stronger in the future because of it.”

FRANCES (PAT) AND LINDA HOLMES

**Pediatric, Infant & Family Home Health Care Services
Minority-Owned Business
of the Year**

Fourteen years ago, sisters Frances and Linda Holmes saw a need for home health care in Gary and began providing it. Today, the two nurses have a clinic, nursing services, home health aides and occupational therapists.

They recently bought a building on Burr Street that’s home for PIF’s 80 employees.

Dan Duncan of Peoples Bank nominated the sisters. “Pat and Linda’s efforts to grow their business have provided additional employment opportunities in Northwest Indiana.”

Pat Holmes was delighted with the E-Day honor. “I was elated to see that someone else recognized the things we do.”

In working with Peoples Bank,

Holmes says the relationship with Duncan “blossomed.”

“It has been very challenging in this economy, but we think we’re on the right path,” says Holmes.

Pat and Linda’s daughters are following their footsteps as registered nurses and helping at PIF. “What gives me the most satisfaction is seeing the patients and families in the community,” says Holmes. “When you’re out in the community and you see someone who is now back on their own feet, it gives me a great feeling.”

STEVE ARNDT

Above the Tracks LTD.

Emerging Business of the Year

Steve Arndt is a blue collar guy, so the plunge into running his own safety consulting business surprised even him. Still, Arndt has built a reputation that has companies large and small calling for help to assess their safety protocols.

“I wasn’t sure what an entrepreneur was. I had never received a

Congratulations



Kurt Minko

Retro-Tech Systems, Inc.

NWI SBDC Award Winner
Entrepreneurial Success of the Year



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nomination for anything before, but I was honored," Arndt says from his Michigan City office.

He started the company in 2006. Arndt says safety is an integral part of any operation and he's pleased clients allow him to offer safety solutions to make their business more efficient.

Rene Martin of Citizens Financial Bank nominated Arndt. "Steve Arndt is the epitome of a small business entrepreneur. He saw an underserved need in the market and formed his company to service this niche."

Arndt says nearly all of his consulting work has been with the steel industry, not only in Northwest Indi-

ana but around the country. He's also done work at power plants and refineries.

Arndt says, "At the rate we're growing, I see us being one of the top companies in our field in the country." Within five years he hopes his company has between 150 and 200 employees. "That is the goal. I want to take this company to the next level."

DANIEL J. AND LAURIE ROHDER

Rohder Machine and Tool Inc.
Family-Owned Small Business of the Year

When Daniel and Laurie Rohder bought the family business in 2005,

it was a big step. He wanted to make sure he continued the reputation his father had built since he started the Crown Point company in 1968.

Jack Esala of Centier Bank nominated the Rohders. "Dan and Laurie were obvious candidates in my mind. Since taking over for Dan's parents, the Rohders have continued to be successful with managed growth. Even in a down economy they did not suffer like many small businesses."

Since taking over six years ago, the company has grown by 40 percent. The Rohders say they couldn't have moved forward without the help of Dan's brother, Dave, who is quality control manager, and their son, Matt, who is operations manager. The company has 14 employees.

Dan says a key to success is making sure growth is manageable. "We made sure we didn't extend ourselves," he says.

Another key is communication with his banker. "You have to keep the banker informed of what you're doing. And you have to know how to market yourself. It is hard to get started, but once you get established, you can focus on your customers by giving them good, quality work."

Laurie adds that as an entrepreneur, you can't be afraid of the future. "Sometimes you have to take a risk to move ahead."

"It's a real honor for us to receive the award," says Dan. "Mom and dad flew in from Florida for this. He was very proud of what we've done."

FRANK SZCZEPANSKI

IVDiagnostics
Revolutionary Technology
Company of the Year

Its unique research to find a cure for cancer has created a buzz about IVDiagnostics, owned by Frank Szczepanski in Valparaiso. Its high-tech focus is changing the way Northwest Indiana is viewed by those outside the region.

"I believe in companies with a focus on technology," says Szczepanski. "But I think the research we're doing has the chance to change the world."



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Family-Owned Small Business of the Year

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**"I NOW KNOW THERE
IS NO ONE PROBLEM
I CAN'T DO," says
Theresa Valade of
Success Trek, the
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Charlie McGill of Elevate Ventures LLC, and the former director of Entech Innovation Center, nominated IVDiagnostics. "IVDiagnostics is one of the most exciting new ventures in the state of Indiana. They have been developing a biomedical application for monitoring and diagnosing cancer cells that is truly unique and will make a significant impact on the medical community and patient care once fully commercialized."

For Szczepanski being an entrepreneur is part of his DNA. He has been involved with nine start-up companies over 20 years. In recent weeks, he has visited both coasts to talk about IVDiagnostics. "People are starting to recognize Northwest Indiana for more than steel," he says.

Szczepanski is trying to find a more efficient way of diagnosing and treating cancer. "We're dealing with nanotechnology, things smaller than a micron in size. What we need to do now is get hospitals to focus on this technology. We need to educate students and professors about what we're doing and enhance partnership and collaboration in this field."

KURT MINKO

Retro-Tech Systems Inc.
Entrepreneurial Success
of the Year

For 18 years, Kurt Minko has led Retro-Tech Systems into one of the nation's leaders in lighting. Minko's companies provide clients with lighting that enhances the work place and is energy efficient.

"I'll be honest, I didn't know if I deserved this honor," says Minko. "We just kind of plug along here, so it was a surprise."

Donald McCormick of First Midwest Bank, nominated Minko. "Under the leadership of Kurt Minko, Retro-Tech Systems strives to deliver the highest value and quality customer service to every client on every project. They are truly a great company."

For several years, the company was based in Illinois, but in 2010

Congratulations to

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George S. Kucka
Owner, Fairmeadows Home Health Center
Recipient of the

Small Business Development Center
"Small Business Person of the Year"
&

Pat Holmes and Linda Lewis
Owner, Pediatric, Infant & Family Home
Health Care Services

Recipient of the
Small Business Development Center
"Minority Owned Business of the Year"



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moved to Valparaiso. It has 150 employees.

One of the most satisfying things Minko and his staff do is save clients money. "I like the fact that we save our customers money. And we're helping reduce the nation's carbon footprint."

Minko has worked for large corporations but says he wasn't cut out for that lifestyle. He likes a smaller operation where there is more of a team concept. "We do a lot of work with existing buildings and it's really satisfying to make them more efficient for our clients."

GEORGE S. KUCKA

Fairmeadows HomeHealth
Small Business Person of the Year

George S. Kucka admits he was surprised when he learned his company was receiving an E-Day award. "I was humbled. I wondered if they had gotten the right guy."

Brian Rusin of Peoples Bank was

sure. He nominated Kucka. "George Kucka has a history in the pharmaceutical and home health care industry for over 40 years. He is a good business person and is very knowledgeable about his operations and passionate about the pharmaceutical and home health care industry."

Kucka, a pharmacist by training, has been president and CEO since 2001. Fairmeadows has 35 employees who serve as consultants to area industries and provide equipment to retailers.

"I always wanted to own my own business," says Kucka, who started his first business in 1985 and sold it to Walgreens. Five years ago, he joined Fairmeadows.

Kucka says the best part of business is "the people we work with and the people we serve. We believe the answer to the nation's health care problem is to keep people at home where they want to be."

For that to become the norm, Kucka does a lot of explaining to legislators that effective health care can be provided just as well at home as in a hospital.

Five years from now, Kucka says he hopes his company is still around. "There are huge legislative issues out there that could eliminate 80 percent to 90 percent of providers like us."

Kucka said his business requires unique people. "We're very compassionate. The feedback we get is that people and families love what we do. That's very satisfying."

JOHN BARNEY

Barney Enterprises
Lifetime Achievement Award

John Barney is a career restaurant entrepreneur. He started with Burger Chef in central Indiana and later developed Rax Roast Beef restaurants. His entrepreneurial drive has led him into student housing in

CITIZENS FINANCIAL BANK
CONGRATULATES

GREGG HOLLEY

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
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**E-DAY
AWARD WINNER**
Small Business Financial Advocate of the Year

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Lifetime Achievement Award

STEVE ARNDT

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Emerging Business Award

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Indiana and Kentucky, heater manufacturing, a surgery center and an imaging center.

Mark Maassel of the Northwest Indiana Forum, nominated Barney. "John is a superb business leader with a long track record of success who is deeply committed to sharing his skills with the community."

Barney admits he was humbled by

the award. "I know there are many people who won it."

Barney's father operated Circle Leasing in Indianapolis, which operated some 700 Burger Chef restaurants. While he was at Indiana University, Barney says all he wanted to do was run a Burger Chef franchise.

He got his chance in Marion in

1967. Eventually he had 12 restaurants, some of which were in Northwest Indiana, which is how he wound up in the region. Eventually Burger Chef was sold to Hardee's. That's when Barney got involved with Rax Roast Beef.

As the business grew, Barney brought family members, including his daughter, into the business. "I can't tell you how thrilled I am to have my daughter working with me," he says. "Each business is different and that's why I find it challenging."

JIM JORGENSEN

Hoeppner, Wagner & Evans
Garry Bradley Business Advocate
of the Year

For as long as anyone can remember, Valparaiso lawyer Jim Jorgensen has been involved with the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center, mostly behind the scenes.

When he was announced as the Garry Bradley Business Advocate of the Year, Jorgensen said there had to be someone else more deserving.

Valparaiso Mayor Jon Costas disagrees. "Starting with the day I was elected mayor in 2003, I have called on Jim Jorgensen regularly for sound, practical advice. He has helped me to better understand what government can do to help foster a business environment that helps small businesses form and prosper."

Jorgensen specializes in labor, employment, banking and business law. "The award is a tremendous honor. I was very flattered by the recognition, especially the comments of Mayor Costas."

Jorgensen says what he does for small business is solve problems. "At the very least, I try to move things ahead for them."

Jorgensen says Northwest Indiana has always been fertile ground for entrepreneurs. "For me, it's the people I meet. There is an energy, a can-do spirit. There is a boldness. They have a vision. That's what keeps you coming back day after day." **BQ**

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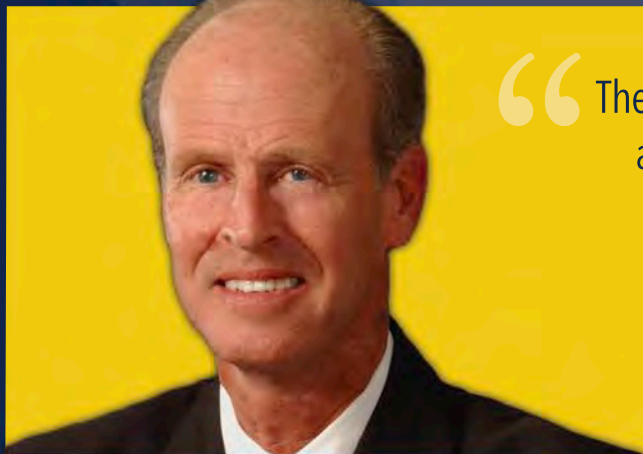
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How Safe

Food manufacturers and

BY RICK A. RICHARDS

Tom DonLevy isn't concerned that the public has probably never heard of his company. The president of DonLevy Laboratories in Crown Point prefers a low profile.

If his lab's name pops up, that means there's a problem somewhere, and DonLevy doesn't want any of his clients to ever have a problem when it comes to food safety.

DonLevy is a microbiologist and has been involved with the food industry since the 1980s. He started his own company in 1992 in Merrillville with just three employees.

Today, DonLevy Laboratories is an independent commercial food testing lab that performs microbiological and chemistry analysis on facilities, raw food products and finished products for clients across the country. The company also performs sanitation audits, shelf-life evaluations and analysis of product

integrity and regulatory compliance.

In 2005, DonLevy built a 22,000-square-foot food laboratory in Crown Point that today has 105 employees.

On the surface, it may seem simple to create a set of protocols for clients to follow in order to make sure their food products are safe.

"Unfortunately," says DonLevy, "things are not that cut and dried. It depends on the building, the kind of equipment they use, all sorts of things. One size definitely doesn't fit all."

When public announcements are made by the Food and Drug Administration that contaminated lettuce or tomatoes or bean sprouts or some other food has caused illness (or in some cases, death), that means there has been a failure in the food safety system somewhere.

DonLevy's goal is to prevent those kinds of failures and FDA involvement with a client.

"Identifying the root cause of a

problem is difficult," says DonLevy. "Each and every food borne illness has a cause. Our job is to find it and get rid of it."

DonLevy says what he preaches to clients is the science of prevention, but it's up to clients to follow his advice. "For instance, when I deal with meat, I can guarantee it will be 100 percent safe when it reaches the store, but that might mean it would cost \$50 a pound. No one can afford that."

So what happens is a delicate balance of cost-effective safety and affordability. What can meat producers do to provide safe meat to consumers without pricing their product out of the reach of consumers?

The ultimate decision on food safety rests with the client, but DonLevy doesn't hesitate to make recommendations. Sometimes all of his recommendations are embraced, but other times, only some are put in place.

For a large multinational company that supplies a variety of foods, Don-

“We pride ourselves on having good manufacturing practices.”

—Larry McLeskey, Nampac

is Your Food?

distributors are always vigilant.

Levy's recommendation might mean \$10 million in safety improvements that the company accepts without a second thought. But for a small, independent supplier, \$10 million might be beyond its capability.

And for the companies that put DonLevy's recommendations in place, it's not as simple as it sounds. “Even within the same company, the recommendations that work at one facility might not at another. To make sure things work, I need to be in contact with individual plants.”

DonLevy says his company is constantly looking to the future. “I never want the customer to have to call us with a problem,” he says. “We work with them to avoid problems. We never want a regulatory agency involved with our clients because of a contamination problem.”

To test a single sample, DonLevy says it can take as many as 20 people. “What we do is very labor-intensive. For example, take a com-

pany that makes frozen TV dinners. There is a protein component, a starch component, a fat component and a dessert. All of them have a different shelf life and they all have to come together at the same time. Our part of that is to test each component and make sure they come together as safely as possible.”

And just because a company has a problem doesn't necessarily mean it's a bad company. Keeping unwanted bacteria out of the workplace is a daunting challenge. All it takes is one misstep – a missed spot on a knife, bacteria tracked on the bottom of a boot, a sneeze from an uncovered mouth – and a major problem can happen.

Companies that respond to such problems by announcing a voluntary recall even when they're fairly certain there isn't a problem with products on the shelf are good companies.

It happened last month at Fair Oaks Dairy Products LLC, the

cheese-producing arm of Fair Oaks Dairy in Newton County.

The company announced a voluntary recall of half-pound packages of cheeses and gift boxes sold between Sept. 20 and Dec. 3. The cheese had the potential to be contaminated with *Listeria monocytogenes*, an organism that can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections in children, the frail or elderly.

In a statement issued to the public about the recall, Fair Oaks said a laboratory analysis confirmed that a 4-year aged cheddar cheese marketed in half-pound packages contained *Listeria*. The company contacted the FDA and pulled its product from stores. No illnesses were reported.

That's the kind of announcement no food producer wants to make, but by reacting decisively, quickly and openly, Fair Oaks showed it was on top of the situation.

At Nampac in Valparaiso, a division of BWAY, the focus is not food



NO RECALL DonLevy Laboratories in Crown Point doesn't mind that it's not a household name. It just wants to keep its food-manufacturing clients out of the headlines.

but food containers. Larry McLeskey, the quality manager for Nampac, says the company follows all AIB standards for cleanliness.

AIB International has been around since 1919 and is the agency that sets cleanliness and food quality standards for much of the food industry. Originally, it was known as the American Institute of Baking.

"We make mostly five-gallon and two-gallon buckets for the food industry," says McLeskey. (The company also makes 3½-gallon, 4½-gallon and 20-liter buckets.) "Even though we're making buckets, everything we do here is food quality – we all wear aprons, hair nets, beard nets and gloves."

McLeskey said he closely monitors the building for any pests, inside and out.

"We pride ourselves on having good manufacturing practices," he says. Even though the company makes buckets for other uses such

as paint and hardware products, every bucket Nampac produces is food-quality.

"We decided to make all of our buckets to food-quality standards. It could get confusing for our people if we had two standards, so we decided to go with the higher standard for everything. It's actually easier for us to manage it."

At Stanz Foodservice in South Bend, tight quality control is a way of life, says President Mark Harman. The company supplies food in bulk to school cafeterias, restaurants and commercial food service outlets.

Stanz was founded in 1923 as Stanz Cheese Co. in South Bend. As roads were developed in the 1920s, founder Emil Stanz saw the possibilities of truck delivery. By the end of World War II, the company's focus had changed from retail to institutional food delivery.

Today, the company occupies a 152,000-square-foot building on 13

acres near Michiana Regional Airport on South Bend's southwest side.

"We don't do any preparation. We're a food distributor," says Harman. "We make sure the quality of our facilities and our trucks are maintained. Because we deliver such a variety of foods, we have different storage areas in our facilities that are maintained at different temperatures for the different foods we have."

Harman says Stanz also makes sure the paper goods it supplies to customers are clean. "A lot of people wouldn't think about napkins and paper goods having to meet the same standards," says Harman.

Among the items it routinely supplies to clients are fresh produce, meat and frozen seafood. "Every product has a specific location in our building, where it's stored at a specific temperature. We know where every product is and where it's going. We have to know that in case there is a recall. We have full

records of who produced it, where it was produced and where it's going."

Harman says that by taking those steps, Stanz absorbs a lot of the risk and worry of customers. "This is what we do to protect our customers," says Harman.

At Integrated Flavors in Pines in Porter County, Georgeann Quealy says food safety is paramount. The company provides soup flavorings and stock for such major food companies as Nestle and Heinz as well as national restaurant chains such as Red Lobster, Steak 'n Shake, Panera Bread and Applebee's.

Quealy has been with the business since 1990. In 2005, she bought the Michigan City company from her parents and two years ago moved into a larger facility just three miles away.

"We've hired someone fulltime just to do the FDA paperwork that needs to be done," says Quealy. "It doesn't matter how big you are, we have

"It doesn't matter how big you are, we have the same regulations and inspection requirements."

—Georgeann Quealy, Integrated Flavors

the same regulations and inspection requirements as a big company like Hormel or ConAgra.

"We're FDA-inspected and we have an inspector here every day that we're processing meat," says Quealy. "And they could pop in whenever they want." To make sure the company will always pass an FDA inspection, Integrated Flavors has hired a third-party inspector who has an office in the building and constantly monitors the company to see if it's operating according to government rules and regulations.

In addition to meeting FDA requirements, Quealy says many of

her customers have their own safety and cleanliness guidelines and send their own inspectors to the company.

"We score very well," says Quealy. "It shows we're doing a good job."

And in the end, that's what all food and food product distributors want. Each wants to operate quietly and provide customers with the best quality product possible. There are a few more hoops to jump through than might apply to a steelmaker or a tool and die maker, but Northwest Indiana's food industry is willing to do that so their customers don't have to worry about safety. **BQ**

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Managing Pain

With millions of sufferers, chronic pain gets increasing attention.

BY KATHY MCKIMMIE

About 116 million adults in this country experience chronic pain, which costs between \$560 billion and \$635 billion annually in medical expenses and associated economic costs including lost wages and productivity, according to a report issued in June by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, sponsored by the National Institutes of Health. The study, mandated by Congress as part of recent health-care legislation, shows a dramatic increase over previous estimates.

The first stop for individuals in pain is typically the family doctor, and the Institute's report said the majority of care and management should take place through primary care providers and patient self-management, with specialty care services reserved for more complex cases.

For those more difficult cases, however, there are several resources available in Northwest Indiana to tackle chronic pain, nearly all using minimally invasive procedures.

"Most people don't even know there are such things as pain specialists," says Dr. Heather Nath of Lakeshore Bone & Joint Institute, Chesterton, but they've been around for about 20 years. She is board-certified in both anesthesiology and pain medicine, with a dozen years practice in the latter.

At Lakeshore, she works closely with workers' compensation insurers, adjusters and occupational health providers to treat primarily workplace injuries.

"If you would have told me that my office would be between a Walmart

and a cornfield, I wouldn't have believed you," Nath says, who spent most of her career at Rush Medical Center in Chicago and has lectured at Harvard. "But it's nice to be able to provide that kind of care here — you don't have to go to Chicago."

"The people that come to me are those who generally fail the first round of treatment," says Nath. That sometimes leads to frustration, financial stress and fear of reinjury, all of which need to be dealt with. It's up to her to discover why the first treatment didn't work. The individual may have been seen initially onsite at an occupational health center at a steel mill or by an orthopedic surgeon. "We work in a coordinated effort to get the proper diagnosis and treatment," she says.

"As a pain specialist, I treat people with all different types of pain," Nath says, "but I treat a lot of back injuries, that's the most common." And the most common procedure she performs to alleviate back pain it is an epidural steroid injection that is done under X-ray guidance.

"I saw hundreds of injured workers last year and most get better," she says. The treatments are sometimes combined with physical therapy or other measures to achieve success. "The best approach is prevention," she adds, but that doesn't always get considered.

Prevention is also a key word for Dr. Shaun Kondamuri, director, Midwest Interventional Spine Specialists, based in Munster with locations in six other Northwest Indiana cities. Like Nath, he is board-certified in both pain medicine and anesthesiology, with the additional area

of internal medicine. He practices interventional pain management full-time.

Fifty percent of injuries in non-Medicare adults happen in the workplace, says Kondamuri. That's why ergonomics, proper lifting techniques, and strengthening core muscles are stressed to prevent injuries. Most patients he sees are from 35 to 50 years old and some arthritis is developing; they have stiffness in the joints if regular exercise is not the norm.

When injuries occur they could be caused by heavy lifting, but just as often by bending and twisting, "life's usual events" as he calls them, putting greater stress on the spine and disks, the most common cause of back injury and pain.

Anti-inflammatories, analgesics and physical therapy are recommended and in appropriate cases Kondamuri will use steroid injections into the specific location causing the pain. In those cases, about 90 percent of patients return to work in about a week if the employer allows light-duty work. He doesn't want to have his patients at home developing "chronic pain tendencies." More than half his patients will be back to work at full duty within a month and very few will need surgery.

The use of steroid injections has been shown to be as effective as surgery, Kondamuri says, and at much less expense than a spinal fusion. In addition, the patient frequently expects a quick result with surgery and takes a passive approach to recovery. Kondamuri says he tries to avoid prescribing opiates and muscle relaxants because they interfere with

fine motor skills and shouldn't be taken while on the job.

Dr. Ramesh Kanuru, medical director, Kanuru Interventional Spine & Pain Institute, with offices in Highland, Valparaiso and at Pinnacle Hospital in Crown Point, may be the longest-practicing pain specialist in Northwest Indiana. He started in 1981 at St. Margaret's in Hammond.

He remembers introducing the pushbutton patient pain device for use after surgery in the hospital, and he has added other innovations as they have come along, like steroid injections, neurostimulation with the use of a spinal cord stimulator (implanted in the body similar to a cardiac pacemaker) that blocks the nerves going to the brain, and radio frequency ablation, which causes a burning of a nerve in the neck or back to stop pain.

Despite high-tech treatments, however, he says he remains conservative in his practice and touts a decidedly low-tech advancement that has aided pain control. It's the "fifth vital sign," he says – asking patients to describe their pain on a scale of one to 10, with no pain being zero. It was adopted by the Joint Commission 10 years ago. "It made professionals and non-professionals aware of the importance of pain and the need to treat pain."

About 70 percent of patients Kanuru sees have been injured at work. If he finds the majority of the patient's pain is coming from muscles, he refers to a physical therapist first. If that doesn't do the trick he will typically have them come back for an injection. In most cases the injection is a one-time thing.

Treatments are often complemented by physical therapy, stress management techniques, yoga and meditation. Conditioning strategies are emphasized with patients and employers to prevent injuries. Unfortunately, Kanuru says, employers rarely provide exercise or wellness programs. "They don't mind paying out hundreds of thousands on the other end by paying for workers' compensation, hospitals and surgeries."



DOWN WITH PAIN Dr. Ramesh Kanuru, medical director of the Kanuru Interventional Spine & Pain Institute, may be the longest-practicing pain specialist in Northwest Indiana.

OCCUPATIONAL MEDICINE PLAYS A ROLE

The medical staff, physical therapists and ergonomists at Memorial Center for Occupational Health, South Bend, have worked with some

2,300 companies in northern Indiana, Michigan and Illinois to help get injured workers back on the job as soon as possible and provide a safer work environment.

"Over the last few years there's

SPECIALTY TREATMENT CENTERS

been a 40 percent increase in the number reporting chronic pain in the workplace,” says its medical director, Dr. Eric P. Wohlrab. “It’s now one in four employees. Half of those admit it decreases their ability to do the job.” That leads to absenteeism, but also presenteeism — showing up but only going through the motions without the normal productivity.

“Our approach to pain is: do a good job evaluating what’s causing it and go about ameliorating it,” Wohlrab says. If it’s tennis elbow, for instance, do minimal activity, take anti-inflammatories, do stretches, use ice and heat and limit repetitive motion. He subscribes to the old joke: “Doc, it hurts when I do this.” “Then don’t do it.”

“In three to four weeks most work-related musculoskeletal injuries will get better on their own, regardless of what you do.”

For more serious cases, Wohlrab says treatment may involve more bells and whistles, such as cortisone shots, but he is adamant that prescription pain medications such as Vicodin are overused. If they are used, they need to be discontinued when significant progress is made, certainly before a return to work.

“All medications have side effects. In a safety-sensitive situation you’re putting yourself and others at risk.” It is his job to report to supervisors that the employee is “fit for duty.”

“I’m more interested in the functional capacity, more so than the pain,” he says. “As we’ve all found, you can have pain day-to-day.

“With chronic pain, I like to take a holistic approach,” Wohlrab says. That means making referrals to alternative types of health-care treatments when appropriate, such as chiropractic, yoga and bio-feedback.

CHIROPRACTIC CARE

“About 85 out of 100 people will suffer with an incapacitating lower-back situation in their lifetime,” says Robert Hall, DC, Broadway Plaza Pain Relief Center, Merrillville. So naturally, that’s the most common problem he has treated in more than 20 years of practice, but all parts of the body can be involved.

For working adults, most problems arise from repetitive tasks or overuse, says Hall. “Of course, we also see the plain old traumatic injury,” where a person bent over to pick something up and an injury results. Those injuries are typically caused by deconditioning, he says, when you do something 90 percent of the time and then switch to something you do infrequently and the injury occurs — maybe from one little twist.

“We use conservative measures aimed at correcting whatever the problem is that is causing the discomfort, as opposed to treating with medications,” Hall says. “Is there a muscle shortened and tightened over time? Can we stretch it? Is it weak? Can we strengthen it?”

One treatment Hall added a few years ago is spinal decompression. “It’s a revisitation of traction,” he says, that has come in and out of style. It’s helpful in people with spinal stenosis and disc disease. When a nerve is compressed, causing pain, it is decompressed using computerized programmed patterns of stretching and release. “It’s the treatment of choice if we’re trying to avoid surgery.”

Like Hall, the majority of patients seen by Jose Cordova, DC, Community Chiropractic Clinic, Munster, have back injuries. Ninety percent have pain coming from the base of the skull to the tailbone, he says, with the rest typically having problems with knees, hips, feet and wrists.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common condition found in the wrist from overuse and is treated with stretches as well as splints, fre-



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quently used at night when the pain can get worse.

Cordova's ultimate goal is to get the pressure off and get the tissue to recover. In most cases that involves spinal manipulation – adjusting and mobilizing the spine to regain normal movement. Adjunctive therapies are also used, such as electrical stimulation, cold therapy, heat therapy and ultrasound therapy to reduce swelling.

Most of Cordova's clients have chronic pain caused by arthritis and degenerative problems caused by repetitive work, such as hairdressers, assembly line workers and truck drivers. Not surprisingly, many problems start in middle age when people tend to get out of shape. Even sitting behind desk for long periods of time causes problems, he says, because there is no exchange of fluid within the cartilage.

"Movement promotes fluid

exchange," he says. The treatment plan for these individuals may last eight to 12 weeks, compared to a couple weeks for younger workers where there is no degenerative problem or arthritis. After treatment,

his treatment. If the condition is acute enough, he will present the patient with options, including referral to a physician.

Insurance coverage for chiropractors is limited in Indiana because the

"Over the last few years there's been a 40 percent increase in the number reporting chronic pain in the workplace."

—Dr. Eric P. Wohlrab, Memorial Center for Occupational Health

patients are counseled on how to do stretches and exercises to avoid reinjury. Even so, Cordova says patients with chronic conditions return every couple years.

Allowing the tissue to heal is key to Cordova's success and treatment depends on a good diagnosis. Not all patients are good candidates for

state has no "any willing provider" provision in its insurance law, Hall says, which would allow a patient to more easily choose a chiropractor for care. As a result, "it's an unlevel playing field for chiropractors." Where injured workers have a choice, like in Illinois, he said, "chiropractic flourishes." **BQ**

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Tackling Adult ADHD

Proper treatment can lead to more effective employees.

BY KATHY MCKIMMIE

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, ADHD, is widely discussed as a childhood problem, but more than half of children affected will take it with them into adulthood, causing ongoing problems with jobs and relationships.

Adults may have known all of their lives that something was wrong, says Dr. David Parks, clinical psychologist with Parks Associates Psychological Services, Portage, yet were never diagnosed with ADHD as children. Now, workers having trouble keeping a job are seeking help voluntarily or occasionally because of a “last-chance agreement” with an employer where termination is imminent.

“With adults it shows up most often as some other presenting problem and the actual ADHD has been misdiagnosed for years,” Parks says. In the workplace the symptoms can show up as difficulty remembering and an inability to follow instructions of more than one step, difficulty planning, missing deadlines and chronic lateness.

As the ADHD name suggests, there are really two types of problems, inattentiveness and distraction, and hyperactivity — frequent fidgeting and bouncing of the leg, and blurting out responses at inappropriate times and interrupting. They can wreak havoc on a person’s ability to perform a job or get along with managers or peers in a work situation.

On occasion employers have referred employees to Parks for evaluation after erratic performance on the job because they want to save a good employee. Employers are gen-



GETTING HELP Some hard workers that get poor reviews are suffering from ADHD, says Dr. Samir Gupta, a psychiatrist at Porter-Starke Services.

erally so relieved to know that it isn’t a substance abuse problem that they are accommodating and cooperative in helping the employee work through the ADHD issues.

The longer individuals go without treatment the more accumulated debris of disasters pile up, Parks says, like firings, chronic underemployment, absenteeism, low self-esteem and lack of awareness about the needs of others. It gets tougher to treat after age 25, and many of his clients are just learning about their condition in their 30s and 40s.

At that point, targeted interventions are based on specific behaviors. Learning to write things down, including instructions given on the job (not typically an accepted norm in a blue-collar workplace) is helpful, as is physically moving a cubicle or a desk so the person is free of distractions. If the employer is willing, flexible hours are helpful so that chronically late employees can arrive at slightly different times.

Another strategy that has worked for both students and adults, says Parks, is to have two projects going on at the same time in two separate locations. When the individuals get agitated on one, they move to the other and start anew, being

more productive than trying to work through something when they are stressed and frustrated.

Medications combined with therapy may be helpful, Parks said. “I can diagnose the nature and form of the problem, then physicians will prescribe what best fits.”

Dr. Samir Gupta is a psychiatrist at Porter-Starke Services, Valparaiso, which provides behavioral health-care services. After a diagnosis, medication-based or cognitive therapy is

begun. “I think the best treatment is a combination of the two,” he says. Not taking prescribed medications, however, is a big problem in this group, with 65 percent non-compliant.

Some adult patients come in seeking help for anxiety over poor work performance or depression because of a lost job, and are found to have ADHD, Gupta explains. “They are hard workers putting in effort, but not getting the same result as their colleagues. They get poor reviews.”

Those who do stick to their treatment program will see improvement and continue to benefit, Gupta says. It will help them not only in their jobs, but in their family lives and relationships, where high divorce rates, extramarital affairs and addictions are prevalent. “They are very prone to impulsive decisions that give instant gratification.”

Gupta says there are free online screeners to self-test for ADHD, and you don’t necessarily have to see a psychiatrist for treatment. “A lot of primary care physicians are becoming more comfortable treating this disorder.” He adds an interesting clue for employers and primary care physicians to consider: 70 to 80 percent of adults with ADHD are smokers. **EQ**

Staffing Up for Recovery

How personnel companies help employers navigate the road ahead.

BY STEVE KAEUBLE

"It's kind of an industry trademark that we're canaries in the coal mine," Mirko Marich, managing partner of Staff Source in Hammond, says of the staffing and employment services industry. "We were seeing the downturn in the economy well before most other industries."

But canaries also sing when the dawn is near. That's why it's so encouraging to hear how well things are going in the staffing and personnel business these days. Manufacturers and other companies tend to turn first to temporary hires when a sluggish economy starts to turn around.

"Companies that are a little skittish have work orders on the books, but are reluctant to bring people on full-time," Marich says. "So they're going to an agency like ours to get their orders done." The optimistic prognosis: Hires that are temporary now will become permanent as the economy continues to turn around.

Truth is, there are plenty of good-news stories around the business if you know where to look, says Brian Holecki, director of executive recruitment for Career Transitions in Mishawaka. In some industries and some lines of work, companies were a little too eager to lay off workers during the recent downturn, and now they have to compensate.

"They went through the recession of 2009 and 2010 downsizing a little too far," he says. "There are skill gaps and function gaps in some organizations. There's still catch-up going on. They're tapping into the pool but not finding the right kind of talent."

That can even happen in industries where the overall jobless rate remains far from normal. "Some



NOW HIRING? Manufacturers and distribution centers often turn to professional staffing companies.

industries still have very large unemployment rates, such as the RV industry," Holecki says. "But we are still finding a very tough number of qualified individuals for specific jobs."

The result for companies like Career Transitions: "We're extremely busy. We have jobs all over the United States, but they're specialized. Companies are looking for specialized skill sets."

Staffing companies are just what the doctor ordered for employers nervously viewing the economic landscape ahead. Downsizing has definitely been the norm the past couple of years, and many companies laid off not only front-line workers but also a fair amount of the human resources support staff.

"A lot of human resources departments were hit," says Bob Tithof, CEO of Sedona Staffing in High-

land. That really poses a problem when the economy recovers enough to necessitate some hiring. Who's going to handle the HR component?

"It takes a lot of time to qualify people to put in these jobs," he observes. "One of the problems that human resources departments are facing is that if they post a job that pays a decent salary, they could be bombarded with 200 or 300 resumes. Try to find the time to go through all those." Staffing companies are there to help get that job done.

It may be that an employer has kept HR generalists on the payroll, but not the specialists who are only needed on occasion, according to Desila Rosetti, president of Organizational Development Solutions Inc. "We will come in and assist where they need a depth of knowledge, such as a compensation specialist."

The services of staffing companies

are not just for economic times like today, though. For many companies, it makes sense in good times and bad to bring in labor through a staffing service. Sometimes, demand fluctuates so regularly that an employer will fill certain jobs only with temporary employees, so that the company is not stuck with idle hands on the payroll when the demand slacks.

In other cases, companies will regularly first engage workers through a staffing service on an "intent to hire" basis. "It's basically companies wanting people that down the road they intend to make their employees," Tithof explains. The reasons make sense no matter what the economy is like. "By going through an employment service, it allows them to try an employee before they offer full-time employment."

"The advantage to employers is that they can do a test drive, if you will; they can try the person

out," Marich concurs. That helps the employer determine whether the employees are a good fit, which is not just a matter of qualifications

the other hand, acquire that employee through a staffing service on an "intent to hire" basis, and it's the staffing company that deals with such headaches,

"You can have people who have the right skills but who don't fit within the mold of the company."

—Mirko Marich, Staff Source

and experience. "You can have people who have the right skills but who don't fit within the mold of the company."

Hiring and then sending such employees back on the street has fiscal implications for the employer. The cost of hiring can be steep, for one thing, and so can the cost of firing, if there's an impact on the company's unemployment insurance. On

Tithof points out. "We would be responsible for that temporary associate's unemployment."

Likewise, there are companies that never maintain a full HR department, good economy or bad. "In our area, a lot of construction companies don't employ an HR person," Rosetti points out. "They have an office manager who has assumed duties of human resources." That can work, but only if there is a consultant on-call—such as a staffing service—to handle the HR work that the office manager is not able to address.

There are many different kinds of employment companies. Some specialize in placing temporary industrial workers, some focus on bringing in permanent hires, in a search capacity or in an "intent to hire" arrangement. Outplacement is another area of specialty, as are various models of permanently outsourced labor pools.

And then there are companies with highly specialized offerings. Code Red Safety in Hammond is one such player. CEO Mike Miller explains that the company provides a full range of safety-oriented personnel. "These are specialized positions," he says.

Code Red Safety provides many clients with safety supervisors on a temporary basis. A construction contractor is a prime example. The need for safety supervisors varies by construction project, and projects don't last forever, so a company may bring in safety supervisors just for the duration of a specific proj-



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ect. The same holds true when a big manufacturing plant shuts down for a retool—there are safety roles needed only then, not later when the plant is rolling again.

Another need that comes up only now and then is the confined space rescue crew. Perhaps a company is cleaning the inside of a huge oil storage tank. That's potentially dangerous work that doesn't happen every day. What if the workers are overcome by fumes? Immediate rescue is critical, and the local fire department probably doesn't have the appropriate training or equipment. So, a specialized rescue crew from Code Red Safety is hired to be on-hand for the duration of the project, just in case.

"We have a database of 6,000 people who are safety professionals," Miller says. "We have them matched per industry, and we can find people with specific background or training." The company also conducts personality tests to help match the safety personnel with the need. One job may require a strict disciplinarian, another may require more of a teacher, and another might need a consultant.

With all of the activity as the economy sputters back to life, where are the opportunities? "For us in Northwest Indiana, we do a lot of work in the automotive sector," Marich says. "There are a number of suppliers that supply Ford Chicago, and as Ford Chicago ramps up, all of the suppliers are ramping up as well. We're going to see a big uptick in the first quarter of 2012."

Same goes for the steel industry and its suppliers, Tithof says. Health care and information technology are hot, too, the experts agree.

"The best thing to tell your children is not to be afraid to get into jobs that use your hands," Holecki adds. That could be everything from computer-aided design and programming to computerized numerical control machining, and that also includes plumber and electrician professions. "Those are really good jobs that pay well." ■

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STUDEBAKERS DRIVE HOME South Bend's Century Center will welcome the Studebaker Drivers Club International annual convention this summer.

Who's Coming to Town?

Wide variety of events and conferences slated for 2012.

BY SHARI HELD

Despite the slower than expected economic growth that has continued to put a damper on business meetings, events and conferences, Northwest Indiana has continued to hold its own.

"The SMERF (sports, military, education, religious and fraternal) market in Northwest Indiana has sustained even through the terrible economy," says Keren Olivero, senior sales manager for Star Plaza-Radisson Hotel in Merrillville. "Though planners and organizers are a bit more selective and conservative with their guaranteed expected attendance numbers, food and beverage, etc., they continue to book. Planners are slowly starting

to secure dates two and three years out, ensuring their conference dates and convention space are available."

Angela Gaghan, director of sales and catering for Blue Chip Casino, Hotel & Spa in Michigan City, sees a trend toward shorter meeting programs and says conferences that used to book on an annual basis are now tending to book every other year. "We are also seeing more requests for ways to incorporate some of our unique amenities such as gaming into conferences," she says. "For example, a conference with a dinner banquet may request to have gaming tables and dealers available to train attendees at the event on how to play the games."

It's too soon to tell if 2012 will be a banner year compared to the past

few years, but here's a look at some of the organizations and events that are coming to Northwest Indiana this year.

LAKE COUNTY

The Star Plaza will once again host the **19th Annual Indiana Challenge** February 23-26. One thousand participants are anticipated for the DanceSport Competition, which gives out more than \$40,000 in cash and awards. This event will add 500 room nights.

In April, the **Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.** (500-600 room nights) and **Omega Psi Phi** will come to town adding 500-600 room nights.

June marks the second year Star Plaza has hosted the **Crusaders**

Impact Network. Under the leadership of Apostle John Eckhardt, the Crusaders Church in Chicago is the headquarters church and international apostolic base for the IMPACT Network. Twelve hundred to 1,500 room nights are anticipated.

Approximately 3,000 participants are expected to attend the **Salvation Army Conference** this June 8-10. "This is traditionally the largest convention held in Northwest Indiana," says Heather Beccera, director of sales and marketing for South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority. The conference, which has been hosted by the Star Plaza for more than two decades, generates approximately 1,000 room nights, with an estimated economic impact of \$250,000.

In December, Star Plaza will host the **Chinese Christian Mission Conference** for the second time. Attendees will come from the region, Chicago and China, and the event is



PARKS AND RECREATION Not the fictional TV show set in Indiana, but the real-life Indiana Parks & Recreation Association, meeting this year at the Blue Chip Casino.

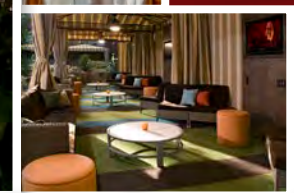
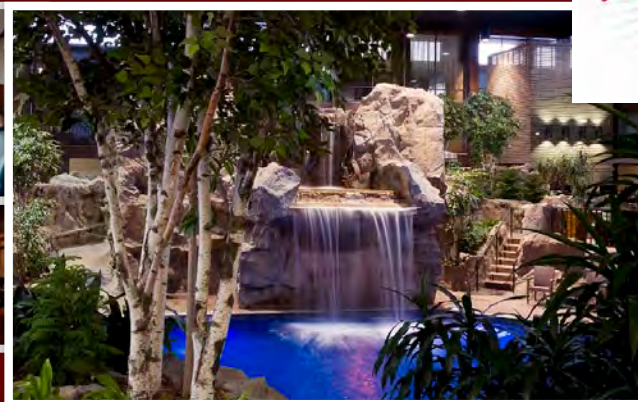
expected to add 1,000 to 1,200 room nights.

Hammond will be the site of **Leon's Triathlon**, the world's fastest triathlon. This event brings up to

1,000 participants to Wolf Lake Park on June 3.

South Shore residents have a treat in store for them this July when the **United Council of Corvette**

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MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS

Clubs comes to the area. The 200 attendees will be driving their cars throughout the South Shore during the entire week. This event includes drag racing, a road course, car shows and social activities. It is expected to generate approximately 560 room nights and its economic impact is in the \$140,000 range.

LAPORTE COUNTY

The **Northwest Indiana Steelheaders** will hold its annual conference/tradeshow at Michigan City's Marquette Mall for the first time on January 14-15.

August 11-17 the **Pyrotechnic Guild International**, a worldwide non-profit organization of amateur and professional fireworks enthusi-

asts, will hold its annual conference at the LaPorte County Fairgrounds. Displays will be open to the public.

The Blue Chip Casino will host the **Indiana Parks & Recreation Association's** annual conference January 18-20. This marks the first time the conference has come to LaPorte County. "This is a great economic boon for Michigan City," says Jason Miller, Sports Development Manager for LaPorte County Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Blue Chip Casino will also be the site of the Indiana District Convention of International Rotarians June 1-2. Up to 2,800 Rotarians are anticipated.

PORTER COUNTY

With 3 million tourists flocking to Porter County each year to visit Indiana Dunes State Park and the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, leisure travel is the county's biggest draw. "The sports market represents 4 percent and business, conferences and seminars collectively represent 16 percent," says Indiana Dunes Tourism Executive Director Lorelei Weimer. "The sports and convention markets are important niche markets."

According to Weimer, 2011 was a "growth year," with room revenue up 11.6 percent and room demand up 9.8 percent through October of 2011, compared to 2010.

Indiana Dunes Tourism doesn't host events, but offers marketing grants to help Porter County venues and organizations succeed in hosting sporting events, conferences, festivals and events. "We're looking at redevelopment of the Expo Center and we're looking at opportunities to bring in additional sports complexes," Weimer says.

The two main venues for hosting events and conferences are Valparaiso University (VU) and the Porter County Expo Center. Valparaiso University hosts the **Lutheran Basketball Association of America's National Basketball Tournament** March 29-April 1. This event, which has been held at VU since 1971, brings in 864 participants and their families for an estimated economic



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impact of \$625,000 annually. The **Institute of Liturgical Studies** will come to VU in May, and the City of Valparaiso will host the **GreenTown 2012 Conference** at VU this fall.

The Expo Center will host the **Garden Show** in January, the **Passport to the Past antique show** in March, the **Winter Snow Show** in December, and many others. Chesterton High School will host the **AAU Youth District (State) Track & Field Championship** in June, and in July, Lake County's South Shore Convention and Visitors Authority is hosting the **NSA Girls Fast Pitch 'B' World Series** which takes place in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. This sporting event will bring in some 10,000 players, coaches and family members to the South Shore. Games will be played throughout facilities in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. According to South Shore's Becerra, this event will generate approximately 4,000 room nights in all three counties, with an estimated economic impact of more than \$1 million.

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY

"Youth sports events remain our strength, with new events and more of them scheduled for 2012," says Colleen Bormann, marketing manager for South Bend/Mishawaka Convention and Visitors Bureau. "With a variety of venues available, South Bend/Mishawaka will be host to many varied events, conferences and competitions in 2012."

Baseball figures prominently in bringing visitors to the area. Throughout June and July, six **Past-time Tournaments** will utilize several fields around the area. July 20-29 **CABA World Series Baseball** will bring 1,200 participants to the area in the Under 15 age division. These events will utilize the fields at Coveleski Baseball Stadium, Notre Dame Baseball Stadium and other facilities. And from August 30 to September 2, Belleville Softball Complex will host 500 participants for the **ASA Men's A 16-inch Slow-pitch East Tournament**.

Bormann says that while the actual



A STAR AMONG CHURCH GROUPS The Star Plaza this year hosts Baptists, Crusaders, the Salvation Army and Chinese Christian missionaries.

number of meetings and conventions in South Bend/Mishawaka has remained steady over the past three years, attendance has decreased slightly. "Still, with a few key events in place for 2012 we remain cautiously optimistic that better days are ahead."

Several **Hockey Time Productions tournaments** will take place at the new \$50 million Compton Family

Ice Arena at the University of Notre Dame now through April. Two events will take place May 11-13 at Notre Dame: the **Queen of Peace Ministries National Conference on Medjugorje** and the **Fischhoff National Chamber Music Association Competition**. Founded in 1973 at South Bend, this competition is the largest of its kind worldwide. Its 81 performances will be open to the public.



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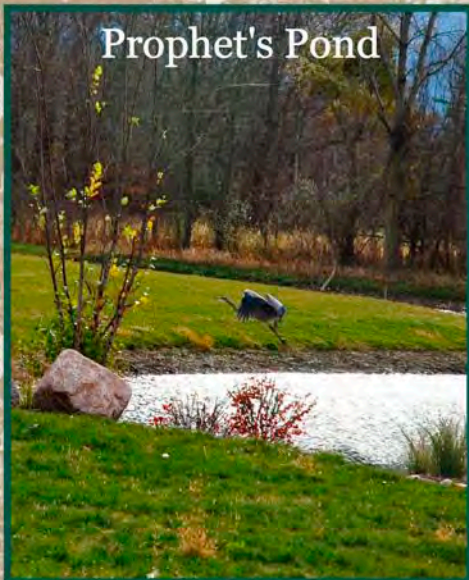
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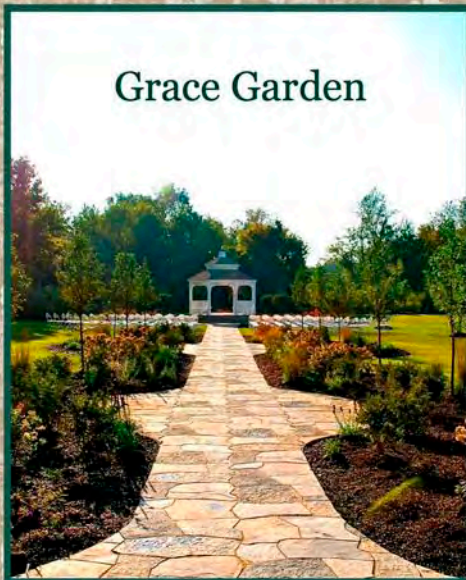
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Four thousand international competitors, from Tiny Tots to Collegiate, will compete at the **National Baton Twirling Association of America's Youth on Parade pageantry competition** at the Joyce Center July 16-20. This marks the 47th consecutive year the competition has come to South Bend. This event is free and open to the public.

April 25-27 the **Indiana Arts Commission Governor's Arts Awards** will be held at Indiana University South Bend for the first time. Two of the six honorees are hometown people — June H. Edwards and Alexander Toradze.

South Bend's Century Center is the site of a large variety of events in 2012. "We are cautiously optimistic about the level of business for 2012," says General Manager Jill Scicchitano. "We anticipate a slight growth in attendance of our consumer shows over the past two years and look forward to an increase in the number of corporate meetings and conventions for 2012."

Here are a few that are currently on the books. January 21-22, the **RVIC Valley RV and Camping Show** will draw 5,000 to 10,000 people. Nearly 1,000 attendees will converge on South Bend for the annual **LOGAN Nose-On Fund-Raiser** luncheon on March 21. LOGAN, a private, non-profit organization, provides resources and opportunities for people with disabilities.

March 22-25 approximately 300 people from Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and Michigan are anticipated to attend the **National Association of Insurance Women Region 4 Conference**.

May 21-24 The Century Center will host approximately 285 attendees of the **Great Lakes Bioenergy Research Center** for the fourth time. This annual even generates more than 500 room nights for downtown South Bend hotels. The research center is one of only three nationwide to be funded by the U.S. Department of Energy to conduct biofuels research.

The **Studebaker Drivers Club**

International annual convention, which features 800 classic Studebakers, will draw close to 2,500 people to South Bend from July 29 to August 4. South Bend and Century Center have hosted the event many times over the past 30 years, and is pleased to have the event return home to South Bend, home of Studebaker, for its 50th anniversary celebration.

Activities will also take place at the St. Joseph County Fairgrounds, the College Football Hall of Fame and the Studebaker National Museum.

On September 21-23 800 estate planners are expected for the **Notre Dame Tax and Estate Planning Institute annual conference**. This marks the institute's 39th year in South Bend. **BQ**



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Building Boom



MEATY DONATION The CEO of Johnsonville Sausage, Ralph C. Stayer, honored alma mater Notre Dame with a \$20 million gift to help build the Executive Education building.

Big projects in education, manufacturing, distribution and lifestyle amenities.

BY MICHAEL PUENTE

Northwest Indiana is experiencing a building boom of sorts with several major projects on tap for the coming year.

One large-scale project that's slated for completion in early 2012 is the new headquarters and distribution center for North Coast Distribution, a wholesale beer distributor based in Valparaiso with a national reputation for excellence in service.

Chief Operating Officer George Douglas says North Coast has outgrown its current 123,000-square-foot location at 705 Silhavy Road in Valparaiso where the firm has been distributing millions of cases of beer annually since 1993. The company's been recognized by Coors and Miller brewing companies as the

best beer distributor in the nation.

"We've maxed out the current site and we're landlocked. We're hemmed in and no place to go. As our business continues to grow, we really don't have a way to take advantage of those opportunities," Douglas says. "Where we are going we'll have plenty of land and build space to grow and realize future opportunities."

North Coast has a long history in Northwest Indiana. It got its start as Valpo Beverages in 1939. Valpo Beverages remained a small operation and closed its doors for a year because of hard times in the 1950s, but the company's savior was the Falstaff Brewing Co. which designated Valpo Beverages as its wholesaler in Indiana.

Growth really took off for Valpo Beverages in '70s and '80s when it began acquiring other beer distribution companies in surrounding counties, including Lake County Beverages in the 1980s. By 1992, the company had grown so much – and beyond just serving just Porter County – that it decided to change its name to North Coast Distributing Inc.

The new facility off Indiana 49 and U.S. 30 will be about 215,000 square feet. Douglas says the firm will be moving operations from a South Bend location to the new Valparaiso facility.

Before ultimately deciding on staying in Valparaiso, Douglas says a consulting firm was brought in to make sure North Coast was in the best spot to distribute its beer to its



locations in a seven-county region that makes up Northwest Indiana.

"Anytime you're in the distribution business, it's about logistics. You need to find where the optimal location is," Douglas says. "Our market territory is northern Indiana, a territory that covers the northern third of the state."

Construction started the weekend of Memorial Day in 2011 on North Coast's new headquarters that will have sustainability built right in.

"Everyone wants to have a sustainable business but also a sustainable facility," Douglas said. The new location is on 35 acres on Indiana 49, south of U.S. 30 across from the Porter County Jail and Porter County Fairgrounds.

Larson-Danielson Construction of LaPorte and Design Organization of Valparaiso are participating in the design and construction of the new facility.

Douglas says the new headquarters will be able to meet the company's needs into the near future

but the company made sure not to overdo it.

"We didn't want to overbuild. You don't want to spend all your money on something that you're not going to utilize until 10 or 15 years down the road. That's not a wise use of capital," Douglas says. "We purchased what we thought would be our land needs for the next generation. We won't be landlocked. We'll control our own destiny."

Education is another area that's helping to drive Northern Indiana's building boom.

The University of Notre Dame is moving along in building a new Executive Education building that will house state-of-the-art facilities for the Notre Dame's MBA program in the University's Mendoza College of Business.

"Our business school has been sorely lacking in space for executive education programs," says Paul Velasco, interim director of ND's Executive Education program. "We basically live in a small wing, but it doesn't provide us the opportunity to have the flexibility of classroom space to deliver the types of programs we would like to do for client companies. They pay quite a premium for the education we provide; the rigorous pace we have doesn't provide the opportunity to serve them at the level we'd like to."

But the new building, south of the famous Notre Dame's football stadium, will be 58,000 square feet and will include dining facilities for executive students and lounge areas.

It is expected to be completed by March 2013.

The building is being designed by Robert A.M. Sterns Architects of New York City, a firm with incredible projects throughout the world in business, medical and educational fields just to name a few.

The creation of the new Executive Education building was made possible by a \$20 million gift by Ralph C. Stayer, a Notre Dame graduate and chairman of the board and chief executive officer for Johnsonville Sausage Company.

"Executive Education has a long tradition of excellence at Notre Dame," says Rev. John I. Jenkins, the university's president. "We are so grateful to Ralph and his family for an extraordinary gift that will enable us to continue and expand upon this tradition."

"As a longtime chief executive, Ralph knows well the importance of ongoing leadership and management training in business, and has, himself, been active in establishing such programs," says Carolyn Y. Woo, dean of the Mendoza College of Business. "Our capacity to provide these programs – with a values-based emphasis that is the hallmark of Notre Dame – will be significantly enhanced thanks to this gift. We are most appreciative."

Perhaps one of the most impressive projects is that of high-tech firm Fronius USA. The firm announced plans last summer to eventually move more than 500 jobs from its headquarters in suburban Detroit to Portage by 2016.

Company officials say the firm will invest \$26 million at its new location, where it will lease up to 400,000 square feet of manufacturing space at the AmeriPlex at the Port business park off Interstate 80/94 and Indiana Highway 249.

The state is stepping in with more than \$4 million in tax credits. "Indiana is grateful and excited about this decision," Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels says. "There is no new job of any kind, there is no new company anywhere we don't welcome with open arms but there are special features about this great company that has had my attention for some time now. They are a global company, a leader in their field. Their products are going to gain and grow in their market."

Austria-based Fronius has more than 4,000 employees worldwide. Started in 1955, the company specializes in battery charging systems, welding technology and solar electronics. The managing director of the USA division, Wolfgang Niedrist, says Indiana was chosen because it offers



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The move to Indiana is the company's largest investment outside of Austria. The firm will keep a sales office in Brighton, Mich., where the company opened in 2002.

Thomas Herndler, chief manufacturing officer for Fronius USA, says his firm is among the world's top producers for solar electronic worldwide. "We expect to see enormous growth in the market. This production facility will serve to support and supply the expected growing demand for solar workers in the USA."

Herndler says the Fronius culture is to aim for economic growth while ensuring professional growth for its employees. "Today, we have three divisions and one goal: We create technologies that allow the most efficient use of energy, welding technology, solar electronic and battery charging systems."

The Portage facility will tentatively employ up to 512 people by the end of 2016 in a variety of capacities, including technology, production and office administration.

Some employees will transfer from the company's Michigan office. The current location will continue to support the surrounding regions with sales, service and application support.

Meanwhile, the Little City on the Lake is undergoing a big transformation. The city of Whiting is experiencing a sort of renaissance, with dozens of economic and community development projects most notably a project that improves access to its lakefront.

The Regional Development Authority is fueling the renaissance with a \$19.45 million grant for the Whiting Lakefront Project with much of the work to begin in March. The entire cost of the project is \$43 million, with much of it being paid by industrial revenue and other grants.

The project's full scope will focus on development of a boardwalk, fishing pier, bike path, and other amenities. The Lakefront Project

should take about two years to complete. Improvements to the Whihala Beach launch area are also within the scope of the Lakefront Project and should begin in the spring. "The focus of the project is to transform Whiting Lakefront Park into a destination point for all to enjoy," says Mayor Joe Stahura.

The plan includes a two-tiered boardwalk along the shoreline, connecting the Whiting trail system with Hammond's and then up into Chicago. The project also includes creation of a new nature area, renovation of existing facilities and a new gazebo event center, new parking lots, expansion of existing pathways, Whihala Beach boat harbor renovations, and a new Whiting-Robertsedale Historical Museum.

Bill Hanna, executive director of the Regional Development Authority, says the Whiting Lakefront Project is part of the RDA's overall plan for regional development and cooperation.

"The RDA was put in place to cause the kind of change that's needed on a regional scale that will attract new businesses and stabilize our assets. So far, we've been able to commit to half a billion dollars, mostly money from the outside, for projects that include changing the shoreline of Northwest Indiana," Hanna says.

"As you travel from west Lake County and head east to Porter County you will find people on the job, working to transform our most unique asset, the Lake Michigan shoreline, into an accessible treasure that highlights our natural and industrial strength."

Last June, the first phase of the project was completed. That was for a water and sewer infrastructure and installation of a 16-inch water main and lift station to provide for future improvements.

Much of the building boom in Whiting along can also be attributed to the \$3.8 billion expansion and modernization of BP Whiting Refinery.

The project includes up to 9,000 construction workers at the refinery

every day, with the number to ramp up to 10,000 by this summer. The project is expected to be completed by 2013.

"By continuing to invest in the lakeshore, we will continue to attract visitors who will stimulate our local economy, we will encourage families and businesses to invest in our region, and we will raise the quality

of life for all those who live here," says U.S. Rep. Peter J. Visclosky, a Democrat from Merrillville. Based on a request for assistance submitted by the City of Whiting, Visclosky secured \$1.5 million for infrastructure investment. This funding, directed to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, allowed federal participation in the project. **BQ**

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Construction Innovation

Building solutions across Northwest Indiana and beyond.

BY MICHAEL PUENTE

Problem solvers. Solution managers. Innovative thinkers.

Those are a few ways to describe the leading builders in northern Indiana involved in the design and construction of the region's most exciting new ventures.

"If somebody needs to build that means they have a problem," says Tom Panzica, manager of the construction division of Panzica Building Corp. of South Bend. "They are out of space, or their facility is no longer servicing their business. Or

they want a new image. Whatever, it's a problem. No one builds just because they have money to throw around."

Panzica's father, Anthony Panzica, an architect, started the firm in 1955. Tom Panzica says architects use their abilities to come up with solutions for whatever a client may need or want.

"Architects are trained to be problem solvers. My father and my brother, who also is an architect, always approach the project that way," Tom Panzica says.

Panzica Building Corp., a con-

struction management firm, employs 15 people. It subcontracts work to brick masons, electricians, plumbers, carpenters and other trades. Panzica says the firm's slogan "Design Build Solutions" isn't just a saying but words the company lives by.

"The first thing that we try to understand from the client is where does it hurt, where's your pain? Kind of like a doctor might do," Panzica says. "Once we understand what their problem is, then we go about using whatever resources they might have, how much money they are willing to spend, what their needs are. Then we try to tailor a solution that optimizes their available resources to solve the problem. We're able to do that in a way that's very functional and very attractive."

Panzica says not only does the firm want its buildings to look great, but they must work great. "In business, most companies realize their biggest expenditure is personnel. Their facility can either enhance that, make their personnel more productive, make their processes more productive, make customers come to the door and make things run more efficiently, Panzica says. "Or they can work against them."

Panzica's client list includes the University of Notre Dame's Columbia Hall, WSBT-TV in South Bend, several Roman Catholic churches and the Robert K. Rodibaugh U.S. Federal Courthouse.

It's not surprising that Panzica has performed work on the Notre Dame campus since Tom Panzica and his father, Anthony, are both alums of the university. "We highly value that relationship with Notre Dame," Tom Panzica says.

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2011 Best of Northwest Indiana Business



REFRESHING Larson-Danielson Construction Co. is handling a 230,000-square-foot distribution center for beer wholesaler North Coast Distributing in Valparaiso.

Panzica also is a builder of national chain restaurants such as 7-Eleven, Bakers Square Restaurant, Burger King, Popeye's Chicken and Ponderosa.

BUILDING GREEN

In the construction industry nowadays, building green with sustainable materials is becoming more standard.

In the United States, LEED certification is the recognized standard for measuring building sustainability. Achieving LEED certification demonstrates whether a building project is truly "green."

The LEED green building rating system – developed and administered by the Washington, D.C.-based U.S. Green Building Council, a non-profit coalition of building industry leaders – promotes design and construction practices that not only increase profitability but reduce negative environmental impacts of buildings while improving the health and well-being of occupants.

Tom Panzica is a LEED AP (accredited professional). But even before going green became vogue, Panzica says his father was building that way years ago with the installation of solar shaded windows to keep heat

out in the summer and warmth in during the winter.

"We were green before people called it green," Tom says.

And Panzica remains a very family-oriented business. Tom Panzica's brother, Philip Panzica, is president and chief architect while brother William Panzica is development manager and property manager. And founder and father Anthony Panzica continues to serve in a consulting role.

INTEGRATED PRODUCT DELIVERY

A little to the west is Tonn and Blank Construction of Michigan City. In the past five years, Tonn and Blank has completed \$1 billion worth of projects, from replacing a door for a client to building new hospitals and healthcare centers in Chesterton and Indianapolis.

"We act as an owner representative more than we act as a general

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contractor,” says Jon A. Gilmore, president and CEO. “Our delivery model is more based around the entire project delivery and making the entire project successful.”

Tonn and Blank was founded in 1922 in Michigan City as a partnership between C.W. Tonn and J.G. Blank. For the next eight decades, Tonn and Blank experienced a great deal of growth, expanding its capabilities, services, and areas of expertise while increasing its market presence and geographic reach throughout the Midwest.

Their work was valued by one client, Franciscan Alliance, so much that the Northwest Indiana-based 14 hospital network purchased Tonn and Blank in 1998.

Gilmore says Tonn and Blank operates on a philosophy similar to the hospital system of trying to help others. “We’re an owner and we’re building for our owner. We don’t fight with owners; we try to help them. That’s the culture that we bring to owners,” Gilmore says.

Although Franciscan Alliance’s hospitals are not-for-profit, Tonn and Blank is a for-profit construction company. Half of its work is for Franciscan Alliance, with the rest for other clients.

“We bid projects all over the place,” says the 43-year-old Gilmore, who started with the company in 1987 right after he graduated from high school. He took over as president in 2003.

Gilmore says the construction industry buzzword these days is “integrated product delivery.” But for Tonn and Blank, that’s the way the company has been working for the last five decades.

“We’ve been doing it for 50 years. It’s the architect, the contractor and the owner all having the game goal: Success of the project in lieu of individual success. We check our egos at



GEARING UP New Shafer Gear Works facility, built by Panzica Building Corp.

the door and we check our agendas at the door and do what’s best for the project,” Gilmore says.

In the past five years, Tonn and Blank completed three replacement hospitals in Indiana, making it among the biggest healthcare builders in Indiana. Those projects were St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in Mishawaka, St. Elizabeth East Hospital in Lafayette, and St. Francis Hospital in Mooresville.

Tonn and Blank also has done work for U.S. Steel, ArcelorMittal Steel and Olympic Steel in Gary and Urschel Laboratories in Valparaiso.

Gilmore says Tonn and Blank’s delivery process starts with the conception of an idea. “We start before the designer gets involved. We help set the budgets, we help set all the expectations for the project and manage it all the way through. So we make sure the design stays on scope, stays on budget, stays on schedule,” says Gilmore.

Tonn and Blank is staying busy these days. It’s building a new freestanding emergency department for Franciscan Alliance in Chesterton, a new cancer center in Michigan City and a new surgery center in Crown Point.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Larson-Danielson Construction Co. of LaPorte has more than a century of building experience, having started in 1908. The firm offers design/build and construction management services. L-D has

experience in building projects for the health care industry, retail, corporate, commercial and education. Terry A. Larson, secretary/treasurer of L-D says the hallmark of the company is the quality of its construction and attention to detail. The company’s specialty is the design/build approach that enables clients to turn to a single source for every facet of planning, design and construction for their projects. That speeds up delivery time for a project.

“Design/build brings a lot of cost advantages to the owners. Speed of construction is important because they want their buildings done much quicker these days,” Larson says.

Larson-Danielson has kept busy the last few years, having worked on projects for Walmart, J.C. Penney, Truck City of Gary, School City of Hammond, Valparaiso University and the University of Notre Dame. One of its current projects is a 36,000-square-foot building for Team Toyota in Schererville that’s slated for completion this summer.

DESIGNING SUSTAINABILITY

Another leading builder is Design Organization, which has offices in Valparaiso and Chicago. The firm’s president and CEO is Spero W. Valavanis, AIA, LEED AP.

“We think it’s about the clients and the building should reflect the feel and culture of that company,” Valavanis says.

continued on page 55

Sustainable Building

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Manufacturing on the Rebound

Innovation and entrepreneurship in the land of the RV.

BY BOB KRONEMYER

While many areas of the country remain mired in economic distress, Elkhart County has become a beacon of light for a manufacturing turnaround. A historic entrepreneurial spirit, a stellar workforce, industry consolidation and an increasingly diverse manufacturing base have all contributed to the rebound.

"Many manufacturers here are either solely owned or family-owned businesses that were started by entrepreneurs who came up with an idea to build a gadget or some special-need tool," says Phil Penn, president and CEO of the Greater Elkhart Chamber of Commerce Inc. "These businesses have grown and become successful."

Penn believes entrepreneurs by nature are risk-takers and, therefore, more likely to gamble on an idea. "They don't sit back and wait for something to happen," he says. "They are innovative, looking for new product opportunities and acquiring the most modern equipment."

Overall, Elkhart County has literally hundreds of entrepreneurs, says Penn. "It is just amazing. Companies I visit tend to be innovative in their processes." Some of the recreational vehicle (RV) manufacturers, in particular, "are becoming very innovative in the way they have set up their production lines and their use of lighter weight materials. We just don't sit around and wait for things to get better in Elkhart County."

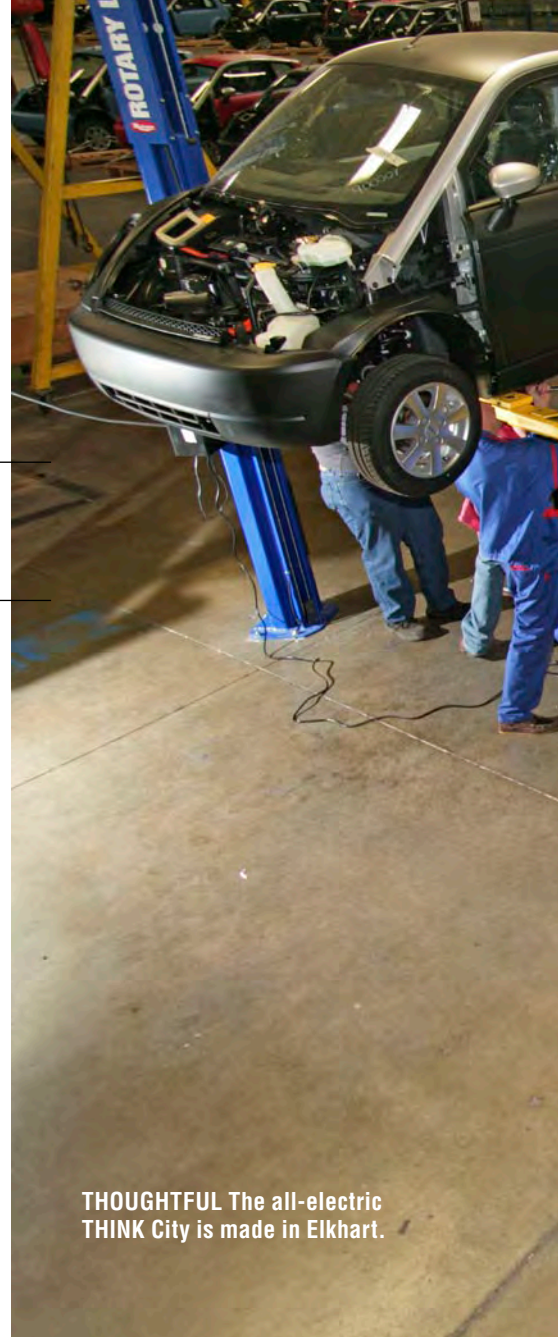
A third-generation manufacturer of high-precision, military aircraft parts that are shipped worldwide "is doing very well, in part because it has invested millions of dollars in high-tech, computerized machinery," Penn points out. Two other success stories are a first-generation maker of highly specialized small parts for a variety of industries and Flexco Products Inc., a steel and aluminum fabricator.

Penn expects the manufacturing sector in Elkhart County to continue to improve over the coming years. "Everyone says everything is being imported from China. But that's not true to a large degree. Some of those businesses are actually coming back here because they found they could not achieve the quality they need."

Ivy Tech Community College in Elkhart is also "on board for training people," he says. A more diversified manufacturing base over the past few years is precipitating growth as well.

Dorinda Heiden-Guss, president of the Economic Development Corporation of Elkhart County, concurs with Penn that many of the investment and job announcements are essentially from consolidation from overseas back to the U.S. market. She cites shipping costs as the major reason for the reversal. "It just makes more sense to be in the Midwest and a central location." Consolidation also provides for reduced overhead and labor costs.

Between January and October 2011, the economic-development



THOUGHTFUL The all-electric
THINK City is made in Elkhart.

agency documented roughly 1,700 new jobs and \$113 million in investment from 21 companies in Elkhart County, ranging from Hi-Tech Housing Inc. in Bristol to Lippert Components Manufacturing Inc. in both the City of Elkhart and unincorporated Elkhart County to Benteler Automotive in Goshen.

"We continue to see improvements in production and efficiency," says Heiden-Guss. Going forward, those manufacturers that have standardized as many processes as possible and are able to customize to the client's specific needs will continue to excel. "They will derive a higher return on investment," she says. "We also have a fantastic workforce for



manufacturing. This information has been shared with me while meeting with site selectors that have done research for companies on their expansion throughout the country. These site selectors have told me that Elkhart County has the absolute best workforce for labor."

Much of that labor is devoted to the RV industry. In October, wholesale shipments of RVs nationwide increased 12.4 percent over September, representing 19,100 units, according to the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association, and marks the highest monthly shipment total for October since 2007.

Sharing in the buoyancy is Jayco Inc. in Middlebury, the largest pri-

vately held RV manufacturer in North America, and in unit volume the third-largest producer overall (public or private). The company makes a full line of RVs, ranging from fold-down camping trailers to large, rear-diesel Class A motor homes. "Over the last two years, our sales are up in excess of 60 percent," says Sid Johnson, director of marketing.

A huge portion of Jayco's customers are baby boomers. "As these people become more mature and economically comfortable, they feel both an ability and an urge to see the country through traveling," Johnson explains. In addition, a typical RV owner in this age bracket "has not been as hard hit" by the most

recent recession because of more stable income.

Johnson conveys that over the past several recessionary cycles – dating back to the 1970s – the RV industry "has been a leading indicator of the economy, in that the industry has led the economy into a recession and has led the economy out of a recession." This holds true about the most recent downturn as well. "As the industry has recovered, RV production has been the leading factor in manufacturing growth in Elkhart County in the last two years," he says.

Johnson predicts 2012 will be characterized by limited or slow growth for manufacturing in Elkhart County,

but then for 2013 “the economic experts we’ve talked to are pretty enthusiastic about more robust growth.” Johnson also believes the county’s workforce for manufacturing is “an excellent fit,” foremost because of the many Amish who are employed. “They have a very positive work ethic and constitute a very stable workforce for us,” he

during the country’s first energy crisis, the Klinglers became much more diversified. “My father had all these chassis sitting around that he was unable to build on to sell,” Smith recalls. As a result, he and his wife started Utilimaster Corp., using the same chassis to build cargo vans, step vans and delivery trucks. “At one point, we also had a kitchen

highway-capable electric vehicles have been made at the plant. “Most of the vehicles have been sold to customers in Indiana – both retail and fleet – including two to the city of Elkhart,” notes Prebo. “This is new technology that we believe will increasingly be seen on U.S. roads.”

Adds Barkley Garrett, economic-development director for the city of Elkhart, “THINK is certainly the type of forward-thinking company that we would like to see in the Elkhart County area. It addresses many of the issues related to transportation. Producing an all-electric vehicle helps to alleviate the nation’s need for foreign oil and eliminates the issues associated with greenhouse gases.”

In the two-plus years that Garrett has been in his position, the unemployment rate in Elkhart County has fallen nearly in half (from around 20 percent to 10 percent). “The primary reason for that has been the resurgence of the RV industry,” he says.

One positive influence has been the gradual availability of financing through lending institutions. “This has allowed people to start looking at RVing as a viable choice for some of their disposable income,” Garrett explains. A somewhat stable gas price has also fueled the recovery. “We haven’t seen a lot of spikes, as we saw a few years ago,” he says.

Many industries related to the RV sector also rely on the same talent base, which is helping to bolster manufacturing. Apart from transit buses, watercraft “has stabilized” and is experiencing slight growth, Garrett says. Furthermore, “some of the stronger players in the area have become stronger, perhaps through acquisition, so we don’t have quite as many companies as we did two or three years ago.” And although manufacturers tell Garrett that their balance sheet is strong, they have cash in the bank and have projects ready to move forward, “they are waiting for things in Washington to settle down a bit. But there is definitely a light at the end of the tunnel.” **BQ**

“Some of the stronger players in the area have become stronger, perhaps through acquisition, so we don’t have quite as many companies as we did two or three years ago.”

—Barkley Garrett, Elkhart economic development director

says. The manufacturing jobs in Elkhart County, primarily led by the RV industry, are also “good paying. This lends itself to a more stable and skilled workforce.”

Besides being known as the RV capital of the world, Elkhart County produces 75 percent to 80 percent of all transit buses (including airport shuttles and tour buses) in the country, according to Heiden-Guss, who adds that 46 percent of the products made in the county are exported. “This is huge. We’re making more and sending more out,” she says. Elkhart County also has a strong presence in third-party warehousing and daily household goods (items such as soap and shampoo). “There is one company here that makes 600 products marketed under other names,” Heiden-Guss says.

Not surprisingly, Elkhart County “is a very inventive community,” observes Pam Smith, president of Swan Lake Golf Resort in Plymouth, whose parents, Richard and Pauline Klingler, cofounded RV-producer Holiday Rambler Corp. in Elkhart in the early 1950s. If a particular business decreases, people “seem to find other things to fill the void,” Smith says.

For example, back in the 1970s,

manufacturing facility, an office and drafting furniture company, and produced a line of recreational boats,” Smith says. “Still today, I feel diversity is where people’s strengths are. They don’t just focus on one product. They are much more diversified in a variety of products.”

Smith also notes that Elkhart County possesses a variety of skill levels. “There are a lot of very educated people and many great minds,” she says.

The extremely business-friendly and manufacturing-friendly environment of Elkhart and of Indiana as a whole was one of the chief reasons that THINK North America Inc. (with business offices in Dearborn, Mich.) opened a plant in Elkhart in late 2010 to produce the all-electric THINK City electric vehicle. “What we found is that the workers here share a strong belief in manufacturing and understand the need to manufacture quality products,” says company spokesman Brendan Prebo. “The workers have a great attitude and spirit.” THINK North America also offers Elkhart County workers an opportunity to earn their livelihood in a new clean tech industry.

To date, some 400 full-speed,

INNOVATION continued from page 50

Design Organization got its start in Valparaiso in 1971. In 1983, the firm opened an office in downtown Chicago. Over the years, Design Organization has performed work for some of the biggest names in the Chicagoland area, including the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois Chicago, Valparaiso University, BP, Aetna Insurance, Franciscan Alliance, and is very much involved in the design and concept for North Coast Distribution's headquarters and distribution facility in Valparaiso with Larson-Danielson.

Design Organization builds all its facilities with green and sustainability in mind. One of the most exciting sustainable projects for Design Organization was creation of the new International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 697 and the Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee (JATC) building in Merrillville.

The two labor organizations



FOR EMERGENCY USE Tonn and Blank Construction is building the Chesterton Health and Emergency Center for Franciscan St. Anthony Health, with a freestanding emergency department plus medical offices on the second floor.

wanted the 40,000-square-foot building to reflect IBEW's commitment to new technology and training in alternative energy for photovoltaic and wind energy. Designed as a "living laboratory," the building features

glass-enclosed electrical and technology rooms. The rooftop over the JATC Training Center is an outdoor classroom with photovoltaic arrays installed, monitored and maintained by the apprenticeship students. **BO**



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An Ambassador for Northwest Indiana

John Davies helps honor region's "Legends" and "Innovators."

BY RICK A. RICHARDS

Ask John Davies for a couple of minutes and he'll give you 10 on something positive about Northwest Indiana. Looking at the region's bright spot is not just in his nature, it's his mission.

Davies, managing director of the Gerald I. Lamkin Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center at Ivy Tech State College in Gary, is the driving force behind the Society of Innovators of Northwest Indiana and the man behind South Shore Wall of Legends.

The first recognizes entrepreneurs, businesses and researchers involved in cutting edge technology and processes, while the latter takes a page from the region's history and brings it to life, recognizing those who've had a historical impact on the region.

At the most recent unveiling of the inductees into the Wall of Legends at the Indiana Welcome Center in Hammond Dec. 15, Davies was quick to deflect credit to others. But the fact is, without his vision and leadership, there wouldn't be a Wall of Legends or a Society of Innovators.

In a word, Davies has become an ambassador for Northwest Indiana.

The 68-year-old Davies lives on the farm in rural Porter County where he grew up. It's where his father, who emigrated from Wales, chose to settle.

"He came here with just a handful of money and big dreams, like so many others who came to Northwest



"I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO LOOK TO THE PAST AND HOW IT RELATES TO LEADERSHIP TODAY," says John Davies, managing director of the Gerald I. Lamkin Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center.

Indiana," says Davies. "I remember he regaled me and my brother with tales of King Arthur. This was before television and I think that is where my imagination took root."

It was a quarter of a century ago that Northwest Indiana took a big economic hit when the region's steel industry collectively lost 50,000 jobs. That attracted a lot of attention about a depressed region falling into a dark hole from which it might not recover.

Davies didn't like that impression and was convinced there was a lot of good in the region. It was a feeling that evolved into the South Shore Wall of Legends.

By 2002, Davies had his plan

mapped out and he spent the next two years lining up supporters and sponsors. "I knew what I wanted to do, but my name was not enough," says Davies. "But if I could link it with one of our great universities, we had something."

With the help of Stephen McShane, the archivist at Indiana University Northwest, and the financial support of BP's Whiting business unit, the first inductees to the Wall of Legends were announced in 2004.

"That was a magical moment," says Davies. "It was a way to celebrate some amazing people."

That first group included Dorothy Buell, the woman behind the creation of Indiana Dunes National

A "PATH" to Economic Development

Helping teens make healthy choices also helps reduce poverty. *Read the story at nwibq.com.*

Lakeshore; Octave Chanute, whose experiments in flight along Lake Michigan in Gary predated the Wright Brothers; and Henry Chandler Cowles, a scientist whose research in the Indiana dunes area led people like Buell to push for a national park.

Davies said his life is guided by his internal compass. "My true north is place, my true south is the power of understanding, my true east is the power of faith and my true west is the power of an idea," he says. "I grew up here and we've grown here."

On the family's farm, there are 14,000 walnut trees, each planted by hand. It's a crop that takes a lifetime to grow and a belief in the future.

The tales of King Arthur he heard as a boy led Davies to a life-long interest in history. Today, he says history is intertwined with present day, the reason the Wall of Legends is so close to his heart.

"These are people who were defined as leaders by a single decision at a single point in time," says Davies. "I think it's important to look to the past and how it relates to leadership today."

During this year's induction, Davies made that link a reality for fourth-graders with the announcement that a textbook with information on each of the 20 people or groups inducted into the Wall of Legends had been published. Fourth-graders in Lake and Porter counties will use it to study the region's history.

Called "The Legends' Compass," the book has a short biography on each South Shore Legend, from astronaut Jerry Ross of Crown Point to popcorn king Orville Redenbacher of Valparaiso, from world boxing champion Tony Zale of Gary to author Jean Shepherd of Hammond.

With help from his daughter, Jennifer, a former fourth-grade teacher who now works at Tradewinds, the book hits at the heart of what Davies sees as most important about Northwest Indiana – its people. **EN**



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Tech Transformation



Steve Dalton

How can you decide which new technologies to adopt?

In 40 short years, the world has been transformed by the personal computer. There are few businesses that can successfully and profitably operate without computers and digital information technology.

Embedded in this rapid and overwhelming innovation is a growing sense of falling behind. If you own a small- or medium-sized business, you are challenged with deciding which technology is imperative, which will offer greater efficiency and which is merely a cool gadget that will soon be outdated.

Here is a list of terms that contribute to that sense of frustration and confusion: Cloud computing, mobile and native proprietary applications, virtualization, zero clients vs. desktop vs. mobile device, intruder prevention, voice over Internet protocol, social media, online reputation management, search engine optimization, keyword density, power and data redundancy, bioinformatics, disaster recovery and software as a service.

What does that mean? How can these new technologies help my business? Instead of a Wikipedia style glossary, let's talk about strategies for this tidal wave of innovation.

Here are three key strategies for the small- and medium-sized business owner to think about:

Today is over and tomorrow is uncertain—When reviewing your technology options, remember that what is cool and new today is going to be old tomorrow. That doesn't preclude making a decision, but may be a guide. Are you choosing technology that you're willing to use for at least a couple years, even if some-

thing better comes along tomorrow? This is often the guide when considering a new product. For example, when the first iPad was released, were you willing to invest in this new tool knowing that the second version would be better? Is this tech-

implement than just talk about. For example, your IT company recommends that you invest in virtual server technology for increased redundancy, energy use reduction and flexibility for expansion. There is no doubt a virtual server is cool,

Which technology is imperative, which will offer greater efficiency and which is merely a cool gadget that will soon be outdated?

nology cutting edge, or is the benefit well known and more defined?

Define and measure the desired outcomes—Often technology decisions made for a small- or medium-sized business disregard measuring for outcomes. This is poor management at best and risky at worst. Any new technology should be assigned a desired outcome, with some measurement of benefit. Your measurements may change and outcomes modified, but in the long run, you will be managing your technology, not the other way around.

Every action will have a reaction—There is no such thing as a new technology rollout without some kind of reaction. It may be an internal change in process, roles for staff may be modified, or there may be full-scale changes in the way the company operates. But you will be much better prepared if you approach the rollouts expecting specific reactions.

These strategies may seem predictable, but they are harder to

but here are some questions to guide this rather daunting investment decision: Is this technology so new that it will be out of date by January? Is this technology so new that upgrades will be impossible? What are the outcomes and how can they be measured in the short, medium and long terms? Can this new technology be supported by outside experts so my staff isn't required to be experts? What staff changes will be required and what day-to-day tasks will change?

Investing in this technology without answering these questions is foolhardy. Take the time, put in the work to maximize the effect and benefits of your new technology. Skip this step and you'll wonder next year what the investment gained you and your company. ■

Steve Dalton is manager of business development for Golden Technologies in Valparaiso, a privately owned information technology services company which has offices in Valparaiso, South Bend, Chicago and southwest Florida.

The Digital Age of Marketing



Megan Marrs

There's no cookie-cutter approach to social media.

With the dramatic increase in technology the past few years, brands have learned how to quickly adapt to the needs of the growing online consumer. While some may say all brands need to utilize the standard social media outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube, it's crucial that every brand look at its individual needs so an effective message and product is available for targeted consumers.

Digital marketing has become more important for brands to be successful; the use of digital marketing has enabled small businesses to compete more effectively with the larger names.

When developing an effective digital marketing campaign it's important to weigh the pros and cons of utilizing the available outlets. There has been a wide misconception that brands need to focus only on digitalization. While that is the way of the future, there are plenty of consumers who enjoy holding a newspaper, magazine or book in their hands.

Depending on the individual brand, digital marketing should be used as an enhancement for a marketing campaign. For example, many large brands such as Vogue use digital marketing as a way to enhance their brand; the editors tweet, post Facebook updates or even blog occasionally as a way to bring more life to their brand.

The goal of any brand is to be thought of by consumers in any situation that arises; many brands are achieving this by increasing personalization for consumers through videos, tweets, Facebook updates, blogs, promotions and local events.

While developing a brand or

enhancing consumer experience might sound easy, there is a science to it. Many times brands that have tapped into the digital realm without a well-thought-out and effective strategy have done more harm than good to their image.

or event. Once the consumer is on the page, it's necessary they are also linked to the main brand website. While print materials are important, a brand's website is its most important marketing material.

Many brands are taking advantage

The goal of any brand is to be thought of by consumers in any situation that arises; many brands are achieving this through videos, tweets, Facebook updates, blogs, promotions and local events.

Content needs to be managed and crafted so that no matter what outlet is viewed, there is different, yet related and relevant, content available. Brands should not use more than three to five outlets, so there is always a well-managed and consistent brand message. When considering what outlets to use, brands need to take a hard look at what they can do effectively as well as what they can manage.

If using one outlet works for your brand, use just that one while getting started. If your brand can handle a few more, and someone is specifically in charge of the digital marketing strategy and development, go with a few more. While the outlets are the same for all brands, the actual development, messaging and strategy are different; digital marketing is not cookie-cutter.

Another way brands can take advantage of digital marketing is using QR (quick response) codes that take consumers to a specific landing page for a new product, promotion

of search engine optimization (SEO), a method of marketing that allows brands to be found online more often than others based on algorithms and keyword research. Once the brand is found, it's essential to offer relevant content, activities and a call to action. Many times brands achieve this through blogs that are written by a brand manager, executive, brand ambassadors or sometimes a combination of writers.

Taking the time to fine-tune the digital experience for consumers will increase the likelihood of satisfaction with your product or service as well as increase the likelihood of continual trust in your brand. **EQ**

Megan Marrs is an entrepreneur, consultant and owner of Marrs Media Group, a branding and strategic marketing company in Valparaiso. She is a writer focusing on branding as well as business school, is involved with volunteering with youth leadership programs and is a graduate of Purdue University ('06) and Valparaiso University MBA ('11).

The NBA Returns

Labor deal gives a boost to small-market teams such as Indiana Pacers.

BY RICK A. RICHARDS

After five months of rancorous bargaining, the National Basketball Association got back to business Christmas Day.

As is usually the case in labor-management disputes, the root of the disagreement was money – but not between labor and management. The real dispute was between large-city glamour franchises like the Los Angeles Lakers and small-market teams such as the Memphis Grizzlies. They may be in the same league on the court, but they're worlds apart when it comes to the bottom line.

According to figures from the NBA, on average, the Lakers rake in \$1.9 million per game; the Grizzlies just \$322,105. There is an even bigger disparity when it comes to television revenue. The Lakers' TV deals are worth \$150 million a year, but Memphis' TV contacts are worth just \$10 million.

Small-market teams – a group that includes the Indiana Pacers – want the ability to compete on a level financial field against large-market teams such as the Chicago Bulls. They're better able to do that now, since the new deal calls for a 51-49 percent split of revenue between players and teams (down from a 57-43 percent split). Additionally, small-market teams will get an extra \$270 million that previously would have gone to the players.



BACK TO BUSINESS Darnell Lazare of the Indiana Pacers and Taj Gibson of the Chicago Bulls square off during a preseason game at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis.

COURTESY OF INDIANA PACERS

Michael Hicks, an economist at Ball State University, has studied the impact of professional sports franchises on cities. He says the NBA is struggling and communities that have anchored their downtown economic development to professional sports should be worried.

"Most NBA games, unlike NFL games, are attended by local residents," says Hicks. "You don't see a lot of Houston Rockets fans coming to Pacers games, but it's different when the Houston Texans are in town to play the Colts."

When the NBA announced it had reached an agreement for a condensed 2011-12 season, Hicks says the economic impact wasn't that big. Instead of a full 82-game schedule, the NBA will play 66 games over 122 days. Still, 240 games were lost, and that represents \$480 million the NBA won't get this year.

Lost were the preseason and 16 regular season games. Hicks says he doesn't have a dollar amount, but says that outside the NBA it isn't that big. "Those who go to NBA games tend to be more local. For the Pacers, they probably live within an hour of Indianapolis and chances are the money they're spending at the game would have been spent in Indianapolis regardless."

"The biggest loss is to the government's coffers," says Hicks. "Indiana has a 'jock tax' that taxes high-paid performers for the income they earn while they're in Indiana. Since no one was getting paid, there is less revenue going to the state."

Chris Gahl, a spokesman for the Indianapolis Convention & Visitors Association, says that while the loss of games in the NBA was disappointing, the economic impact on the city won't be large.

"If there was any year to have a lockout, this was the year," says Gahl. "With the first Big Ten football championship in Indianapolis and the city hosting the Super Bowl, those events will make up for the loss from the NBA."

The Super Bowl alone is expected

to pump more than \$200 million into the local economy.

Gahl says a study commissioned by the Community Investment Board, which operates Conseco Fieldhouse, where the Pacers play, show a combined impact of the Pacers and the WNBA's Indiana Fever to be about \$55 million per season.

"Certainly there is some lost income this year, mostly in bars and restaurants. They would have been packed pre- and post-game, but they weren't this year because there weren't any games."

In a 2006 study of the impact of lockouts and strikes in professional sports, Lake Forest College in Illinois (just north of Chicago) showed the economic impact on Chicago was negligible. The study looked at work stoppages between 1969 and 1996 in the NFL and Major League Baseball.

Robert Baade, an economist at

Lake Forest College, says in his study that the loss of revenue to the NBA was a gain for someone else – a restaurant, a movie theater or other form of entertainment.

In the end, the biggest impact may be felt by the bars and restaurants that cater to basketball fans. Without the NBA, there are empty seats in bars and restaurants and that income won't be made up, says Allen Sanderson, an economist and professor at the University of Chicago. He adds that since most Chicago Bulls fans are local, there won't be much of an impact on the economy. "People will just spend their money somewhere else in Chicago."

Sanderson says the biggest impact will be felt by the businesses around the United Center, but businesses elsewhere might see a boost. Instead of going to a Bulls game, Sanderson says those fans may decide on a movie or a restaurant. **BQ**

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Fashionable, Playful, Breathtaking Exhibits

Clothing, fanciful illustrations and photos from space.

BY JOHN CAIN

Three outstanding exhibits presented in three Northwest Indiana communities are showcasing the diversity of visual art in the new year. The symbolism that is inherent in what we choose to wear and how this affects and defines our cultural identity will be explored in the South Shore Arts exhibit “Uniforms, Outfits and Accessories: Photographs” by Joel DeGrand, Feb. 12 through April 8, 2012, in the gallery at The Center for Visual and Performing Art, Munster.

An opening reception will be held on Sunday, Feb. 12, from 1 to 3 p.m.

For the past three years, DeGrand has been documenting and examining the peculiarities and complexities of what people wear. He believes it is important to define our cultural identity visually and historically. His photos act as both a reminder and an educational tool, having the ability to break down prejudices and enlighten senses to think about the past and its relationship to the future.

DeGrand makes the photographs in “Uniforms, Outfits and Accessories” life-size in order to better represent the importance of apparel and allow the viewer to confront the subject matter with a greater sense of reality and cultural identity. He feels the project has much to do with the time frame in which it was completed.

“Photographs have a unique characteristic of capturing the moment,” he says, “But also tell a story years later when things have evolved or morphed into something else.”

“Mindless Mayhem: The Art of



UNIFORMITY Joel DeGrand's Jeremy, Coal miner, and inkjet photo on canvas.

Ron Villani runs through March 18 at Valparaiso University's Brauer Museum of Art. Villani's characters and subjects connect to a wide variety of popular cartoon and illustration styles seen in print sources throughout the mid- to late 20th century, including pulp science fiction of the 1940s and 1950s, gritty sci-fi fantasy worlds and the visual culture of circuses and carnivals, with the artist's sideshow banners referring most directly to this transient and colorful culture. Villani's art connects visually to the Monster Roster and Imagist groups, Chicago artists who emerged in the 1950s and 1960s.

Villani was born in Chicago and graduated from the School of the Art Institute. His paintings and illustrations have been widely exhibited, published, and collected. He has also illustrated for advertising agencies, design firms, record companies, and

numerous national publications. Villani has been art director on projects for Apple, Audi of America, Crate & Barrel, Sports Illustrated, Anheuser Busch, McDonald's, Navistar International and Mercedes Benz.

The Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibit “Earth from Space,” a set of 20 posters that feature images and text, **will run through March 11 at the Lubeznik Center for the Arts in Michigan City.** Satellite imagery of earth reveals the swirling arms of a massive hurricane, triangular shadows cast by the Great Pyramids, and the grid-like pattern of Kansas farmland.

A collaboration with the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum's Center for Earth and Planetary Studies, the traveling exhibit won a 2007 U.S. Geological Survey communications award. The exhibit presents large color reproductions of images captured by high-tech satellites constantly circling the globe.

Rare views of dust storms, forest fires, volcanic eruptions, and hurricanes are accompanied by text that explains how satellite imagery is gathered and used to explore the Earth. Documenting environmental cycles, natural disasters, and manmade ecological effects, satellite images provide clues about the dynamic nature of our planet and offer rich opportunities to engage students in a wide range of science curricula. **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 at 9 p.m. on Lakeshore News Tonight.

Employees in the Military



James L. Jorgensen

Law guarantees veterans a place back on the “escalator.”

The return of our soldiers from Iraq refocuses attention on the re-employment rights of employees who were called into active duty.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) protects employees who are called into active duty. One provision – the escalator concept – is especially important. Think of employment as an escalator. At some point, all of us step on the escalator, and move through our employment on it. At a different time, all of us step off the escalator, but a different place from where we stepped on.

Under USERRA’s escalator clause, employers must ensure that returning uniformed service members return to the position, including seniority, that the uniformed service member would have occupied if he or she remained continuously employed.

This is not necessarily the same position the employee had prior to the uniformed service. For example, during the period the employee was in the service, if he had not been called to duty, he might have been promoted or laid off.

The escalator principle also applies to pay and benefits. For example, returning uniformed service members should be given the benefit of any cost-of-living increases or any other across-the-board increases given during the employee’s period of uniformed service.

The same rule also applies to merit pay increases the employee would have received but for the active service. To help determine merit pay increases that are based on performance reviews that could not take

place while the service member was away, an employer should look at the employee’s performance review during the employee’s prior period of active employment.

USERRA also applies to promotions. In other words, as the employ-

small monthly draw, while he rebuilt opportunities for cold calling clients.

The court found that the employer violated USERRA. The court held that the employer should have done more, perhaps offering a guaranteed compensation and related assistance

Employers must ensure that returning uniformed service members return to the position, including seniority, that the uniformed service member would have occupied if he or she remained continuously employed.

ment escalator advances, employees may move up steps. Employers often overlook this requirement. If an employee is protected by USERRA during the employee’s absence, the employer must track promotions to which the employee would have been eligible to receive.

A recent case highlighted the application of the escalator concept and USERRA’s requirement that employees are entitled to be reinstated to a position of like “seniority, status and pay.” The employee worked as a financial advisor and was paid on a commission basis. He was called to active duty. During his deployment, many of his accounts were lost or redistributed to other commissioned salespersons.

Upon discharge from active duty, the employee sought reinstatement pursuant to USERRA. His employer offered him a position at his previous commission structure, with a

for a reasonable period of time while the service member sought to rebuild his previously existing book of business.

The number of USERRA cases is on the increase. As we wind down our military presence in the Middle East, more employees will be returning to the workplace. Employers must be increasingly sensitive to the requirements of USERRA, and to the need to uniformly apply them. **□**

James L. Jorgensen, a partner with Hoepfner, Wagner and Evans, practices in the areas of labor, employment, banking and business law. His representation of business clients ranges from small, closely-held business to American subsidiaries of foreign corporations. Mr. Jorgensen is a frequent lecturer to various business groups, publishes extensively in business journals, and was an adjunct professor at the Valparaiso University School of Law for over 10 years.



Jacob Schpok

Don't Go It Alone

Business success depends on collective wisdom.

A few years ago, I received a phone call from a small-business banker. He explained how a client of his recently acquired the business he worked at for 10 years. His client, who we will call Joe, has since depleted a bank loan, maxed out his personal credit cards, and just left the banker's office after asking to borrow additional funds. The banker provided Joe with my contact information to see if there was anything the Indiana Small Business Development Center could do.

Joe called shortly after, worried about his business and looming personal bankruptcy. I met Joe and his wife at their office, an advanced manufacturing facility where Joe and his team built and repaired custom race-car parts that needed to be back to customers overnight. Joe ran the shop and his wife managed the books.

When we first sat down, Joe explained how the business ran smoothly under the old owner even though the previous owner did little in the way of marketing. So, when Joe took over, his focus was on developing new sales leads and growing operations. During the first few months of ownership, Joe used his contacts and met new potential customers and started producing new sales.

What Joe didn't realize was his marketing efforts worked so well, he was bankrupting himself. With every new work order came the requirement for more inventory and, in some cases, new supplies. Joe would charge his customers appropriately for his operational expenses, but on 45-day terms. In other words, with every new job, Joe's company had to float a new 45-day inventory cost. The best thing Joe could

do was to stop marketing until he received some of his outstanding accounts receivables and improved his cash flow.

Joe's case is not uncommon. Today, his business is flourishing, but what would have happened if he never asked for help?

With a new year comes new year's resolutions. Most small-business owners select business resolutions

tions and implementing tactics. This focused approach toward problem-solving works great, so long as the correct solution is identified.

Small-business researchers point to a myriad of reasons, including a lack of experience, competition, low sales, personal use of business funds, over-investment in fixed assets, insufficient capital and unexpected growth. The answer you never see,

Business owners who develop strategies and solve complex problems with the help of others can draw on the knowledge and perspectives they do not have themselves.

the same way we select personal resolutions. We have a vision of who we want to be and we start identifying what needs to change to get there. Then, we act on our findings. This adherent methodology has been ingrained in us since elementary school. It works great when dealing with clear problems with one solution, but thinking this way when dealing with issues as complex as personal or business visioning is extremely dangerous.

Joe wanted to grow his business. So, his business resolution was to focus on increasing sales. Consequently, he almost bankrupted his business and himself. Why did it take a conversation with an ISBDC business advisor for Joe to finally see the mess he was creating? It's the same reason why 49 percent of businesses fail in the first five years. Instinctively, we identify business strategies and answer complex business problems by quickly searching for solu-

though, despite its validity, is a business goes under due to the owner diligently spending his or her time sustaining and growing a business while focusing on unproductive or ineffective solutions.

How can you make sure you are focused on the right solutions? Business owners who develop strategies and solve complex problems with the help of others can draw on the knowledge and perspectives they do not have themselves. Making complex decisions alone paralyzes one to the limitations of one's own wisdom. If you really want to grow your business, develop an advisory board, tap into your local mentorship and business consulting organization, and bring in some trusted employees and colleagues into your decision-making process. **EQ**

Jacob Schpok is the state director for the Indiana Small Business Development Center Network (ISBDC).

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