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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Inspiring Innovators



Troy Linker

Great ideas spark economic growth.

Innovators are people who bring together ideas in new and different ways. Our region is fortunate to have the Society of Innovators of Northwest Indiana, which, for 12 years, has helped our community recognize innovation by honoring the creativity, perseverance and dedication of local people and organizations. These honorees inspire us as role models in finding innovative solutions in our work, community and personal lives.

On our cover, CEO Rich Urschel represents the employees of Urschel Laboratories—winners of the Accelerating Greatness Team Award. The Chanute Prize for Team Innovation went to The Grand Calumet Restoration Project for its innovative, decade-long, multi-organizational collaboration to clean up the Grand Calumet River.

In addition to the team prizes, the Society named six individual fellows; Whiting Mayor Joseph Stahura, Calumet College of St. Joseph Professor Sandra Chimon-Peszke Rogers, Elizabeth Lynn, founder of the Center for Civic Reflection at Valparaiso University, Michigan City Area Schools Superintendent Barbara Eason-Watkins, Porter County Career and Technology Education Principal Jon Groth and Purdue Northwest Chancellor Thomas Keon

Innovation, among other factors, contributes to business growth and growth is one of the many criteria considered by judges in awarding the 2016 Companies to Watch. We talk with four winners from our region whose companies provide services that: bring cell phones back to life; service and sell overhead cranes; promote healing and fight infection

among implant patients; and keep food and medicine from spoiling in commercial refrigerators.

Our innovation theme continues as we talk with local healthcare professionals about new robotic surgery techniques that provide patients with faster recovery time with less pain and fewer complications. The list of surgeries performed with robotic assistance is growing, eliminating the need for patients to travel outside of the region to receive these benefits.

In this issue, we survey local experts to bring you regional updates on economic development, commercial real estate and clean energy jobs. We profile Dust Furniture, a local business that creates unique, custom built and designed works of art. We talk with Jeff Strack, the new CEO of Strack & Van Til Food Stores, about the company's past, present and future in Northwest Indiana. Local bankers recommend building a working relationship, including periodic check-ins with your banker long before you need financing. We learn some legal tips for safely using social media. We prepare for the holiday season with our Holiday Gift Guide. We share local opportunities for arts and entertainment. We explore the meteoric rise of Coach Ryan Shelton and the IU Northwest women's basketball team.

This issue is filled with inspiring stories about local individuals and organizations that impact our economy and communities. I hope you enjoy reading about the creativity, determination and commitment of these innovators and look for ways you can support and create innovation in your life. 

—Troy Linker, Publisher

Around the Region

BY MICHELLE M. SEARER

BUSINESS

Accu-Mold LLC has hired **Walter Hill** as its strategic sales director. He will collaborate with the entire Accu-Mold team to develop short and long term sales plans that support the company's business plan. Accu-Mold specializes in metal-to-plastic conversion as well as manufacturing and assembly of plastic injection molded components for the automotive industry.

CONSTRUCTION

The Building Services Contractors Association International has awarded **Corey Bush** of **Bryco Services Inc.**, Merrillville, its Registered Building Service Manager designation. The designation means Bush has satisfied stringent criteria and passed an examination certifying he now meets the high standards of the association.

EDUCATION

Ivy Tech Community College announced **Peter Linden** as the new president of Ivy Tech's Michigan City

campus when he assumed his new role on August 1. He succeeds Rick Soria, who left Ivy Tech in February to become president of Miami Dade College's Wolfson campus. Linden most recently has been serving as senior academic dean of Career and Technical Education at Joliet Junior College. Linden has a Ph.D. from Loyola University of Chicago in Higher Education and Policy Leadership and also holds an M.B.A. from North Park University, a B.S. in Business and Management from Northeastern Illinois University, and an Associate of Occupational Studies from the Culinary Institute of America, Hyde Park, N.Y. **Peter Biegel** was appointed assistant vice chancellor for Student Affairs at Ivy Tech's Michigan City campus. Biegel most recently served in various leadership positions at Florida State College in Jacksonville and previously worked in various capacities at Indiana University South Bend. He has a Ph.D. in education from Capella University. **Devin Hughes** has been named the associate director of Admissions for Ivy Tech Community College's Gary campus. He is a resident of East Chi-

cago and previously worked as the Dual Credit coordinator at Triton College in River Grove, Ill. ... **Purdue University Northwest** Dean of Technology **Niaz Latif** was recently honored with a Frederick J. Berger Award presented by the American Society for Engineering Education at its 123rd Annual Conference and Exposition in New Orleans. The award is presented to individuals and schools that have demonstrated leadership in curriculum, scholarly contributions, innovative techniques, or administration in engineering technology education. Professor **Jeff Shires** has been appointed PNW's executive director of Concurrent Enrollment/Dual Credit. He will provide leadership and strategic vision, managing daily operations and facilitating partnerships with local school systems to meet the Indiana objective of increasing the number of in-state college graduates ... **Indiana University Northwest** has announced the selection of **Cynthia Roberts** as the dean of the School of Business and Economics. Roberts served Purdue North Central for the past 16 years in the roles of Chair



CONSTRUCTION Corey Bush



EDUCATION Jeff Shires



EDUCATION Niaz Latif



EDUCATION Peter Biegel



FINANCIAL Cindy Finley



FINANCIAL Dave Ellingsen



FINANCIAL David Leeper



FINANCIAL Dionna Johnson

of the Department of Business and Leadership, Director of the M.B.A. Program, and the Teddy Jacobi Dean of the College of Business. Roberts earned her Ph.D. in Organization Development from Benedictine University in Lisle, Ill. and two master's degrees from Loyola University in Chicago. **Michelle Dickerson** was appointed as IUN executive director of Finance, a post she assumed in July. Dickerson will oversee the

university's Office of Fiscal Affairs and the Office of Human Resources. She previously worked in finance, budget and audit roles at Building Better Futures (BBF) Family Services, Canteen Corp. and McDonald's Corp. **Aneesah Ali** has been appointed IUN director of the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action programs and Deputy Title IX Coordinator. She will coordinate IUN's compliance with nondiscrimination

and affirmative action in educational programs and employment, and will also coordinate affirmative action plans for women, minorities, protected veterans and individuals with disabilities.

FINANCIAL

Fifth Third Bancorp has named **Eric S. Smith** market president for the Chicago region, which includes Northwest Indiana and Southwest

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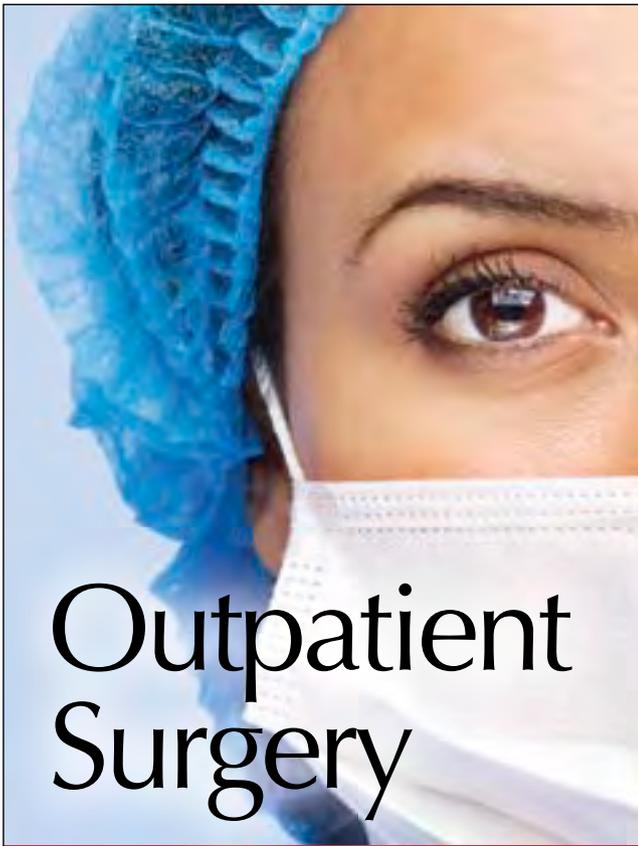
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Some outpatient surgeries may be scheduled on Saturdays for those with weekday employment obligations.

Michigan. He will be focused on driving the bank's growth in credit, treasury management services, capital markets and corporate advisory solutions. Smith most recently served as chief financial officer of middle market banking for JPMorgan Chase ... Residential mortgage lender **Ruoff Home Mortgage** has hired **Gina DeCicco** as senior loan officer at its Crown Point office. DeCicco most recently worked with the Bank of England. She has been doing mortgages since 2003 and is green belt certified in Six Sigma. **Dave Ellingsen** was the top loan originator for the Crown Point office of residential mortgage lender Ruoff Home Mortgage for the month of August. He has worked in the banking industry since 2003. **David Leeper** was recognized as the top loan originator, based on the number of loans closed, for their Crown Point office for the month of April. Leeper joined Ruoff in May 2015 and has been in the banking/mortgage industry for 12 years ... **Meridian Title Corporation** recently recognized **Cindy Finley**, **Dawn Zigler** and **Palmer Myers**, all of Northwest Indiana, with its "Excellence in Sales" award and "Outstanding Performance and Sales Achievement" award for 2015 ... The Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards has authorized **Wesley M. Kotys**, president and wealth adviser at **The Kotys Group**, Valparaiso, to use the Certified Financial Planner certification marks. He has met the experience and ethical requirements of the board, completed financial planning courses, and passed certification exams ... **Edward Jones Financial** advisor **Brock Lloyd** recently received the firm's Eagle Award for his "clear vision of both client and business goals" over the past year. Only 1,959 of the firm's more than 14,000 financial advisors received the award. He works out of the firm's Valparaiso office and lives in Chesterton ... **Allegius Credit Union** has hired **Marcelina Ramirez** as a vice president/chief financial officer. Ramirez will focus on the credit union's financials,



FINANCIAL Eric Smith



FINANCIAL Gina DeCicco



FINANCIAL Kyle Yelton



FINANCIAL Matthew Stosich

asset/liability management policies and procedures, along with overseeing the comptroller and accounting department.

HEALTHCARE

Carl Risk II has been named the new president of **Elkhart General Hospital**. Risk comes to Beacon from St. Vincent Jennings Hospital in North Vernon, Ind., where he had been serving as the lead administrator since 2011. During his tenure, Risk was instrumental in leading overall operations of the hospital, implementing the hospital strategic plan and budget, developing effective working relationships with the board, managers, physicians, associates and community and improving patient care services and satisfaction. Risk previously served in senior leadership positions at King's Daughters' Hospital and Health Services in Madison, Ind. Overall, he has 17 years of experience in health care administration ... **Porter Health Care System** has welcomed **Dr. Vijaya Chapala**, to its medical staff. Chapala, a board-certified Internal Medicine physician, will practice at Portage Medical Group in Portage. She earned her medical degree at Ross University School of Medicine and completed her residency in internal medicine at the Allegheny University Hospitals in Philadelphia and continued as an attending physician at the VA hospital in Asheville, N.C. ... **Franciscan St. Anthony Health—Michigan City** honored **Dr. David Miller** with a 35-year service certificate. Miller practiced as a physician for more than 40 years

before retiring. Hospital CEO Dean Mazzoni thanked Miller for making a positive difference in the lives of others through his dedication, service and commitment to the community and to the hospital. Nurse **Kathy Koehler**, of Franciscan St. Anthony Health—Michigan City's medical-surgical unit, was recognized with the St. Camillus Award for her exceptional service. **Dr. June Brown**, an emergency room physician, was recognized with the St. Luke Award. Nominated by nursing staff members, Brown was praised for her rapport with staff, being approachable, and staying calm during emergencies ... In recognition of National Nurses Week, **St. Mary Medical Center** awarded 2016 Nursing Pillar Awards to registered nurses **Steve Lopez**, for service; **Josette Crostreet**, for quality; **Sheena Tinner**, for finance; **Jennifer Mulvihill**, for growth; and **Randall Quirk**, for people. Registered nurse **Jodie Blackman** won the superstar award. The awards honor nurses who go above and beyond their duties, providing the best in patient care ... **Orthopaedic Specialists of Northwest Indiana** has welcomed **Drs. Craig Best** and **Daniel Woods** to its practice. Best is a physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist who will help expand the practice's non-operative spine and sports medicine services. He specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of neuromusculoskeletal disorders. Woods, who is fellowship trained in sports medicine and orthopaedic surgery, will focus on treating injuries to the knee and shoulder, including ACL and rotator cuff repair. He was

team doctor for the Flyers and the Philadelphia Eagles during his fellowship. Woods will also be heading a new orthopaedic surgery program at **St. Catherine Hospital** in East Chicago.... **The Academy of General Dentistry** has given **Leonard F. Anglis, DDS**, its Lifelong Learning & Service Recognition Award for the second time during the AGD 2016 Annual Meeting. The award recognizes continuing education, community service, and service to dentistry. He completed 100 hours of dental-related community volunteer service and 500 credits in course attendance, teaching, or publications since his previous award ... **St. Mary Medical Center's Cancer Care Center** in Hobart has welcomed **Patty Higgins**, RN, OCN as its new oncology nurse navigator. Higgins will assist oncology patients through treatment, education and coordination of care. She will help patients develop a survivorship plan after treatment concludes. Higgins most recently served as a nurse in the oncology unit. Nurse practitioner **Lindsay Gordon** has joined **Dr. Christina Huynh** in practice at the Portage Health Center II of St. Mary Medical Center. Gordon received her B.S. in nursing from Valparaiso University. Nurse practitioner **Ann Trapp** has joined the physicians of Porter County Primary Care in practice at the Valparaiso Health Center of St. Mary Medical Center in Valparaiso ... **The American Optometric Association** has recognized **Dr. Richard W. Ireland** of Valparaiso with a 2016 Continuing Recognition Award for completing 50 credit hours of continuing education. He



FINANCIAL Wesley Kotys



HEALTHCARE Armand Gasbarro



HEALTHCARE Carl Risk II



HEALTHCARE Isidora Nantes

was one of 69 optometrists nationwide receiving the award ... Family practice physician **Donald Phillips** has joined the **Community Care Network Inc.**, the physician group affiliated with St. Mary Medical Center and all Community Healthcare System hospitals. Joining him at his Hobart offices is nurse practitioner **Melissa Dvorscak** ... Family Medicine Physician **Kajal Patel**, MD, has joined the **Porter Physi-**

cian Group. The doctor focuses on preventive care and believes in current evidence-based guidelines when caring for patients. She received her medical degree from Windsor University, College of Medicine, West Indies. She completed her internship and residency in Family Medicine at Presence Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center in Chicago. Her office is located on Willowcreek Road in Portage ... Registered nurse **Megan**

Walker, of the post-partum unit at **Methodist Hospital's Northlake Campus** in Gary, is the only nurse from a Northwest Indiana hospital to be named a finalist for the 2016 Nurse.com GEM Awards from the Midwest states. The award recognizes nurses nationwide for excellence in leadership, management, education, volunteerism and clinical practice. Regional finalists will be announced in November and national winners



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HEALTHCARE Raphael Albert



HEALTHCARE Vijaya Chapala



LEGAL Brian Custy

early next year. Methodist Hospitals welcomes Drs. Raphael Albert and Isidora Nantes to Methodist Physician Group. Both physicians were formerly part of Porter Physician Group, a division of Porter Health Care System and the United States Steel (USS) Family Medical Center, prior to Porter Health System purchasing the clinic in December of 2014. Albert and Nantes have served Northwest Indiana families for many years in Merrillville and, by joining the Methodist Physician Group, their patients are now supported by the advanced, nearby resources of Methodist Hospitals ... Physical therapist **Tracy Campbell, MPT**, has joined the staff of **Integrated Therapy Practice PC** in Valparaiso. Campbell earned her M.S. in physical therapy from the University of Findlay in Ohio. She has more than 15 years' experience and the Indiana chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association honored her with its Emerging Leader Award in 2009 ... The Board of Lower Extremity Surgery has granted **Dr. Armand Gasbarro, Lansing Foot & Ankle Center**, certification in lower extremity medicine and surgery and the title of Diplomate after he passed written and oral exams and submitted examples of his surgical cases. ... **Community Health Network** has named **George Hurd** vice president of the network's Behavioral Health Services. Hurd will provide strategic, fiscal and operational leadership, filling the needs of patients and the network through an integrated and comprehensive continuum of ser-

vices. Veteran TV personality **Kris Kirschner** has joined Community Health Network as PR and media relations strategist. Kirschner spent the past 19 years as a reporter and anchor at WTHR in Indianapolis. An award-winning journalist, Kirschner has earned several Emmy nominations for reporting, writing and anchoring. She most recently took home an Emmy and has also been honored by the Associated Press and Society of Professional Journalists.

HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

Mark Timejardine, general manager of the **Red Lobster in Munster**, has been recognized with the Red Lobster's People Developer Award, which honors general managers who demonstrate a passion for mentoring others. He is one of only eight general managers to be selected from the more than 700 Red Lobster restaurant leaders in North America ... **Buffalo Wings and Rings** owner **Mike Weyer**, of Jasper, Indiana, and general manager **Ann Benet** recently were awarded the Club Level Experience award for best customer service within the chain at the company's national conference. Cincinnati-based Buffalo Wings & Rings has almost 60 locations, many located in the Midwest.

INSURANCE

MacLennan & Bain Insurance, Valparaiso, has hired **Kyle Yelton** as a commercial property and casualty insurance agent. He was formerly a financial services specialist at Northwestern Mutual Life. He serves on

the Porter County Planning Commission, the Boys & Girls Club of Porter County board of directors, and other community organizations ... **Todd Avery** has opened a **State Farm Insurance Agency** in Highland. Prior to becoming a State Farm Agent, he worked for Ossur Americas in sales management. He is a lifetime resident of Northwest Indiana, currently residing in Crown Point ... **Allstate** agency owners **Nick Adams** and **Travis Huber** have had their agencies designated as Allstate Premier Agencies. Adams owns the **Adams Insurance Agency Inc.** in Griffith, and Huber owns the **Team Huber Agency** in Highland. The Premier Agency designation is awarded to Allstate agency owners who have demonstrated excellence in delivering an accessible, knowledgeable and personal customer experience while achieving outstanding business results ... **Northwestern Mutual** in Chicago has announced that **Dionna Johnson** has joined the firm's downtown Chicago office as a recruiter. She will play a key role in finding talented individuals who want to be part of a caring performance culture and want to build enduring relationships with clients. She is a Lansing native who now lives in Hyde Park.

LEGAL

Attorney **Brian Custy** has graduated from the prestigious Gerry Spence Trial Lawyers College in Dubois, Wyo. The College is led by famed trial attorney Gerry Spence and dedicated to training lawyers who are committed to the jury system and to



LEGAL Patricia Roman Hass



MANUFACTURING Walter Hill



NONPROFIT Harry Vande Velde



NONPROFIT Karen Vogelsang

representing and obtaining justice for individuals ... Attorney **Patricia Roman Hass** has joined **Reminger Co. LPA's** Northwest Indiana office, located in Crown Point. She practices civil defense litigation, with a focus on general tort liability, civil rights litigation, commercial disputes, and employment litigation. Roman Hass was previously a member of the litigation practice group of a law firm in Northwest Indiana for six years. She is a graduate of the College of William and Mary and earned her

law degree from Indiana University Maurer School of Law.

MANUFACTURING

Haire Group of Merrillville has welcomed corrugated industry veteran **Tim Engle** as its new machinery product manager. Engle will be responsible for heading up sales of new machinery with a focus on Dong Fang machinery, including APSTAR Rotary Die Cutters and APSTAR Flexo-Folder-Gluers. Engle has more than 16 years of experience in the corrugated box industry.

NON-PROFIT

The South Shore Leadership Center has appointed **Harry J. Vande Velde III** as its new president and CEO. Vande Velde, a former president of the Legacy Foundation, brings extensive experience in not-for-profit management, education and development to the role. He replaces SSLC founder **Keith Kirkpatrick**, who stepped down in 2015. **Leigh Morris** has been serving as interim president and CEO of the



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center since early 2016. Vande Velde is a graduate of the LNI program and former member of the SSLC board ... **The Pines Village Retirement Communities Inc.** has named **Karen Vogelsang** to its board of directors. Vogelsang, a Valparaiso resident, is a senior financial adviser and registered principal of Vogelsang Asset Management LLC. Pines Village Retirement Communities provides housing, services and advocacy for older adults.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The Illinois CPA Society (ICPAS) announced **Stephanie Blanco** has been elected chair of the Government Report Review Committee. Blanco, 39, is the Senior Manager at **John Kasperek Co. Inc.** in Calumet City. The Government Report Review Committee conducts annual reviews of audit opinions issued by public accountants and related financial statements for local governments ... **Matthew Stosich**, CPA has been appointed tax manager at **McMahon & Associates CPAs PC**. His tax and accounting services include individual, partnership and corporate tax returns, tax projections and tax planning. He serves a variety of industries including professional services, construction, manufacturing, real estate and nonprofits.

RETAIL

The National Pawnbrokers Association has selected **Greg Engstrom**, founder of **Ameripawn** in Valparaiso, as the recipient of the 2016 Pawnbroker of the Year Award, presented to an NPA member who has demonstrated exceptional success in their business and local community and has made a significant contribution to the pawn industry.

SOUTH SHORE LEADERSHIP CENTER ANNOUNCES AFFILIATION WITH PURDUE UNIVERSITY NORTHWEST

The South Shore Leadership Center (SSLC) announced that it has entered into a collaboration agreement with **Purdue University Northwest (PNW)** to develop

an expanded range of leadership programs and services designed to address the needs of private, public and not-for-profit participants. The affiliation, effective Oct. 1, will benefit both the organization and the university through opportunities to jointly provide leadership development programming that enhances the economic, social and cultural well-being of residents from across the seven-

county area of Northwest Indiana. Under the terms of the agreement, PNW will serve as the host organization for the SSLC. The SSLC office will relocate to PNW-hosted facilities, while the center will remain an independent 501(c)3 organization. The SSLC also will seek opportunities to support and augment PNW's research and economic development efforts across the region. **BQ**

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ACCELERATING GREATNESS Rick Urschel, CEO of employee-owned Urschel Laboratories Inc., with machine assembler Jesse Nielsen.

Honoring Innovation

Society of Innovators shines the spotlight on the region's big thinkers.

BY JERRY DAVICH

Similar to when atoms collide at high speeds, something remarkable happens when ideas collide at innovative speeds.

"The spark of *genius* happens," says John Davies, managing director of the Society of Innovators of Northwest Indiana. "Everything begins with an idea. Everything. This is why innovation is so crucial and why anyone can truly be an innovator."

Now in its 12th year, the Society recognizes and celebrates this spirit of innovation in this seven-county region. Through a project of the Gerald I. Lamkin Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center of Ivy Tech Community College Northwest, more than 1,000 innovative pioneers have been unveiled and heralded.

"These amazing innovators are doing wondrous work in our own backyard," Davies says. "In their own ways, they are capturing the very essence of innovation."

Each nominated candidate is vetted by 19 judges before finalists are determined and winners announced. "These judges know what they're doing is very important," Davies says.

This year, the Society selected six fellows in addition to team-based trailblazers selected for two awards: the Chanute Prize for Team Innovation and the Accelerating Greatness Award. These heralded recipients were formally inducted into the Society during an Oct. 20 ceremony at the Horseshoe Casino in Hammond.

Here is a snapshot of their stories.

JOSEPH STAHURA **Whiting Mayor**

In 2004, the City of Whiting was dramatically affected by the implementation of the circuit breaker credits, state legislation that ensured property owners do not pay more than a fixed percent of a property's gross assessed value. This law placed stiff tax caps on municipalities, which devastated the lakeside city through drastic revenue loss, forcing city officials to remake what was once known as only a sleepy company town.

"I strongly believe that Mayor Stahura evidenced the highest type of innovation in the public sector, responding to the necessity created by a new public finance paradigm," Highland Clerk-Treasurer Michael Griffin



"REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCE" Sandra Chimon-Peszek Rogers, Ph.D., director of the Calumet College of St. Joseph Biophysical Chemistry Department and a researcher into Alzheimer's disease, works with biomedical major Ciara Carmichael.



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“INNOVATIVE WORK” Dr. Barbara Eason-Watkins, superintendent of Michigan City Area Schools, visits the NIPSCO Energy Academy classroom in the A.K. Smith Career Center in Michigan City.

stated in his nomination letter. “He instituted a new vision for the city, assembling classic responses with unconventional ones to reinvigorate the city as a desirable place to live, work and play.”

Stahura, who’s known as “Mayor Joe” by residents and his talented staff of municipal innovators, transformed Whiting into a destination location, an unheard of description for the city with an oil-refinery reputation. They did so through an innovative use of classic techniques and imaginative visioning, judges stated. These actions led to multi-million dollar investments, including lakefront beautification, a revitalized downtown, and the National Mascot Hall of Fame, a year-round family-friendly attraction.

“We’ve had a few rough years but we’ve been in a sweet spot for the past year and our task is to keep our city in the limelight,” says Stahura, who

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repeatedly praised his staff for this award. "I graciously accept this award on behalf of our staff and this city."

**SANDRA CHIMON-
PESZEK ROGERS**

Calumet College of St. Joseph

When Sandra Chimon-Peszek Rogers found out she was chosen to be an esteemed new member of the Society, she reacted with the enthusiasm of a young student.

"I jumped up and down a couple of times like a little kid," she admits. "This is an extreme honor. Not only for what innovative ideas I have, but for the mere fact that Northwest Indiana has such amazing innovators and that I was recognized amongst such admirable and innovative leaders. The nomination itself was an honor. The award is just the icing on the cake."

She is director of the biophysical chemistry department at Calumet College of St. Joseph, and a determined researcher into Alzheimer's disease. She launched an innovative curriculum combining classroom lectures with hands-on lab work to especially help students who've been under-represented in the sciences, including women, minorities and first generation college students.

"Through her recruitment of promising women and minority students into the CCSJ Science Program, her innovative and engaging teaching methods and her mentoring, Dr. Rogers has proven that students aspire to careers in the sciences and that they can compete at the highest levels," says Daniel Lowery, the school's president.

In February, a 30-day experimental project submitted to NASA by Rogers' students will be conducted on the International Space Station. The project will collect information that advances Alzheimer's research. Rogers says, "We are learning as we are applying not just real-life experience, but also taking it a step further by sending our experiments into space. It is because of the amazing support from the Calumet College

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“A PASSION FOR SUCCESS” Jon Groth, area director/principal at Porter County Career and Technical Education, stands by the historic 1912 Grand Truck rail depot that was moved onto the school campus and is being converted into a 21st century classroom.

of St. Joseph and their mission that allowed me to do this.”

ELIZABETH LYNN
Valparaiso University

It didn't take long for Elizabeth Lynn to reflect upon the civic meaning of her award.

“It identifies an underlying pattern of experimentation and iterative learning in my work, affirms and celebrates that pattern, and gives it a name—innovation,” says Lynn, who founded the Center for Civic Reflection at Valparaiso University. “This is very encouraging and heartwarming, and I understand my work better in this light.”

The nationally known center,

part of the Institute for Leadership and Service, developed and refined an innovatively applied use of the humanities to illustrate issues of concern through reflective dialogue. Civic reflection uses readings, images and videos to engage people in productive conversation about their communities. To date, the center has trained more than 7,000 facilitators while leading more than 20,000 individuals in public, community and workplace dialogues.

“I didn't seek this award, and I don't know that seeking such recognition ever really works,” Lynn says in response to offering advice to others. “Keep focused on the good you are seeking to do in the world,

take risks, allow yourself to fail and learn from your failures, and bring other people along with you. Make it a journey with good company.”

BARBARA EASON-WATKINS
Michigan City Area Schools

Through a new, comprehensive high-tech classroom initiative, involving a five-year \$10 million upgrade for technology enhancement district-wide, Barbara Eason-Watkins highlighted a transformation achieved through fresh ideas, improved curricula, and community-influenced collaboration. She has demonstrated an innovative spirit of collaboration involving many initiatives, including the first NIPSCO Energy Academy, the first STEM public elementary school, and the first construction technology program, judges stated.

“This recognition reflects the collective effort of our school community, business and educational organizations, and the mayor and city council,” says Eason-Watkins, superintendent of Michigan City Area Schools. “It is an honor bestowed upon an entire community in support of education.”

Eason-Watkins is leading a movement from traditional educational tools—textbooks, notepads and blackboards—to a digitized curriculum program—improving Wi-Fi service in schools, enhancing technical services, and deploying Chromebooks to students. This effort began at the high school and will eventually impact every school and every student. Dubbed the Technology/Digital Classroom Initiative, it began with a nearly \$4 million program funded in part by the Michigan City Redevelopment Commission.

“I hope this award reinforces that our school district is doing some innovative work that is meaningful and that others support our efforts,” she says. “We cannot make a difference alone. This effort was done as part of a journey that began with a listening tour and feedback from schools, parents, business and civic leaders as to what our educational system needed to focus on. I hope that my school community—the

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teachers, principals, parents and partners who work tirelessly to provide high quality options for our students—recognizes the impact they are having and take pride in their accomplishments.”

JON GROTH
Porter County Career & Technical Education

Jon Groth was nominated for two innovations in his field. First, for leading the repurposing of a vacant, historic rail station to be used as classrooms, with much of the renovation work performed by students. And second, for leading the sustainable energy components to the repurposed and existing school buildings as part of the curriculum.

“This award is confirmation that my school, teachers, and students are models of educational excellence,” says Groth, director of Porter County Career and Technical Education, based in Valparaiso. “I tell people all the time that I am honored to work with the next generation of leaders, and that our future will be in good hands.”

Groth, whose office has 35 teachers district-wide, including 12 within the central building, led the innovative repurposing of the 1912 Grand Trunk rail depot into a 21st century classroom. He worked with community leaders and volunteers to raise funds and relocate the historic building, with students helping to convert the 3,200-square-foot structure. Groth also launched the first student-built alternative energy demonstration project on a school roof in Indiana, including 15 solar panels and three wind generators that power the lights of the building.

“Our students have a passion for success and an altruistic perspective of the world,” Groth says. “Their energy, their compassion for others, and their enthusiasm for life empowers me and my staff. It is incumbent on my generation to provide the opportunity for them to reach their goals.”

THOMAS KEON
Purdue University
Northwest Chancellor

Thomas Keon has taught workable,

viable and impactful strategies to countless companies and organizations. His own teachings were used in an innovative fashion to launch one of the first models in the country leading to the unification of two regional campuses, Purdue University Calumet and Purdue North Central, into a single university—Purdue University Northwest.

“It is very rewarding to have

others think that the work you are doing is innovative and makes an impact,” says Keon, chancellor of the renamed school. “My prime motivation is always to attempt to make a positive impact in relation to all that I do.”

Under Keon’s direction, this unification is the first of its kind in Indiana and one of only a handful of this nature in the country. It offers

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more choices for students, creates a regional identity for Northwest Indiana, and presents a greater cornerstone force to generate new economic activity in the Chicago market.

Keon, a longtime educator, proved that those individuals who teach for a living can also apply their teachings as a practical solution to a challenging problem.

“To know that a faculty member can actually apply a theory to a real world dilemma is wonderful,” Keon says.

TEAM AWARDS

GRAND CALUMET RESTORATION PROJECT Chanute Prize for Team Innovation

Once called the most polluted river in the world, the Grand Calumet River is “coming alive again,” according to judges (with thanks to the Grand Calumet River Restoration Project).

By demonstrating an innovative collaboration involving eight companies working with regulatory agencies, the project transformed more than 80 percent of the iconic river in this region over the past decade. This massive cleanup stemmed from the 2004 Grand Cal Consent Decree, representing the second largest multi-party action of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment process in its history.

“We are all so proud of this project and thrilled that we could be a part of bringing back a natural resource for which many, if not most people, had lost hope,” says Beth Admire, state natural resource co-trustee with the Indiana Department of Environmental Management. “This award is an amazing reflection on how an idea can become a journey that ends in great success. It gives all of us renewed energy to keep moving forward to perfect this resource and help others do the same in their communities.

“So many challenges take time and effort, but a big idea is worth seeing through to the end,” she says, offering a stream of advice to other similar projects. “Always be willing to listen to ideas of others. There may



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“KEEP FOCUSED ON THE GOOD YOU ARE SEEKING TO DO” Elizabeth Lynn, Ph.D., founded the Center for Civic Reflection at Valparaiso University.

be something out there that could lead to great results that had not been considered.”

URSCHEL LABORATORIES INC. Accelerating Greatness Award for Team Innovation

Built on a foundation of engineering marvels and innovations to produce industrial cutting machinery for 106 years, Urschel Laboratories Inc. has pioneered a transformation in technology while creating an entrepreneurial culture among its 400 employees. By doing so, it has become a global leader in food-cutting technology.

“We were humbled to be included in such esteemed company,” says CEO Rick Urschel. “When we found out we had won an award, we were elated that the judges found our efforts for establishing employee ownership worthy of recognition.”

Now owned by employees, in

addition to a new \$100 million, 350,000-square-foot manufacturing facility and headquarters, this company is positioned to enhance its global leadership over the next century. This perfectly describes the Accelerating Greatness Award, which judges describe as an “accelerator” to inspire future innovation.

“We hope our winning of this award encourages more companies to explore the employee stock ownership plan option,” Urschel says.

Since 1910, Urschel has been designing and manufacturing precision industrial cutting machinery. From the invention of the Gooseberry Snipper to the development of the TransSlicer and DiversaCut series of machines, the focus has always been on finding innovative and efficient ways to improve customer productivity. “The desire to do great and innovative things should not be driven by recognition,” he says. **BQ**

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Portrayed by Larry Galler, Larry Galler & Associates, a 2010 – 2011 Society Member and Board Governor of The Society of Innovators of NWI

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Companies to Watch

Northern Indiana companies with great results and lots of promise.

BY STEVE KAEUBLE

What companies have potential to create tomorrow's big business news? That's what the Indiana Companies to Watch program sets out to discover.

This year, four Northern Indiana organizations made the state's Companies to Watch list. These companies aim to bring people's ailing cellphones back to life, keep overhead cranes operating safely and efficiently, promote healing and fight infection among implant patients, and keep food and medicine from spoiling in commercial refrigerators.

Indiana's Companies to Watch were chosen by judges brought together by the state, the Indiana Economic Development Foundation and the Edward Lowe Foundation. A total of 14 privately owned companies made the 2016 list, all beyond startup and all demonstrating strong, sustainable growth. As a group, they increased revenue by an average of 44 percent a year between 2012 and 2015, and grew their total employee count by about a third every year, on average. They expect 52 percent annual revenue growth by the end of 2016, and if that's the case, they will have generated revenue totaling half a billion dollars over the last five years, and together will have created 659 new jobs.

Read on to learn more about the

Companies to Watch from the northern tier of the state.

GENIUS PHONE REPAIR

You could say that it doesn't take a genius to know what an important role smartphones play in people's lives. But it definitely took smarts to figure out a good model for providing repair service that meets the demands of impatient, needy customers going through smartphone withdrawal. The business model is definitely working out.

After just two years in business, Genius Phone Repair—launched by some young college grads in the Grand Rapids area—earned the Young Entrepreneurs of the Year Award from the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce, and the next year moved up to an Entrepreneur of the Year award from the same organization. By last year, the company was named among Michigan Companies to Watch, and this year its Indiana operations earned it a place on the Indiana Companies to Watch list. It's only five years old now, but Genius Phone Repair has grown to include two locations in Fort Wayne, plus locations in Mishawaka, Angola, Lafayette and Avon, in addition to a dozen in Michigan.

Genius Phone Repair specializes in repairs of all kinds of devices, from iPhones and iPads to other varieties of smartphones and tablets. Computer

repairs are also on the menu, and the company buys and sells used devices.

What sets the company apart is precisely this: innovative concepts that serve the needs of device users—concepts that often were the light-bulb moments of its employees. It was a front-line worker, for example, who suggested offering extra-speedy phone repairs for an extra price, and it turns out that plenty of people are more than happy to shell out an extra \$20 to get their phones fixed faster. For those who can't get through an hour without checking Twitter, that's a whole lot better than having to ship off a faulty phone.

Genius Phone Repair went from one location to about a dozen and a half in five years, hit 136 employees in 2015 and was expecting to reach 175 this year. Not a bad call!

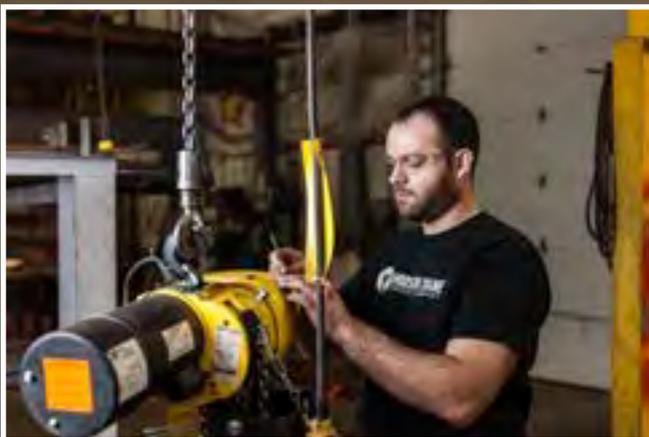
HOOSIER CRANE SERVICE CO.

It's no accident that the word "service" is part of the name of Hoosier Crane Service Co. Tom Schmidt, founder and president of the Elkhart-based business, says that's what his company is all about. "A big part of our success is how we treat our customers," he says. "Our customers can call us 24/7 and someone will always answer. 'Service' is in our name, and it is the heart of Hoosier Crane."

The company, launched in 2002, is in the business of servicing, inspect-



“SERVICE’ IS IN OUR NAME” Tom Schmidt is founder and president of Elkhart-based Hoosier Crane Service Co.



ing and manufacturing overhead cranes. It also sells crane kits, parts and accessories for the industry. “The annual revenue growth rate has been about 20 percent over the past three years, and our employee numbers have been steadily increasing along with that revenue growth,” Schmidt says.

One aspect of service is always

being available. For Hoosier Crane, that means being at-the-ready to help a customer, at any time of day, even on holidays. But that’s just the start. Responsiveness is important in the sales end, too.

With that in mind, Hoosier Crane has worked to maximize the power of online functionality. You might ask, how can you buy a massive,

overhead crane online? It’s not your typical Amazon.com kind of product. True, but on the company’s website, a quote wizard can help you generate a quote for the crane you’re seeking, and get it right away, rather than in days.

You can get an express service quote online, too. And the company’s sophisticated website also includes a whole host of helpful videos and manuals. Overhead cranes may be a mainstay in the industrial world, but Hoosier Crane’s online technology is

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“Grants from the NIH help us continue to discover potential applications to improve the future of healthcare.”

—Matt Hedrick, Nanovis

several steps ahead of the pack.

The company’s expansion into additional locations also helps it live up to the “service” in its name. In addition to its Elkhart headquarters, Hoosier Crane has branch offices in Fort Wayne, Indianapolis and Chicago.

NANOVIS LLC

Nanovis creates what it likes to call “science-driven, life-improving technology.” More specifically, the company’s product line focuses on scientifically advanced regenerative platforms for implantable medical devices. As its name suggests, Nanovis is in the business of nanotechnology, which, simply put, has to do with things that are very, very small.

The challenge that the company addresses is the fact that human tissues have tiny patterns—nano-sized patterns—and if medical technology such as implants can be made to resemble those patterns, there is a

greater likelihood of successful healing. Nanovis works to help implants heal more effectively and with fewer infections.

The whole topic of infections is an increasingly important one, since surgical infections can be extremely serious, and resistant strains of bacteria are becoming more commonplace. If nanotechnology can help implant surgeries become less prone to infection, that's quite a positive.

Nanovis, based in Columbia City, was founded 10 years ago, and is on an increasingly fast growth trajectory. Its roster totaled eight employees last year, and it was on track to more than double the count this year. Beyond its headquarters, the company maintains offices in Carmel as well as labs at the Birck Nanotechnology Center at Purdue University.

Plenty of things have been going well for the fledgling company. For example, earlier this year, the company announced a grant from the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health. The grant funding is intended to support pre-clinical studies related to the company's deeply porous FortiCore interbody fusion devices and nanotube technology. The company believes the technology has potential to improve recovery following spinal fusion procedures.

Says the company's CEO, Matt Hedrick, "Gaining the attention and support of the NIH for Nanovis' technology platforms and research is gratifying. Grants from the NIH help us continue to discover potential applications to improve the future of healthcare."

SMART TEMPS LLC

Whether it's food, medicine, vaccines, blood or lab specimens, maintaining the right temperature is critical. Getting it wrong can be costly, even dangerous, which is why Mishawaka-based SMART Temps ensures mega peace of mind.

SMART Temps' technology uses wireless thermometers to monitor the temperature of things that need to be cold or hot. Why wireless?

Because the monitoring devices pass along the data into the cloud, allowing the company's technology to automatically send out email, text or phone alerts if a sensor senses that something isn't the way it should be. And wireless also means battery-powered, and that means the sensors

can keep gathering data even if the power goes out.

The beauty of the technology is that it's simple for the end user to keep tabs on many critical locations. The Rite-Aid pharmacy chain signed on with the company last year to monitor drugs at 4,600 stores, a huge



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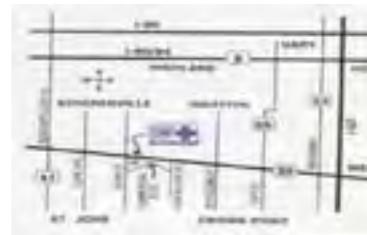


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contract that has enabled the company to get the attention of other major drugstore chains. It already had built a solid reputation with schools and higher-education institutions, but cracking the drugstore market has a very healthy potential for SMART Temps.

The next frontier is the restaurant business, where SMART Temps can help protect food storage areas from the risk of spoilage and food safety issues. For restaurants, automating the business of temperature monitoring means less pencil-and-paper work, and greater peace of mind. The company has its eye on cruise ships, too, and movie theaters, grocery stores and hotels. It's up to 14,000 locations under its watchful eyes, with many more on the way.

For SMART Temps, success has come from listening to customer needs, then figuring out the technology needed

success has been a total team effort.”

The company was launched in 2009 as a spinoff of SMART Systems, a provider of food safety systems and supplies for schools. John Miller's brother, Michael, runs that business. SMART Temps employs about 35, and hopes to rapidly grow its

business by as much as three times through 2017.

“Our future is limitless,” says Michael J. McKay, partner and chief operating officer. “We have a great product with a real return on investment that provides real-time peace of mind.” **BQ**

What sets Genius Phone Repair apart is precisely this: innovative concepts that serve the needs of device users—concepts that often were the light-bulb moments of its employees.

to meet those needs. “SMART Temps has always been customer-centric,” says the company's president, John M. Miller. “We listen and innovate based on what the market needs, even if the technology isn't there to support the need. This is true throughout our organization, and why our

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Banking on Success

Build your banker into a trusted entrepreneurial adviser.

BY LESLY BAILEY

Creating a connection with bankers is more than just crunching the numbers, according to banking professionals in the region who detail how entrepreneurs can launch and maintain productive relationships that endure

throughout the years and economic changes.

Michael Schneider, Northwest Indiana market president at First Financial Bank, says entrepreneurs bring a unique synergy to the table.

“We really enjoy working with entrepreneurs,” he says. “They tend

to have a great energy, dreams, visions and ideas that they want to fulfill. They are very positive people. We help them take that vision and dream and take them from Point A to Point B.”

Schneider recommends that start-ups meet with a banker at a very



“VERY POSITIVE PEOPLE” Michael Schneider, Northwest Indiana market president at First Financial Bank, says entrepreneurs “have a great energy, dreams, visions and ideas.”

early point in the process.

“One of the most important things that I always tell clients is, when they have an idea, always get a banker in on the idea way out in front of the need,” he says. “If at some point in the future they may borrow money, don’t wait until two weeks before the check needs to be written. Meet well in advance to talk about the dream and vision of where they are going. The banker can help stair-step where the entrepreneur needs to be so that everyone understands the mechanics of how things are going to work.

“There are a lot of good bankers out there who enjoy helping entrepreneurs and putting the deal together. Get them in on the front-end of the conversation so they understand the vision well in advance.”

This extends to an emerging entrepreneur’s management team, says Erica Dombey, president and execu-

tive director of the Regional Development Company (RDC), which assists small businesses with purchasing hard assets.

Dombey says, “Attorneys, CPAs, insurance agents and bankers are all important people in a small business owner’s life. These people can provide sensible advice and keep any potential trouble or issues at bay. “It’s best to establish those relationships early, so the professionals can grow with the business, are familiar with its history and can give the best counsel possible.”

Gregory A. Gordon, vice president and group manager of business banking at Centier, says, “A banker, attorney and CPA offer valuable professional resources, especially for someone just starting out. You get different types of advice from a banker than a CPA. It’s good to get differing opinions.

“We make sure, as their banker, to get them a quality CPA, help refer them to an attorney and vice versa. It’s important to maintain a good network and getting our clients in the hands of those three leads to a tripod that works together.”

After connecting with a banker on the ground floor, it’s really about growing and developing with entrepreneurs over the years, says Brian Rusin, vice president and business banking manager at Peoples Bank.

“In the short term, we need to build a relationship and become a trusted adviser,” he says. “We will ask a lot of questions of the entrepreneur to help understand how they do business and what types of banking needs they may have. Then we like to uncover what they may need on a longer-term basis as well. As entrepreneurs grow, they want to make sure that their banks have the abil-



“ESTABLISH THOSE RELATIONSHIPS EARLY,” Erica Dombey, president and executive director of the Regional Development Company, says of attorneys, CPAs, insurance agents and bankers.

ity to grow with them ... building on that trusted relationship. Our goal is to help them with whatever banking needs they have.”

“It’s not so much access to credit as the relationship to the banker that is the important part,” Gordon adds. “Trust is very important between a banker and the business owner. Trust, honesty, forthright conversa-

tion ... having those conversations in order to offer sound financial advice to help entrepreneurs make decisions.”

Open lines of communication are the keys to a strong, long-term connection, says Chris Chatfield, vice president of business banking at First Merchants Bank.

“At the front end, first and fore-

most, we are seeking a long-term mutually beneficial relationship with clients and prospective entrepreneurs. That’s the cornerstone and foundation of what we want to do,” he says. “We want to provide good financial advice and that really doesn’t constrain us to the commercial world but the holistic financial spectrum: from wealth management to residential and car loans. We are really talking about an all-inclusive look at finances.

“We are that financial partner and we want to know when it’s good and when it’s bad. When it’s bad, we should be one of the first ones to know and not read about it in the paper or have the keys dropped off when the building is closed.

“Being able to discuss challenges is a critical component of keeping the relationship healthy,” Chatfield adds.

“Commercial lending is not black and white,” he says. “It’s not just in a box ... part of what makes up what we do is creativity every day, on the structure of things, for clients that makes sense for them and is mutually beneficial. We can help provide solutions, even when it’s bad, as to

“It’s not so much access to credit as the relationship to the banker that is the important part.”

—Gregory A. Gordon, Centier

how we’re going to move forward. It really goes back to communication.”

According to Gordon, “Sometimes we have to give, in a professional way, constructive criticism. Especially if we have 20 or 30 years’ experience doing what we do, we have seen what has worked and not worked. Without breaking client confidentiality, we can share advice and ultimately provide them with the tools to make good decisions.

“Don’t hide things from your



banker. It's not always rosy. There's downturns, recessions. But with open dialogue and honesty, more often than not, we can work through those issues. Don't be afraid to ask for help. It's always easier to have that conversation initially before things get sideways."

Entrepreneurs need to take time to sit down with their bankers on a regular basis, no matter what is going on with their businesses, Rusin says.

"With regular meetings, we can discuss the successes as well as the challenges. You cannot be afraid to talk about issues. If there is an existing relationship, your banker will be able to make a quicker decision and address any challenges in a timely matter."

Dombey's advice is to stay in contact with your banker at least twice a year. "Talk to them a year before you plan on making any big changes, moves or expansions. They can look at your financials with you and give



"WE CAN HELP PROVIDE SOLUTIONS," says Chris Chatfield, vice president of business banking at First Merchants Bank, encouraging business customers to be open about the bad times, not just the good.

sound advice on how to proceed.

"They can also help you avoid any challenges you might encounter along the way. Remember, your banker wants you to succeed as much as you do."

Dombey has seen the same clients utilize the Small Business Administration's 504 Loan Program over the years, creating a base to build upon. The 504 Loan Program helps finance owner-occupied commercial real estate and large equipment.

"One of our clients has financed six Dairy Queen locations with us," she says. "Another has financed four Culver's locations. We have several manufacturers that used us to first purchase their building, then returned for two or three expansions on the property. Because we were familiar with the business owners and their financials, it was much easier to get comfortable with the new projects, and loan approval is much quicker."

When I became a partner in Baseball Institute with my friend, retired professional baseball player Chris Pack, our highest priority was purchasing the training facility we were renting. First Merchants knew our best option for financing was the Small Business Administration 504 loan program. After a lot of hard work and dedication we were approved and the training facility was ours. We needed a space we could call our own, First Merchants helped make it happen.

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“WE WILL ASK A LOT OF QUESTIONS,” says Brian Rusin, vice president and business banking manager at Peoples Bank, underscoring the “need to build a relationship and become a trusted adviser.”

Bankers can also be an important source of additional partners and resources that entrepreneurs may need, according to Chatfield.

“We have partners to help think outside the box,” he says. “We’re a certified lender for the SBA. We work with other state and local programs including the RDC, SBDC (Small Business Development Center) and SCORE. They can really help with a business plan, projections or marketing. They’re an important part of what we do day-to-day and we couldn’t do it without our partners out there.”

Schneider says entrepreneurs should really see their bankers as partners in their journeys.

“Once the relationship is established, bankers are their advocate,” he says. “Never be afraid to pick up

the phone and tell them what you are thinking: an expansion or new piece of equipment. A couple years ago, a client asked me to go to a trade show to see a piece of equipment and how it works and would affect the business. He could have just called me up, but he wanted me to see it and be part of that vision. Any good banker is an advocate for the client and wants to be part of that team and appreciates being brought into a decision.”

Rusin, who has been in the industry about 20 years, says traveling along with entrepreneurs and watching them hit milestones, such as a new facility or expansion, is a rewarding component of his role.

“There is a sense of gratification being able to work with entrepreneurs ... see them obtain their goals

and know that I had a hand in assisting them do that,” he says. “That’s the reason I enjoy what I do, to see the successes of our customers.”

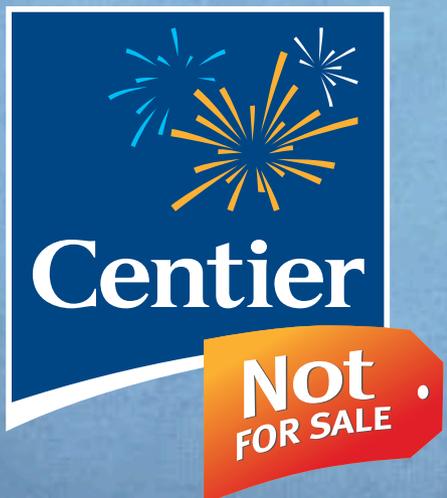
Witnessing the impact of flourishing businesses on the owners, employees and beyond instills a sense of satisfaction in the day-to-day life of a banker, Schneider says.

“I’ve been with First Financial 15 years and I have clients from when I started 15 years ago that I still have today,” he says. “To watch them grow from a small to a bigger facility and see the lives that it touches ... that’s probably the most rewarding part of the job.

“It’s amazing to see how they grow and add employees and how that affects and boosts the economy and supports families in Northwest Indiana.” 



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'Confident' market brings increased occupancy and higher lease rates.



THE LAKES OF VALPARAISO Designed and constructed by Garmong Construction Services, the development will accommodate a wide variety of business sectors.

BY HEIDI PRESCOTT WIENEKE

While vacant commercial buildings still dot the landscape in Northwest Indiana, plenty of heavy machinery and steel beams are creating new homes for expanding businesses.

Occupancy is up—in some instances way up from a few years ago. That means higher lease rates than commercial real estate brokers have seen in quite some time, as the economy continues on its lengthy course of recovery.

It also means there's not enough supply for the demand those real estate brokers are seeing from prospective business tenants. As quickly as new construction is complete or existing space becomes available, tenants are signing on and moving in.

In a word, the commercial market is "confident," says Shawn Todd, commercial broker with Newmark

Grubb Cressy & Everett, Mishawaka. And it continues to build on the gains from 2015.

"The local manufacturing and RV industry continue to be strong and capital is readily available," Todd says. "Industrial vacancy continues to be at near record lows, office rates and occupancy is staying strong and retail continues to see tenants entering new markets."

While the market is confident, investors are not going to quickly forget the past. Still, there's great potential for continued commercial growth in Northwest Indiana if—and that's a big if—the region can deliver what prospect companies often want. And that's available space on short notice.

"There is a need in the industrial area of our market for spec buildings, especially as manufacturers grow and need immediately-available space for expansion," Todd says.

New construction is taking place where new construction can take place, but speculative project announcements aren't coming as frequently as they do across the state line in Illinois. That puts Indiana at a disadvantage, as companies that otherwise would have expanded here are looking elsewhere.

"The challenges we have experienced have been associated with the inventory of suitable light industrial and manufacturing locations," says Michael Siwietz, broker associate with McColly Bennett Commercial, Valparaiso.

Siwietz says the recent challenge of finding suitable buildings or development sites for Cook County manufacturing companies eying Northwest Indiana is their desire to locate as close to the border as possible for management purposes and work force travel.

Locations south of the I-94 corri-

dor, that would otherwise be ideal locations, do not have the proper zoning or permitted use for the needs of expanding businesses, he explains. Sites north of the Borman Expressway in Munster do, Siwietz says, but many of those buildings are older with limited ceiling heights or other issues that manufacturers don't want to contend with in repurposing.

McColly Bennett has introduced the Northwind Crossings business park in Hobart, although the development mostly contains build-to-suit with lease back. Northwind Crossings also has more stringent building standards and there have been challenges with outdoor storage of materials in some instances, Siwietz says.

Holladay Property's AmeriPlex at the Port, a 385-acre mixed-use business park in Portage, is another excellent opportunity for growing businesses, Siwietz says. The AmeriPlex campus contains industrial buildings, office buildings, restaurants and retailers. But the South Bend-based company's master planned business park can be perceived as being located too far to the east of some manufacturers' desired locations, Siwietz says.

"The recent excitement with several new modern spec buildings has created opportunities that have not been in existence for some time. As they become fully occupied, it may spur additional construction on a speculative basis."

Two of the larger spec projects driving the commercial and industrial real estate market are happening in Valparaiso and Hammond, says David Lasser, president of Commercial In-Sites in Merrillville.

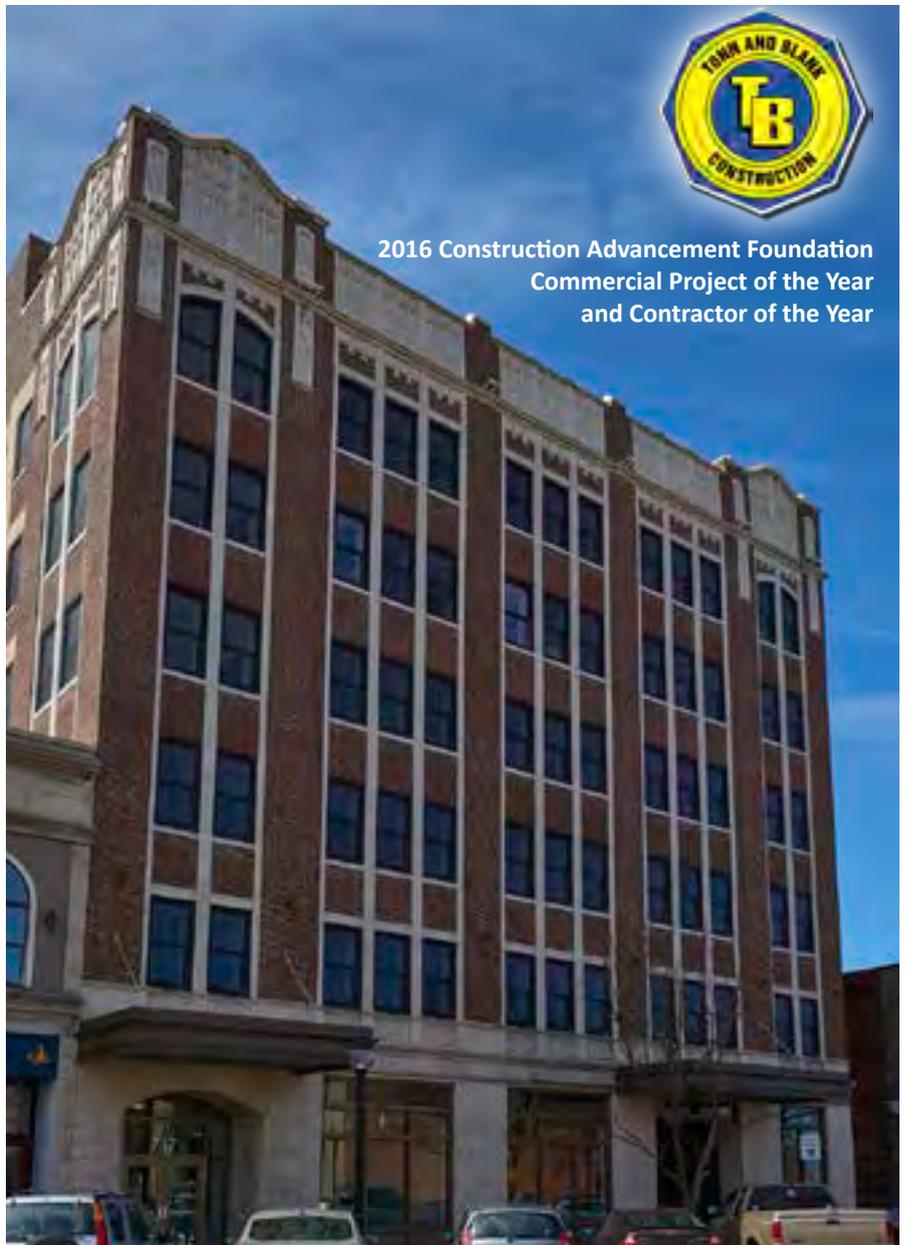
Garmong Construction Services of Terre Haute is currently building an 80,000-square-foot shell building at The Lakes of Valparaiso, a \$6 million, 150-acre planned, multi-purpose development east of Indiana 49 between Vale Park Road and Evans Ave. The company also has plans for a 75,000-square-foot spec building in Gary. Dan Zuerner, vice president of Garmong, says The Lakes

of Valparaiso is being designed and constructed to accommodate a wide variety of business sectors, with a primary focus on attracting manufacturing companies.

"We anticipate employment within this facility to reach 80 to 120 employees once it has been occupied (for) three to five years, with an additional

30 to 40 different trades people participating in the construction," Zuerner says.

Garmong developed and launched a public-private joint venture shell building program in 2004 to assist the State of Indiana and Indiana local units of government to better position themselves to grow their economies



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REDEVELOPED Former Krispy Kreme site in Schererville is getting new life with the help of Latitude Commercial.

by having state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities ready for companies wishing to expand or relocate in Indiana, Zuerner says. “Our commitment is that we can have companies placing equipment within 90 to 120 days of signing an agreement to purchase or lease our facilities.”

ATG Real Estate Development of Hammond has nearly completed framing a three-story, 37,000-square-foot Class A spec office building at 2929 Carlson Drive, where it will house its home office. The site, situated three miles east of the state line and within the revitalized Oxbow Landing, offers tenants prominent visibility on a stretch of I-80/94 used by about 170,000 vehicles per day. ATG has already announced similar-sized plans for a second phase, Lasser says.

Merrillville-based container maker,

Polycon Industries, is expanding its facility with another 150,000 square feet, and Nuco Steel Bar Technologies started construction last spring on a 150,000-square-foot mill that should be up and running during the second quarter of 2017.

“The increasing demand for pre-cast high quality construction buildings with loading docks and higher ceiling heights draws a wide range of potential tenants,” Lasser says.

Medical users and health care facilities have been another driving force of new construction, says Siwietz of McColly Bennett Commercial. Assisted living and memory care facilities continue rapid growth in Northwest Indiana and across the country.

“It’s a national trend, as opposed to a regional phenomenon. The consolidation of private practices selling to hospital groups has also created

the need for medical office buildings that are located on hospital campuses or are very near in proximity to hospitals.”

Lasser says former business college office space has been placed on the market with the recent closings of the University of Phoenix, Brown Mackie College, Everest College and ITT. Together, those closings represent a combined 75,000 square feet. The former classroom space is likely to be used by a combination of new tenants; some tenants will likely lease spaces of about 10,000 square feet, Lasser says. “About 50 percent of the absorption of those units will be subdivided for several smaller tenants.”

The lack of readily available commercial space, either new or existing, has made it challenging for commercial brokers like Aaron McDermott,

president of Latitude Commercial in Schererville, to meet the demands of so many prospects looking near the Illinois-Indiana border.

“Businesses eying to come out to Northwest Indiana still do a lot of work in Chicago,” McDermott says. “Having to add more fuel cost and time for their drivers to the supply chain is not ideal for them.”

There are often challenges associated with leasing existing buildings to new business tenants, depending on the site and tenant’s needs for the physical real estate. But McDermott says liquor license costs also pose a challenge when courting prospective businesses to Indiana.

“We could have leased up the old Krispy Kreme site in Schererville five times over,” McDermott says. “But, since owners of the liquor license are asking so much because of the demand, Schererville may never see another small boutique restaurant in the town.”

Still, McDermott, like other brokers, quickly characterizes the commercial real estate market as being in “expansion mode” right now. He

aged by the amount of speculative space now under construction because those buildings are creating opportunities that have not been in

“There are some success stories in Northwest Indiana, but we can do more.”

—Michael Siwietz, McColly Bennett Commercial

has every reason to believe the trend will continue. “As we look ahead toward next year and beyond, however, you will start to see interest rates increasing and even more new construction,” McDermott says. “The commercial sector could move into a ‘hyper-supply’ phase where vacancy rates will slowly start to increase again. The commercial property price index is at the highest it has ever been since it was tracked in the late ’90s.”

Commercial brokers are encour-

existence for some time in Northwest Indiana.

“Cities just north of the Illinois border in Wisconsin, and Indianapolis, have both done well having pad-ready sites or spec buildings ready and available,” Siwietz says. “The Indiana Economic Development Corp., the [Northwest Indiana] Forum and similar groups are a great tool to help entice these opportunities. There are some success stories in Northwest Indiana, but we can do more.” **EQ**

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Economic Renaissance

Cooperative economic-development efforts are bearing fruit.

BY LAURIE WINK

Recent ribbon cuttings at manufacturing facilities across the region are signaling an economic renaissance in what was once considered the rustbelt.

Key economic development professionals, business leaders and elected officials at local, state and federal levels are joining forces—across affiliations and party lines—to promote the region as vibrant and full of opportunity for companies looking to establish and expand their footprints.

Economic development is a team effort, say professionals with the Indiana Economic Development Corp. (IEDC). The state agency works with multiple partners—including the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA), the Northwest Indiana Forum, the Lake County Economic Alliance and government agencies—to tout Northwest Indiana as a great place to do business.

The IEDC and its partners have helped about 70 companies expand or locate in Northwest Indiana over the last three years. These companies have invested or plan to invest more than \$985 million and create nearly 4,400 new jobs. Indiana currently has the highest concentration of manufacturing jobs in the United States, according to the IEDC.

Matt Saltanovitz, formerly with the NWI Forum and now director of the IEDC Northwest region, is seeing “incredible economic momentum.”

“Companies from across state lines and around the world keep coming to us asking to learn more about living and doing business here,” Saltanovitz says. “Companies are choosing to create their new jobs here because we’ve worked together to create the perfect environment for their growth



“THE PERFECT ENVIRONMENT FOR THEIR GROWTH” has attracted the attention of companies from across state lines and around the world, says Matt Saltanovitz, director of the Indiana Economic Development Corp. Northwest Region.

with the affordability, limited regulations and excellent quality of life in Northwest Indiana.”

Saltanovitz says that’s especially true for companies specializing in advanced manufacturing looking for the perfect place to create skilled, high-wage jobs. Some recent business expansions include:

- Hoist Liftruck moved its forklift manufacturing operation from Illinois to East Chicago after purchasing and renovating an abandoned industrial site. The relocation was celebrated at a ribbon cutting and open house in March. Hoist CEO Marty Flaska cited savings of \$1 million annually in workers’ compensation-related costs as a factor in the move to Northwest Indiana. About 370 workers are employed at the East Chicago plant, with a goal to employ 500 by 2020.
- Japan-based NB Coatings invested \$4.7 million to construct a

warehouse and distribution facility in NorthWind Crossings Industrial Park in Hobart, owned by Becknell Industrial. NB Coatings is a subsidiary of Nippon Paint, which has a manufacturing plant in Lansing, Mich. The NorthWind Crossings Industrial Park gives NB Coatings ready access to I-65 and I-94 transportation corridors. Becknell helped recruit the company, says Denarie Kane, economic development director for the City of Hobart. “We always want to support what Becknell Industrial is doing out there because it’s important to Hobart. The industrial park is one of the few Class A business parks in the area.”

- Corrugated packaging company Pratt Industries invested \$260 million in a new recycled paper mill in Valparaiso. The mill opened last October and is the most technologically advanced, eco-friendly mill in the world, according to the company website. The mill is located near Pratt’s box-making plant in Valparaiso. The new mill facility added 120 new jobs to the 280 employees at Pratt’s box plant. Rex Richards, president of the Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce and Valparaiso Economic Development Alliance, says, “It’s the single largest manufacturing investment in the history of the community.”

- Monosol, a global leader in the manufacture of water-soluble films, officially opened its new \$95 million, 300,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in April at Ameriplex at the Port in Portage. The plant is expected to be in full production in 2017 and will add 150 new jobs. Monosol is headquartered in Merrillville and is a division of Japan’s Kuraray Group.

- Polycon Industries Inc., also based in Merrillville, is investing \$15



ANOTHER 150 JOBS Monosol, a global leader in the manufacture of water-soluble films, opened a new \$95 million manufacturing facility in Portage.

million to nearly double the company's footprint by adding 150,000 square feet to the existing plant. The workforce will increase from 130 to 230 when production gets underway in February. Polycon is a subsidiary of Crown Packaging International and produces high-density polyethylene containers.

- Task Force Tips Inc., a Valparaiso-based manufacturer of firefighting equipment, acquired AMKUS Rescue Systems of Downers Grove, Ill. in March and will transition the engineering, service and manufacturing operations to a new facility in Valparaiso.

- Nuco Steel Bar Technologies, a processor of raw steel materials into steel bars, announced in March that it's investing nearly \$37 million to

develop a 150,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art steel bar mill at the Airport Industrial Park in Valparaiso. Nuco plans to create 50 new jobs and will begin hiring operator technicians when construction is complete in 2017.

In October, the IEDC and the NWI Forum co-sponsored the Industrial Asset Management Council meeting in Indianapolis. The event drew asset managers from companies all over the world says Heather Ennis, NWI Forum president and CEO. Ennis and her economic development colleagues are actively targeting companies involved in: advanced manufacturing; transportation, distribution and logistics; and food processing and agribusiness.

"The Midwest is becoming a more

and more attractive place for companies from all over," Ennis says. "The workforce is strong here. We have a Midwest work ethic. We're not good at tooting our own horns, but we're good at putting in a good day's work."

Regina Emberton, president and CEO of Michiana Partnership Inc. (MPI), has gone with Ennis on what she calls "sales trips" to Chicago to promote Indiana's favorable business climate. MPI represents Elkhart, St. Joseph and Marshall Counties as well as Michigan's Berrien County. Emberton believes that all counties in the region accomplish more by working together than they can individually.

"You need density of population to get on the radar screen of those who

otherwise might not be interested,” Emberton says. “We’re recruiting across the United States but are focused on the Chicago area and Illinois. That’s the closest concentration of large density companies looking to expand and relocate.”

Emberton uses the term “co-competition” to describe the collaborative working relationships she has with other economic development professionals seeking to attract new business to their own areas.

“With the world so connected, we’re really looking at how we can work together,” she says. “Driving more than 30 minutes is no big deal at all so there are more interconnections between cities.”

Emberton says a big boost came last December, when the IEDC awarded a \$42 million grant to the Regional Cities of Northern Indiana. She says the funding supports quality of place projects throughout Elkhart, Marshall and St. Joseph Counties. The

Regional Cities Initiative is awarding \$42 million to all seven regions of Indiana for innovative approaches to creating vibrant communities that will stem the flow of talented people out of Indiana and into southern and western states.

Efforts to create attractive communities with quality-of-life features go hand-in-hand with economic development, Emberton says. “Millennials are the largest demographic and they’re choosing where to live based on amenities such as bike trails, music, restaurants and entrepreneurial opportunities.”

The Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) is striving to spur an influx of people who have high-paying jobs in Chicago into Northwest Indiana communities, according to Bill Hanna, RDA president and CEO.

The RDA is charged with spearheading economic development in Lake and Porter Counties by invest-

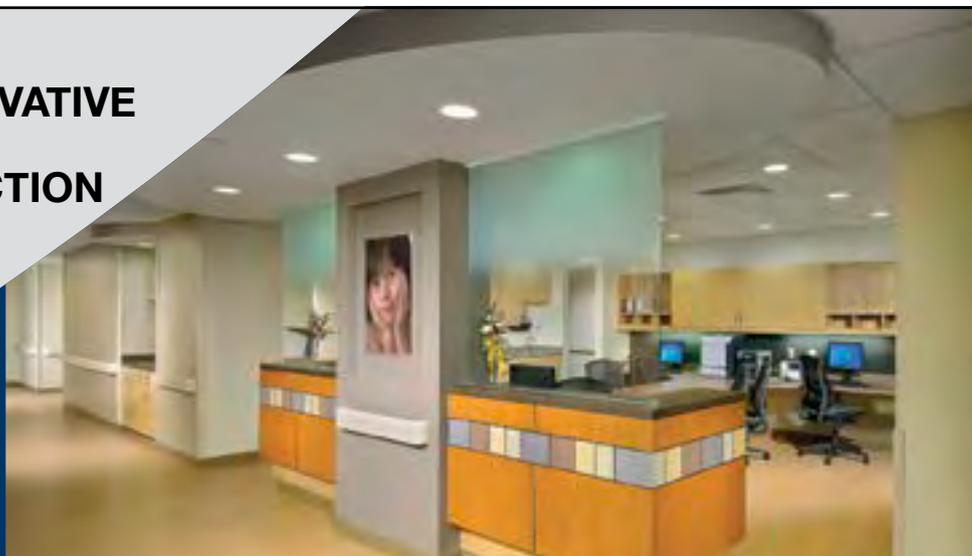
ing in transportation infrastructure—such as expansion of the Gary/Chicago International Airport—and shoreline development along Lake Michigan, including restoring lakefront parks in Whiting, Portage and Gary. Investments over the past 15 years have made Northwest Indiana a more desirable place for both current and potential residents.

Now the focus is on offering faster commute times—an essential element of the RDA’s Comprehensive Strategic Plan—issued in August. To that end, the RDA is working on two goals: developing the West Lake Corridor of the South Shore Line and double tracking a portion of the existing South Shore commuter rail that runs between South Bend and downtown Chicago.

“It’s pretty bold to put a new train line in,” Hanna says. “West Lake is the first new rail line to be put into Indiana for 100 years, and the last one was the South Shore.

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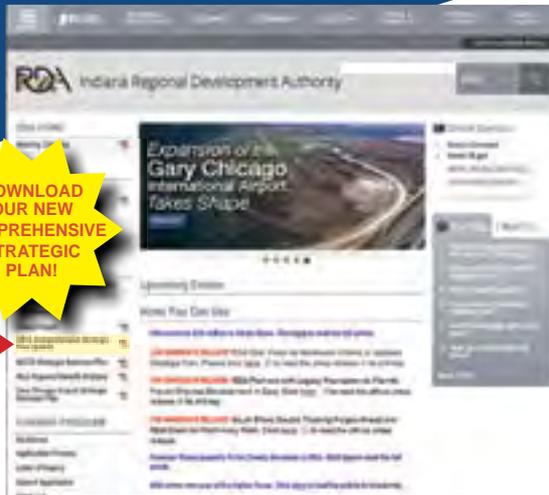
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“We’re making a bold step forward and doing it in a Hoosier way, using existing assets. We’re doing it in a conservative way by not doing it with new taxes.”

Hanna clearly sees the economic multiplier effect that can occur by enticing more high wage earners into Lake and Porter Counties. “I grew up in a steel family and my Dad would say that, for every one steel job, seven other jobs were supported by it. What’s the driver for that kind of ratio? Chicago.”

Currently, only about 6 percent of Porter County workers and about 20 percent of those in Lake County commute to Chicago. And the population in the two counties has increased about four percent since 1970. On the other hand, nearly 40 percent of the total workforce living in suburban DuPage County works in Cook County. And the Illinois suburban counties around Cook County have had a 226 percent population increase, Hanna says.

“By overcoming our transportation deficit, we can take part in the kind of prosperity that has occurred in suburban Chicago,” Hanna says. “There is real opportunity for some of our older cities to experience an urban renaissance.”

The RDA is partnering with the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), which operates the South Shore Line, as well as mayors and legislators at state and national levels to push forward the two major transportation infrastructure projects. “The support is bi-partisan and multi-level,” Hanna says, “giving us the opportunity to lay aside other issues and work together to represent the region.”

The West Lake Corridor Extension project proposes to depart from a newly created Hammond Gateway station and travel west to stops in South Hammond, Munster Ridge Road and Munster/Dyer Main Street. Hanna says the West Lake extension

could begin construction in 2018 and open in 2022.

The proposed South Shore Double Tracking project will install parallel double tracks from Michigan City to and from Chicago. This will allow faster travel times and more reliability than possible with the single-track system now in place. Hanna says the preliminary engineering study for double tracking is underway and the project could be finished about the same time as the West Lake extension.

The planned improvements along the South Shore corridor and creation of the West Lake extension is expected to spur what’s called “transit oriented development” in urban areas along the rail line in Gary, East Chicago, Portage, Hammond, Munster and Dyer. In fact, Hanna says, “We’re seeing early market adaptors moving in to invest in communities before the project is actually done.” **BQ**

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Green, In More Ways Than One

More and more people cashing in on the benefits of clean energy.

BY MICHAEL PUENTE

In 2007, TJ Kancuzewski had an idea while working for his dad's 2-year-old company, Inovateus Development.

The South Bend based company deals with small commercial and residential developments with a sustainability focus, including the use of solar energy.

"My father, Tom, saw there was a huge opportunity to transition our building practices over to more efficient technologies, recycled products," Kancuzewski says. "There wasn't that much of it happening in our neck of the woods. My dad believed in that and saw an opportunity to move it forward in our area."

The younger Tom Kancuzewski,

"Solar was becoming a larger part of what we were doing at Inovateus Development," he says. "My task when I came on board in 2007 was to write a business plan for a solar company so we could focus 100 percent on solar."

Inovateus Solar was born and is taking advantage of the growth of solar energy as a power source in both residential and commercial development in Indiana. Kancuzewski, president of Inovateus Solar, says the idea for his solar company came even before he started working for his dad's company.

In the mid-2000s, he worked with General Growth Properties, which manages residential and retail malls all over the United States—including

General Growth Properties began looking to save energy costs by switching to more efficient CFL lightbulbs. He thought the company could do better than just switching lightbulbs.

"We have malls that have up to 2 million square feet and nothing on the roof. The way we make money is by leasing square feet of our space. Maybe there's an opportunity for us to make money on top of the roof by installing solar panels and creating our own electricity," Kancuzewski recalls thinking. "The more I learned about solar, the more I became immersed in it. I'm very passionate about it."

Kancuzewski is seeing how the growth of solar energy is expanding so much he says there's actually a revolution going on. "Most folks don't see solar or more solar panels and think things aren't changing or there isn't more but there really is," Kancuzewski says.

Earlier this year, the Chicago-based Clean Energy Trust (CET) released a study showing that nearly 569,000 people work in clean energy throughout the 12-state Midwest region. And that number is expected to grow by more than 4 percent next year. CET released the report in conjunction with Midwest Advocate for Environmental Entrepreneurs (E2), a Washington, D.C.-based nonpartisan group of business leaders, investors and others who advocate for policies that are considered beneficial toward the environment.

The report found that nearly 70,000 people work in clean, renewable energy, including 31,000 in solar and 27,000 in wind, in the Midwest



A SOLAR REVOLUTION According to TJ Kancuzewski of Inovateus Solar, solar energy is gaining prominence as a power source in both residential and commercial development.

who goes by the nickname "TJ," decided to start a separate company to only focus on solar energy.

ing Oakbrook Center in suburban Chicago and Water Tower Place in Chicago. As a member of the sus-



A HOT JOB OPPORTUNITY The Clean Energy Trust found that more than 44,000 people are employed in clean and renewable energy jobs in Indiana.

region. Over the next year, about 25,000 new jobs are expected to be created in the Midwest clean energy sector. Small businesses drive the Midwestern clean energy economy, with more than three-quarters of clean energy workers employed by firms with less than 50 employees.

In Indiana, the report found that more than 44,000 people are employed in clean and renewable energy jobs. That's more than the number of Hoosiers employed in the telecommunications and real estate sectors combined.

According to the American Council on Renewable Energy, Indiana is endowed with plentiful wind and biomass resources—ranking fourth in the nation for ethanol production capacity—and is also a user of wind, wood waste and other renewable energy resources. And

those numbers could increase. The State of Indiana has set a goal to obtain 10 percent of clean energy use by 2025.

Carl Lisek is executive director of South Shore Clean Cities, a nonprofit based in Crown Point that promotes the use of clean fuels and clean vehicle technologies. It works toward the mission through education and outreach, training and acquiring necessary funding to implement projects and develop partnerships with industry and business.

“We’re working with folks like NIPSCO and the building trades,” Lisek says, “doing a lot of education on the benefits of clean energy alternative fuels and alternative energy. We feel this is an economic opportunity for Northwest Indiana.”

Last year, South Shore Clean Cities coordinated an effort to get more

residents interested in solar energy. Lisek says more schools, businesses and organizations in Northwest Indiana are moving toward solar energy.

“We worked to help educate the public on the benefits of solar and reduce some of the barriers on the entry level of solar,” he says. “We’re taking some baby steps but we’re really going to see some big steps made toward solar power in Northwest Indiana. I think there’s been a paradigm shift in attitude in our area. I see a lot of good things happening. There’s not a person in Northwest Indiana who doesn’t want clean water, clean land, clean energy and clean air.”

Kathy Luther, director of environmental programs with the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), says the commission recently partnered with

South Shore Clean Cities on a program called Green Fleets. The goal of the program is to significantly improve the environmental performance of business and government vehicle fleets across Northwest Indiana. A number of school districts have participated, including East Chicago, Portage, Hammond and Valparaiso.

“They work with municipal organizations and school districts that have fleets of vehicles,” Luther says. “The program helps them identify ways to have clean energy vehicles that will reduce the air pollution and save them money.”

NIRPC also helped fund an initiative to get more residents signed up in 2015 for solar energy systems

at home. The program got at least 100 people interested in switching to solar energy. In the end, about a dozen residents made the switch. Luther says that’s good considering the area is still in the process of educating the public on the long-term benefits of switching to solar energy. Plenty of research has been done that shows that having solar panels increases a home’s resale value, according to Luther.

“I think this is an exciting time in wind and solar,” she says. “The equipment cost is dropping 10 percent or more a year. There are also lots of jobs in clean energy.”

Clean energy doesn’t always mean wind and solar technology. It can also mean how companies operate in producing products such as steel says Chenn Q. Zhou, director of the Center for Innovation through Visualization and Simulation (CIVS) at Purdue University Northwest.

“Clean energy also means having less [air pollution] emissions and that’s where technology comes in, she says. “What we are doing can improve the environmental issues to make the emissions cleaner.”

Zhou is also director of the Steel Manufacturing Simulation and Visualization Consortium made up of some of the biggest companies in Northwest Indiana, including ArcelorMittal, NiSource, AK Steel, Nucor, Praxair, U.S. Steel, Union Gas, Steel Dynamics, SSAB and Nucor. The consortium was started through a \$480,000 federal grant aimed at benefiting the domestic steel industry. The two-year, advanced manufacturing technology planning grant is among 19 totaling \$9 million awarded by the National Institute of Standards and Technology to universities and other nonprofit organizations.

Zhou says the companies are assisting in research to make the process in steel manufacturing cleaner. Since steel production uses a lot of energy, anything that can make that process run smoother, more efficiently and cleaner is a plus for the area. “We are eager to begin identifying and advancing research projects that will

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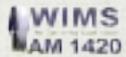
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benefit the domestic steel industry,” Zhou says. “The mission of our consortium is to support the competitiveness of the American steel industry by using simulation and visualization technologies as research tools to make steel manufacturing more viable across its value chain.”

The clean energy sector is likely to expand but could expand quicker with more support from Hoosier politicians, says Gail Parsons, Midwest Advocate for Environmental Entrepreneurs (E2).

“Policymakers may not think of the clean energy industry as being as big as accounting or other known workforces, but there’s a sizable group of people working in it, and it can be even greater if we had the right policies in place,” Parson says. “Energy should really be a bi-partisan issue. The sector is growing and booming and bringing jobs to states. Clean energy is a job creator. If you’re a pro-growth state, you should pass

policies that provide incentives for clean energy companies to want to do business in the state.”

The biggest challenge, according to TJ Kanczuzewski of Inovateus Solar, is the upfront costs for

batteries for large industrial storage.”

Inovateus Solar is currently working with DTE Energy of Detroit on one of the biggest solar initiatives to date in the Midwest. They’re helping the City of Lapeer, Michigan, develop

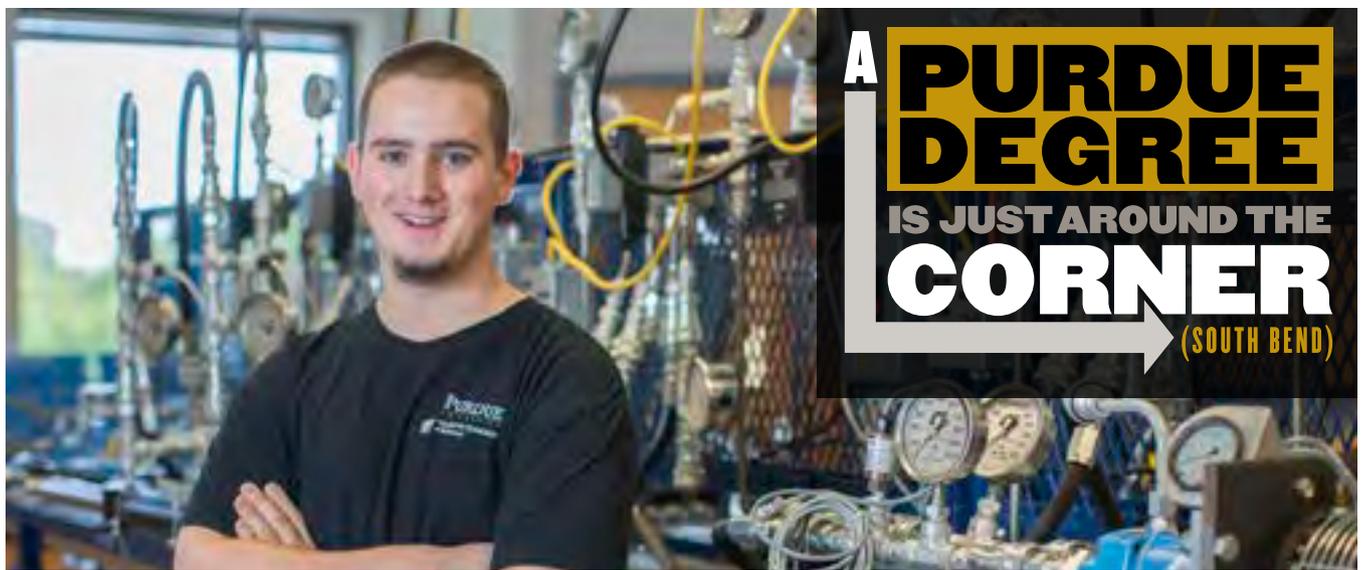
“We’re really going to see some big steps made toward solar power in Northwest Indiana.”

—Carl Lisek, South Shore Clean Cities

a solar energy system. But, with products becoming cheaper to purchase every year, that challenge is dwindling he says. And perhaps the biggest incentive in the years ahead will be energy storage. Kanczuzewski says, “Combined solar energy and battery storage—that’s when you really start to become energy independent and economics become even better. That means bigger

a new solar generating project that will power 9,000 homes with clean, zero-emissions solar energy. When completed, it will be the largest operating utility-owned photovoltaic solar array east of the Mississippi and the third largest in the country.

In the end, clean energy technology can aid in cutting costs for companies, residents and just about anybody. **EQ**



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SOUTH BEND

Standard Operating Procedure

The future is now with advancements in robotic surgery.

BY LAURIE WINK

John Lynam, DO, had little exposure to robotic surgery during his urology residency. When he started his practice with Porter Physician Group in 2011, it was cutting edge technology.

“Over the next couple of years, it went from a new, cutting edge thing to almost a standard of care,” Lynam says. “What used to be a niche thing became more commonplace.”

He took a year’s leave in 2014 to do a fellowship with preeminent robotic surgeons at the University of Pittsburgh. Now Lynam successfully performs prostate, kidney and bladder surgeries using robotic technology. His patients are sold on the benefits, including less post-operative pain and less down time.

“It’s become so commonplace that people come in asking for it,” Lynam says. “Robotics in the right hands, with a skilled person, is absolutely advantageous. But, on the flip side,

just because the technology is there doesn’t mean everybody should do it.”

Clearly, robotic surgery is no longer the stuff of science fiction. In fact, it’s become a viable option for physicians throughout the region because of its distinct advantages.

Robotic technology benefits patients by giving them faster recovery with less pain, shorter hospital stays, lower risk of infection and smaller scars. And the procedures are less physically stressful for surgeons, who sit at a console rather than stand at a surgical table bending over the patient. From there, they can maneuver robotic instruments that are attached to a cart located next to the patient.

The biggest drawback to expanding the use of robotic surgery is the more than \$1 million price tag for a robotic system. Intuitive Surgical, based in California, is currently the only company with FDA approval

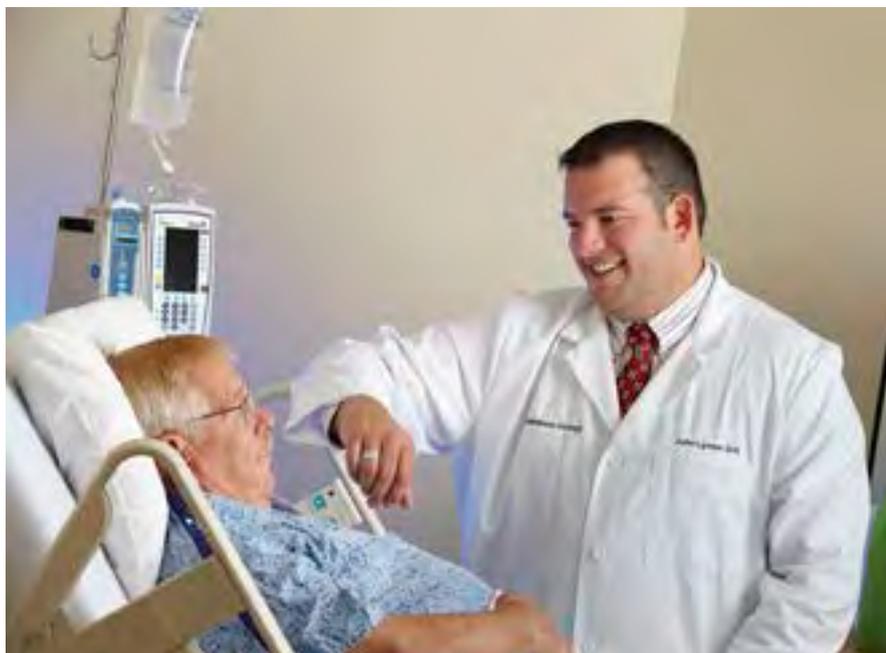
to manufacture surgical robots. The company introduced its da Vinci Surgical System in 1999 and now serves customers around the world. The technology is widely used for cardiac, thoracic, urology, gynecological, colorectal, pediatric and general surgeries, according to the company website.

Laparoscopy was the first minimally invasive surgical procedure, allowing a surgeon to make an incision of up to a half-inch and insert a video camera and surgical instruments into the patient’s body through plastic tubes. Robotic technology takes the technique a step further by giving surgeons a 3D image, similar to that of a 3D movie, and the ability to use tiny robotic arms that have wrists and elbows similar to a surgeon’s hands—giving them the ability to perform delicate procedures in a small space.

Douglas Dedelow, DO, OB/GYN with St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart, began using robotic surgical techniques about five years ago. He performs hysterectomies to address women’s vaginal, uterine and ovarian issues and says his primary goal is to use minimally invasive approaches whenever possible. He says, “The robot has allowed, in my opinion, more surgeons to accomplish things that laparoscopy wasn’t able to do.”

The type of surgery Dedelow uses depends on the patient’s condition. In most cases, he says, women who have robotic surgery are able to drive and resume their regular activities within a week.

Eric Woo, DO, a staff surgeon at Franciscan St. Anthony Health in Crown Point, uses robotic technology for colon cancer, diverticulitis, gall bladder and hernia surgeries. He says the use of robots in general surgery has really taken off over the last two or three years because surgeons



“ALMOST A STANDARD OF CARE” John Lynam, DO, of Porter Physician Group, performs prostate, kidney and bladder surgeries using robotic technology.



GOING BEYOND LAPAROSCOPY Douglas Dedelow, DO, with St. Mary Medical Center, says robotic surgical techniques allow more surgeons to accomplish more things.

can handle difficult cases that previously couldn't be done with small incisions.

Woo says. "This technology allows me personally to more easily do them with small incisions. The incisions are now so small you can't fit a finger through them.

"I saw time and time again that you can do tougher cases because the technology is better and it's better for the patient. It's less invasive, so there's a quicker recovery for patients, there's less risk and less time in the hospital."

Many patients are already familiar with how robotic surgery works, he says. "They know someone who has had the surgery or they've seen a YouTube video."

Occasionally, surgeons come across patients who think robotic surgery allows surgeons to push a button and watch the robot perform, says Manoj V. Rao, MD, urologist with Methodist Hospitals. But, he finds that most know about robot-

assisted surgery and are happy that it's available to them.

Rao was trained to use the da Vinci robot in 2007 during his residency at Loyola University Medical Center and at the Hines VA Hospital in suburban Chicago. "We were fortunate to



NOT PUSH-BUTTON SURGERY Manoj V. Rao, MD, with Methodist Hospitals, finds that most patients understand the benefits of robot-assisted surgery.

have robots at the university hospital as well as at the VA Hospital," Rao says. "For years, ours was one of the few VAs in the country to have the robot."

The robot is very useful for prostate and kidney surgery, according to Rao. "The prostate, in particular, is in a small confined space in the pelvis. Traditionally we would have to make a much larger incision to access this area and the surgery was done with limited room and visualization. In the last several years, our group has exclusively performed robotic surgery for prostate cancer."

Rao also uses robots for kidney surgery, where the goal is to remove a cancerous tumor and spare the portion of the kidney that's healthy. He says. "The robot's ability to do fine movements allows us to do this surgery better than what we could do with traditional laparoscopic surgery."

Bethany Cluskey, MD, with IU Health La Porte Physician Network



“BETTER FOR THE PATIENT” Eric Woo, DO, of Franciscan St. Anthony Health, says surgeons using robotic technology can handle difficult cases that previously couldn’t be done with small incisions.

Women’s Care, says gynecologists have used laparoscopic surgery since the 1970s, particularly to diagnose ectopic pregnancies. The movement to robotic surgery in gynecology has been more recent and requires specialized training.

Cluskey joined IU Health La Porte after completing her medical residency more than a year ago and went for training with the da Vinci Surgical System. She says, “It’s a tool that’s been developed to have a better outcome, and I feel lucky that people in the area do have the option.”

Cluskey performs hysterectomies using vaginal, abdominal, laparoscopic or robotic approaches. She says, “Robotic surgery is a very, very good option for some people but it’s not used for all patients.”

Gynecologist Carlton Lyons, MD, with the Northern Indiana Center for Pelvic Health & Gynecology, was initially reluctant to use robots. He saw it as an expensive tool that was being

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hyped by the manufacturer. Memorial Hospital in South Bend acquired the robot in 2005 and urologists began using it with great success, Lyons says. So he visited a gynecological oncologist in Indianapolis to see the da Vinci Surgical System in action and became a believer.

“You’re seeing things much clearer than you ever have,” he explains. “You get up right next to tissues and organs and cut what you need to cut. There is less tissue damage and less pain and discomfort for patients.”

Lyons is the head of the robotics program at Memorial Hospital and has gone from doing 60 percent traditional abdominal hysterectomies to less than 20 percent. Nearly all of his robotic surgery patients leave the hospital the same day as the surgery. And most are able to resume their normal lives within two to four weeks, compared to up to eight weeks following an abdominal hysterectomy.

“I want my patients out of the hospital as soon as possible because of the risk of infection and potential complications,” Lyons says. “I want them to get back to being professionals and mothers.”

According to Lyons, Intuitive Surgical will soon introduce the new XI robot that can be used for more complicated surgeries than are done right now. And, with the possibility of increased competition in the manufacture of robotic technology, Lyons believes the costs will come down and more health care providers will be able to make it available.

“Robotic surgery is not standard operating procedure because of the cost,” Lyons says, “but now other companies are coming into the market and that should reduce costs.”

Just as computer technology has evolved from the 1950s UNIVAC—an expensive, room-sized computer produced in limited quantity—to today’s much smaller, relatively inexpensive computers, surgeons predict robotic technology will continue to advance. And that could mean even greater benefits for patients and surgeons alike. **BQ**

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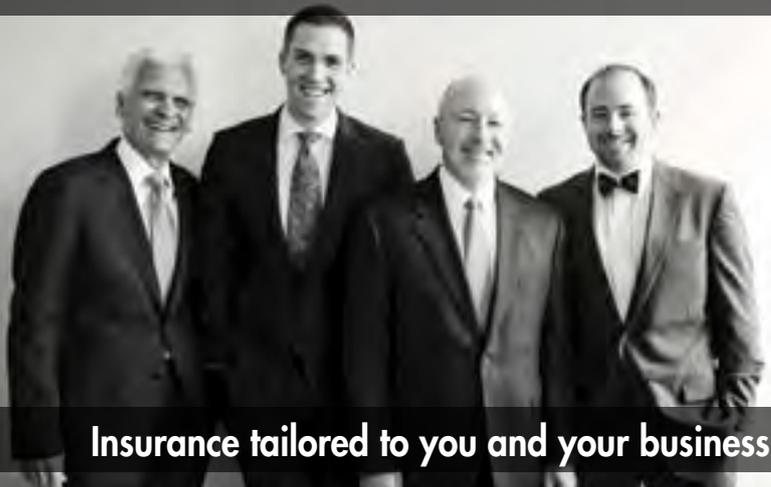


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Executive Gift Guide

BY LESLY BAILEY

'Tis the season to start holiday shopping! This year's executive gift guide spotlights small businesses throughout the region and the unique products and services only they could offer. With Small Business Saturday on Nov. 26, mark your calendars to shop local and help the entrepreneurial community continue to flourish.

For Her

FOR THE FASHION-ISTA

Seasons on the Square—Owner Donna Phelps stocks the shelves of her women's boutique with brands such as Joseph Ribkoff, Frank Lyman and Tribal Sportswear.



SEASONS ON THE SQUARE Brighton accessories for the fashion-ista.

WE RECOMMEND: Grabbing a Brighton accessory from the large selection. Seasons on the Square is located at 1 Lincolnway in Valparaiso. For more information, visit www.seasonsonthesquare.com, call 219/465-0165 or email donna@seasonsonthesquare.com.

FOR THE EXERCISE FANATIC

Barre + Beyond Studio—The boutique fitness studio specializes in Mind over Matter Method, M3, to help participants achieve long, lean sculpted muscles. Owner Orlee Glazer brings her mix of ballet, Pilates and barre techniques to women in the region.

WE RECOMMEND: A gift card for a class or a piece from the workout clothing lines, including Beyond Yoga, Alo Yoga and Splits59. Barre + Beyond Studio is located at 3907 N. Calumet Ave., Suite 207, in

Valparaiso. For more information, visit www.barreandbeyondstudio.com, call 219/929-1550 or email info@barreandbeyondstudio.com.

FOR THE WINE CONNOISSEUR

Running Vines Winery—Cousins Nicole Caylor and Walter Novosel pour their family's passion for running into each bottle of wine, which features the team's unique blends. The winery offers a calendar full of events, including fun runs, book club events, wine and canvas paint parties and trivia nights.

WE RECOMMEND: A bottle from their race collection, which is for the sweeter palate. Running Vines Winery is located at 119 S. Calumet Road in Chesterton. For more information, visit www.runningvines.com, call 219/390-9463 or email info@runningvines.com.

ADDING FLAVOR

Tasty Olive Company—Lynn and Al Gandolfi's story began with an initial visit to an olive oil shop in Wisconsin, where they discovered a love for creating marinades and enjoying dishes with products from around the world. Their shop spotlights extra virgin olive oils, flavor-infused oils, balsamic vinegars and specialty products, such as pepper jelly and sea salts.

WE RECOMMEND: Putting together



BARRE + BEYOND Boutique fitness center for a healthier holiday.



TASTY OLIVE OIL CO. Oils of many varieties, plus vinegars and specialty products to fill a gift basket.

a custom gift basket filled with a selection of products. Tasty Olive Company is located at 2014 45th St. in Highland. For more information, visit www.tastyolivecompany.com, call 219/924-7881 or email sales@tastyolivecompany.com.

ADDING BLING

Martin Binder Jeweler—Family-owned Martin Binder’s roots, as a small watch-making shop, have grown and developed over the years, culminating with its move to a larger space on U.S. 30 in Valparaiso.

WE RECOMMEND: Choosing a charm from the Pandora shop or selecting a starter bracelet to build a Pandora collection. Martin Binder is located at 650

W. Morthland Drive in Valparaiso. For more information, visit www.martinbinder.com, call 219/462-5931 or email info@martinbinders.com.

For Him

FOR THE STYLISH GUY

Rusted Oak—The gentleman’s boutique brings together all of the elements needed to stay stylish no matter what the occasion. From suits and ties to shoes and casual wear, owner Robert Ordway offers custom clothing and tailoring services as well as spotlights books by region authors.

WE RECOMMEND: A grooming item that features a signature scent by Would You Lather out of Fairland, Ind. Rusted Oak is located at 19 Lincolnway in Valparaiso. For more information, visit www.rustedoak.co, call 219/510-0016 or email Robert@rustedoak.co.

FOR THE CIGAR ENTHUSIAST

Karma Cigar Bar—With more than 900 cigar facings, owner Dhiren Shah and team offer a large selection of premium cigars to purchase as well as an atmosphere to connect with the cigar-loving community.

WE RECOMMEND: Any item from the line of cigar cutters or lighters by XIKAR or have a member of the Karma team assist in picking out a cigar based on individual tastes. Karma Cigar Bar is located at 850 W. 81st Ave. in Merrillville. For more information, visit www.karmacigar.com, call 219/756-0698 or email info@karmacigar.com.

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FOR A UNIQUE TASTE

Burn 'Em Brewing—Launched in 2013, the Burn 'Em Brewing crew infuses creativity into the Northern Indiana brewing landscape. Beyond growlers, beer lovers can pick up a four-pack of 16-ounce cans in Burn 'Em's signature flavors.

WE RECOMMEND: Popping in to see what's on tap, in growlers or cans, as batches of the brews change on a regular basis. Burn 'Em Brewing is located at 718 Freyer Road in Michigan City. For more information, visit www.burnembrewing.com, call 219/210-3784 or email zach@burnembrewing.com.



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FOR THE SPORTS COLLECTOR

More Fun Sports Cards Store—Owner Ken Zajkowski has been in business for more than 40 years and has 40 years of collecting experience. He has nostalgic collectibles, baseball, football, NASCAR and hockey cards and back-issue comic books.

WE RECOMMEND: Checking out his certified autographed memorabilia collection. The store is located at 706 Joliet St. in Dyer. For more information, visit www.morefunsportscards.com, call 219/322-5080 or email morefuncollect@comcast.net.

FOR THE BOOK WORM

O'Gara & Wilson Antiquarian Booksellers—Chicago's oldest bookstore, established in 1882, now calls downtown Chesterton home. Owners Doug and Jill Wilson carry on the tradition of used bookselling and also feature autographs, old documents, artwork and book-related collectibles on their shelves.

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STAR PLAZA THEATER The Oak Ridge Boys drop by as the venue nears its final curtain call.

keep small business in the spotlight by featuring local products in her gift baskets. Local food products and artisan creations can be put together in a variety of containers from baskets and bags to coolers and decorative pails.

For Employees and Clients

SATISFYING THE SWEET TOOTH

Cute as a Cupcake! Cupcakery & Bake Shop—Handcrafted cupcakes are available in sugar-free, gluten-free, organic and vegan options. Owner Michelle Wainwright and her crew put together sweet creations with fine ingredients in traditional, seasonal and specialty flavors all wrapped up in a cute package.

WE RECOMMEND: Catering an office holiday event with the special treats or, for individual gifts, the cutie cupcakes in a jar, which feature a ready-to-eat jarred delicacy in any of the shop's flavors. Cute as a Cupcake! is located at 2008 W. 81st Ave. in Merrillville. For more information, visit www.cuteasacupcake3.com, call 888/719-9591 or email cupcake@cuteasacupcake3.com.

FOR PEOPLE AND PETS ALIKE

Uptown Cakery—From tarts and cookies to pies and brownies, owner Kimberly Wertz brings dessert to a whole new level of sweet. The bakery has a range of flavors and specialty items available at the shop or by request.

WE RECOMMEND: Celebrate the holidays with staff members or clients with a breakfast event brimming with pineapple orange muffins. For those employees

who love their pooches, order homemade dog treats for the furry friends in their lives. Uptown Cakery is located at 215 W. Eighth St. in Michigan City. For more information, visit uptowncakery.wix.com/cakery, call 219/814-7700 or email uptowncakery@gmail.com.

AN EYE TOWARD DESIGN

Dust Furniture—At the intersection of art and function is Dust Furniture. Designer Vincent T. Leman brings basic design principles to life in unique furniture and accent pieces.

WE RECOMMEND: The Vento Wall Clock as part of the design series, which features a modern, abstract shape in vibrant colors. Dust Furniture is located at 456 S. Campbell St., Suite C, in Valparaiso. For more information, visit www.dustfurniture.com, call 219/464-9100 or email info@dustfurniture.com.

CUSTOM OFFERINGS

Barbara Jean's Gifts & Gourmet—Owner Barbara Young strives to

WE RECOMMEND: Contacting the staff for personalized assistance in putting together the ultimate basket of goodies. Barbara Jean's is located at 11039 Broadway, Suite B, in Crown Point. For more information, visit www.bjgiftsandgourmet.com, call 219/661-1900 or email barbarajeansgifts@gmail.com.

SHOP AND MAKE AN IMPACT

Opportunity Enterprises Simply Amazing Market—The gourmet treats are hand-produced and packaged by participants of the Opportunity Enterprises program, which supports adults and children with disabilities.

WE RECOMMEND: A tin popping with popcorn flavors, including cheddar and caramel. The market is located at 2801 Evans Ave. in Valparaiso. For more information, visit www.simplyamazingtreats.com or call 219/464-2670.

For Holiday Entertaining

FRESH FOOD EXPERIENCE

Spire Farm-to-Fork Cuisine—Chef and owner Brad Hindsley cooks up recipes based on the farm-to-table concept that he has cultivated from his family's farming roots. The restaurant's menu is constantly in-flux, depending on seasonal ingredients and local farmers and growers.

WE RECOMMEND: Checking out the menu online at



UPTOWN CAKERY Tarts, cookies, pies and other sweets.



CUTE AS A CUPCAKE Cutie cupcakes in a jar.

www.spirefarmtofork.com or call 219/575-7272 for the latest dishes, as the menu tends to change every two weeks. The restaurant also features Saturday night entertainment at 6 p.m. Spire Farm-to-Fork Cuisine is located at 299 W. Johnson Road, inside the new clubhouse at Legacy Hills Golf Club in LaPorte. Reservations are not necessary, but recommended for dinner and larger parties.

CELEBRATING THE SEASON

Star Plaza Theater—As the iconic stage will see its final curtain call in the spring of next year, it's time to make a few more memories with its last season. Entertainers scheduled for the last lineup include LeAnn Rimes, Buddy Guy, the music of David Bowie and a Salute to the Sixties

with Herman's Hermits and the Grass Roots.

WE RECOMMEND: The Oak Ridge Boys Christmas Show on Dec. 18 as the group has performed at the theater the most over the years, hitting the stage for 37 consecutive years. The Star Plaza Theatre is located at 8001 Delaware Place in Merrillville. For more information on upcoming shows, visit www.starplazatheatre.com

or call 800/745-3000.

WEEKEND GETAWAY

Amish Acres—The only Amish farm listed in the National Register of Historic Places, Amish Acres features food, shopping and seasonal experiences. Eat a family-style feast, take a guided tour of the house and farm, enjoy the scenery on a horse and buggy ride and pick up some goodies to take home from the bakery or W.H. Best Meat & Cheese Shop.

WE RECOMMEND: Taking in a show at the Round Barn Theatre, which has hosted more than 100 Broadway musicals in the circular structure that was created from a 1911 resurrected round barn. Amish Acres is located at 1600 W. Market St. in Nappanee. For more information, visit www.amishacres.com, call 800/800-4942 or email amishacres@amishacres.com. **BQ**

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- Halderman Farm Management and Real Estate Services
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- Hoosier Energy Rural Electric Coop.
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Bison on the prairie

© The Nature Conservancy (Chris Helzer)

The Nature Conservancy is the world's leading conservation organization, protecting the lands and waters on which all life depends.

The Corporate Council for the Environment is a group of corporate citizens who share this vision.

The Conservancy has been restoring prairie at Kankakee Sands in Newton County since 1996. We have seen remarkable responses from plants and animals to the restored habitat. And now we're **bringing a herd of bison to Kankakee Sands** to further our prairie restoration efforts.

For more information, contact Jennifer Franer at jfraner@tnc.org.

nature.org/cce

Jeff Strack

Leader of Strack & Van Til started as a stock boy and bagger.

BY BARBARA EASTMAN

One of Jeff Strack's fondest childhood memories is going to visit the grocery store founded in 1959 by his German-born grandfather, Ernie Strack, and his partner, Nick Van Til. Jeff's dad worked in the business and started bringing Jeff to the store before Jeff was in grade school.

Jeff says, "My grandfather opened the Royal Blue grocery store in 1929 in Griffith. Many years later his accountant introduced him to Nick Van Til and suggested a partnership. They opened their first store in Highland, where they shared a 10-foot-by-11-foot office for 25 years. They knew each other's strengths and weaknesses and, in all those years, they never had a significant disagreement. What the business has become would be beyond their wildest imaginations."

The summer between eighth grade and freshman year, Jeff started helping out as a stock boy and bagger. After high school he went to Indiana University, working at the store during vacations and holiday breaks. After graduating from IU with a bachelor's degree in business, he began working full time at Strack & Van Til. He later earned an MBA at Purdue Northwest.

So that Jeff would learn every aspect of the business, his father and his partners created a five-year training program. Jeff started at the ground floor—unloading trucks, stocking shelves, bagging groceries,



"PUT THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE FIRST" Jeff Strack started as a stock boy and is now president and CEO of Strack & Van Til, the grocery chain his grandfather cofounded.

and working in the meat and produce departments—to learn every aspect of the business. In May, Jeff was named president and CEO of Strack & Van Til.

The company has expanded to 25 stores in Northwest Indiana and 12 in Illinois under three banners: Strack & Van Til, Ultra Foods, and Town & Country Markets. Jeff believes Ernie Strack and Nick Van Til would be pleased.

“I think they’d be delighted at our expansion,” he says, “but I think they’d be most proud of the fact that we have preserved their original vision: to put the needs of people first. They believed that if we took care of our people, and that includes both our customers and our employees, we would be successful.”

Jeff feels a responsibility to every one of Strack & Van Til’s more than 5,000 employees and its associates, who work for businesses that work for his company. “What I mean is that people who work for the companies that provide our uniforms, our industrial floor mats, our plumbing and electricity, our refrigeration, our vendors and delivery people—all of these people need us to continue to be successful because it has an impact on their household incomes.”

“It’s the only job I’ve ever had.”

Being at the helm of Strack & Van Til is a 24/7 prospect but Jeff says he loves it. “It’s the only job I’ve ever had, and I get a lot of satisfaction in knowing that I am carrying forward the legacy of my grandfather and father. From my grandfather’s first grocery store to Strack & Van Til today, the business has changed so much he would hardly recognize it.

“For example, people are looking for healthy options and convenience, so we focus on fresh and prepared foods. With ‘grab and go,’ we offer prepared entrees or assembled ingredients for a dish, which the customer

finishes at home. We are also testing ‘click and collect,’ a model where the customer orders and pays online, and we fulfill the order and have it ready for pick up. In addition, we have great bakeries and offer full-service catering.”

As the business continues to

evolve, Jeff says, “I feel privileged and proud to expand our brand and advance the legacy of my grandfather and Nick Van Til—to put the needs of our customers first and to deliver value every day on the finest quality groceries, perishables, and freshly prepared foods.” **BQ**



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Dust Furniture

Furniture is 'functional art on a human scale.'

BY BARBARA EASTMAN

Dust & Ashes Productions Inc. is a Valparaiso-based custom furniture and home accessories company owned by Vincent and Jessie Leman. They founded the company in 2005, before they were married, and have spent the last 11 years growing the business.

Growing up on a farm in the tiny hamlet of Francesville, Ind. (population 1000), Vincent was an artistic child who enjoyed drawing, photography, and working with clay. In the winter, he helped his father build traditional kitchen and bathroom cabinets. He was an eager student and became proficient at woodworking, but the monotony of making the same basic light oak cabinet over and over again made him long to do something more creative.

After high school, Leman went to Purdue University and earned a degree in mechanical engineering. He realized he was not cut out for the corporate world and returned to his father's cabinet shop—this time to create his own designs. He leans toward curved, fluid lines that suggest movement and break all the traditional notions of furniture, much as the fanciful creations of Antonio Gaudy stretched all the conventions of architecture.

He says, "I like to think of my furniture as functional art on a human scale. Unlike a painting or piece of sculpture, which you enjoy passively, furniture is interactive. You put things into it or place things on it. You may sit on it or work at it. In addition to unexpected curves, I favor bright, vivid colors and rich finishes."

Vincent and Jessie connected online and met for the first time at the Sculptures Objects Functional Art + Design Fair in Chicago (known as SOFA). They married in January



"FUNCTIONAL ART ON A HUMAN SCALE"
Vincent and Jessie Leman of Dust & Ashes Productions Inc. launched a marriage, then a business.

2006 and, based on the increasing demand for his furniture, the newlyweds decided to launch Dust & Ashes Productions Inc. At first, they continued to operate out of Vincent's father's cabinet shop, but rapidly outgrew the space.

Vincent says, "At a time when most newlyweds are just trying to settle into married life, we found ourselves launching a business. We found space in Valparaiso and opened Dust Furniture. Then the recession hit

and we needed to add a line with a lower price point. We launched a second brand called Uncommon Handmade, which is sold in an Etsy store. This line is Jessie's domain and offers a diverse array of home décor items such as clocks, mirrors, wall décor, occasional tables, and even wood jewelry. Our third line is called Rocket Mission, and consists of desks and other office furniture that I would describe as mid-century modern.

"Over the last decade we have had a lot going on. We moved our business and home to Valparaiso. We've expanded our product offerings and recently doubled the size of our workshop. Three years ago we started a family and have a son and daughter (three-year-old Emerson and four-month-old Ada), and I also went back to school and earned a master's degree in product design and development from Northwestern University."

Vincent designs every piece of furniture, and it is all produced, painted, stained, sanded and finished in the Valparaiso studio using woods and hardwoods sourced in the Midwest. Virtually everything that goes into the furniture and accessories—hardware, drawer slides, hinges, etc.—is American made. The only exception is the clock mechanism, purchased from Seiko.

Jessie continues to be very active in the business and designs many items sold under the Uncommon Handmade brand. With two small children, she works mostly from home using a software program that allows her to communicate with Vincent and others at the office throughout the day.

Vincent says, "We have a small, dedicated staff who shares our commitment to quality products and outstanding customer service." **EQ**

Things to Do and See

An update on arts and entertainment options across the region.

NORTHWEST INDIANA

BY JOHN CAIN

South Shore Arts presents “Motown vs. Chi-Town: The Indiana Connection,” November 13 through January 29, 2017. More than an exhibit, “Motown vs. Chi-Town” is a cultural event and historical survey from the Chicago Blues Museum that traces the Chicago music scene of the 1950s through 1970s. Featured installations will include rare photographic images, music and movie footage, as well as artifacts and memorabilia that recall the artistic and cultural output of musicians, comedians and entertainers. For more information call 219/836-1839 or go to www.southshoreartsonline.org.

The 2016-17 concert season marks the Northwest Indiana Symphony's 75th anniversary. This year's Holiday Pops concert on December 8 is sure to be a sellout. The audience can sing along to beloved carols and keep an eye out for visitors from the North Pole. Plum Grove Strings, back by popular demand, will perform. The Northwest Indiana Symphony Chorus will also be featured. For more information call 219/836-0525 or go to www.nisorchestra.org.

All the ingredients that made the musical “Annie” so successful return in its sequel, “Annie Warbucks,” with an added old-fashioned romance thrown in for good measure! The action at Theatre at the Center picks up where “Annie” left off, when Child Welfare Commissioner Harriet Doyle arrives on the scene to inform Daddy Warbucks that he must marry in 60 days to give Annie a

proper mother. Directed and choreographed by Jeff Award-winner Linda Fortunato, the show runs November 17 through December 18. For more information call 219/836-3255 or go to www.theatreatthecenter.com.

GREATER SOUTH BEND

BY JACK WALTON

School is back in session and so is another season of eclectic programming at the University of Notre Dame's DeBartolo Performing Arts Center. Highlights include classical pianist Ann Schein playing works by Beethoven, Schumann and Chopin on November 13 and fiddler Eileen Ivers with a holiday program on November 27. The prestigious Elias String Quartet performs pieces from Purcell, Bartok and Beethoven at DPAC on January 29, and Notre Dame's artists-in-residence, the innovative percussion ensemble, Third Coast Percussion, gives a concert on February 4. See the full schedule at performingarts.nd.edu.

The History Museum in South Bend has brought in a public-television junkie's dream. “Dressing Downton: Changing Fashion for Changing Times,” is a traveling exhibit featuring costumes and other treasures

from the BBC/Masterpiece Theater series, “Downton Abbey.” The exhibit opens October 15 and runs through January 8. Find out more at historymuseumsb.org.

Elkhart Civic Theatre is presenting a variety of shows on its schedule, including a musical: the beloved holiday favorite “Irving Berlin's White Christmas,” running November 4-19. A farce set way out in the golden wild, wild West is the comedy for this season: Billy St. John's “Holder Posey, the Felonious Photographer” runs January 20-22. A couple of staged readings round out the offerings, with John Patrick Shanley's “Doubt: a Parable” on December 13 and Donald Margulies' “Collected Stories” on February 14. For more information, go to elkhartcivictheatre.org.

The Morris Performing Arts Center in downtown South Bend is jam-packed with gigs these days. Concerts include Vince Gill on November 20, Mannheim Steamroller on November 29 and Straight No Chaser on December 15. Television comes to the stage in three shows, beginning with “The Price is Right Live” on November 12. Two kids' shows follow, with “Paw Patrol Live” on December 28 and “Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood Live” on February 15. “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer: the Musical” runs in two shows on November 26, and Rodgers and Hammerstein's “Cinderella” comes to the Morris January 20-21. The South Bend Symphony Orchestra has concerts on November 5, December 17-18, January 16, January 28 and February 11. Find further details at morriscenter.org. **BQ**



MASTERPIECES Visit the History Museum in South Bend to check out costumes and other treasures from “Downton Abbey.”

Slam Dunk Turnaround

A fast rebuild for the IU Northwest women's basketball program.

BY BEN SMITH

History and home. That's what Nicki Monahan saw when Ryan Shelton came calling.

She was a basketball star at Portage High School who was a self-professed "family kind of gal" and so, when she was recruited by Shelton, the women's basketball coach at Indiana University Northwest (IUN)—12 miles down the road—the appeal was obvious. She'd get to play in front of her family and friends for four years—and she'd get to do it in a program that had some weighty history to throw around.

Conference titles. Twenty winning seasons. A fistful of all-conference and NAIA All-American players.

"I wanted a program that was gonna be successful," says Monahan, now a senior guard who's started all 92 games in her career and stands second all-time in career points (1,577).

History and home. And yet ... there is history, and then there is history.

The latter begins on an autumn day in 2007, not long after the women's basketball coach was let go and IUN came to Shelton to take on a seemingly hopeless task. The women's team, if you could call it that, consisted of one eligible player. Ahead lay a 24-game schedule larded with nationally ranked opponents.

Fast-forward a few weeks. Practice had just ended for the day. Shelton had somehow managed to find four more players by calling every female student on campus who had even a passing interest in athletics—not just basketball, but any sport. He knew how full his hands were.

And so, looking at his five players that day, he threw his hands up.

"I actually looked at the girls and said, 'I really don't think you guys should do it,'" he recalls.

There was an awkward silence for



WINNING CLOSE TO HOME Nicki Monahan was a basketball star at Portage High School when she was recruited by Ryan Shelton, the women's basketball coach at Indiana University Northwest.

a few moments. Finally one player—a nursing student from Hammond named Erica Baran—spoke.

"Coach, will you just let us try?" she said.

"The first thought that popped into my mind was, 'Looks like we're playin'," Shelton says. "Because what are you gonna say to that?"

You could say the season was every bit the disaster Shelton imagined. The RedHawks went 0-24 and lost games by 30, 40, 70 points. One game they lost by 100.

But here's what else you can say, nine years along: humble beginnings are only that. Beginnings.

By the next season, Shelton had a full complement of players. One of them would emerge as perhaps the best NAIA player in the country—Sharon Houston—who went on to be a four-time NAIA All-American.

"I like to think because of our perseverance of getting through that first year that the basketball gods helped us get the best player in the country," Shelton says. "Regardless of how much work I put into it, we had the best player in the country for the

next four years, and that helped us build the program and gave us credibility."

It all happened in a blinding flash. That second season, IUN went from 24 losses to 20 wins. Back-to-back Association of Independent Institutions (AII) tournament titles in 2010 and 2011 followed. And in 2011-12, IUN won 16 straight games and beat Chicago State, an NCAA Division I school.

This season, the RedHawks return four starters from a team that went 22-10 in 2015-16. They've posted winning seasons seven of the last eight years. In the same span, they've won at least 20 games five times.

"That first year, I wasn't trying to build a program. I was just trying to get through a season," Shelton recalls.

And now?

"I want to keep doing it as long as we're having fun, have great people academically on our team and be competitive for conference championships each and every year," he says. "That's kind of what keeps me going." **BQ**

Social Media Best Practices



Shelbie J. Byers



Marc A. W. Stearns

It's a great marketing tool, but it's also a source of significant risk.

For most companies, social media is a cheap, effective marketing tool, which is easy to access, manipulate and maintain. But social media traits that benefit companies can also expose them to a myriad of legal risks.

- **Ensuring Your Company Owns and Controls its Social Media Accounts**—Some companies entrust their social media accounts to an employee or third-party who has marketing and/or technological savvy. Some even advertise through these individuals' personal social media accounts. Even if this individual executes an agreement requiring return of all confidential information and marketing tools upon leaving the company, or consents to use of their personal account(s), these arrangements leave a company legally vulnerable. Avoid advertising through personal social media accounts. This arrangement can expose companies to violation of privacy claims under the federal Stored Communications Act. Also, provide multiple trusted employees access to company-operated social media accounts and change usernames and passwords when employees with access to these accounts leave the company.

- **Securing Your Company from Attacks Through Social Media**—Social media use invites security risks, including phishing scams, malware attacks and other viruses, which can expose confidential information and/or cripple computer systems. Consider coordinating with an IT specialist to ensure proper technology is installed to protect against security attacks and ensure your trusted employees, who can access the social media accounts, are fully edu-

cated regarding established protocols (e.g. social media usage, or detection of harmful links or accounts), which protect company network(s).

- **Monitoring Social Media Endorsements**—Companies routinely seek endorsements by inviting individuals or entities to comment on a product or service. Be aware that the Federal Trade Commission monitors company endorsements and has made clear that companies who do not monitor their endorse-

ments could face an enforcement action. Generally speaking, company endorsements are regulated and must contain a disclosure to the public. Thus, if the endorser was paid or given anything of value, they should disclose that the endorsement is a paid promotion.

- **Safeguarding Confidential Information**—Those accessing company or personal social media accounts could knowingly or unknowingly disclose confidential information, such as trade secrets, customer lists, new product lines or a company merger ahead of the official announcement. Such disclosures can have negative consequences for businesses, such as loss of intellectual property rights, advantages by competitors, and potential litigation exposure. A carefully worded confidentiality policy, which clearly defines confidential information, can help safeguard against such risks.

- **Ensuring Social Media Policies Do Not Run Afoul of Employment**

Laws and Regulation—Company social media policies often contain rules regarding discrimination and harassment, personal conduct, confidentiality, and expression of personal opinions versus comments on behalf of the company when using social media. Poorly written rules could expose the employer to unfair labor practice claims. The National Labor Relations Board actively litigates cases involving social media policies and has found social media

Poorly written rules could expose the employer to unfair labor practice claims.

policies unlawful that are overbroad because they discouraged or could be interpreted to discourage lawful employee conversations about common workplace issues that are protected by the National Labor Relations Act.

Employers should also avoid accessing social media to screen applicants. When reviewing an applicant's social media public profiles or accounts, employers obtain information that should not be used in the screening process, such as an applicant's pregnancy, race, religion, ethnicity, and age and/or family relationships. Mere knowledge of this information exposes employers to claims that the applicant was not hired because of this protected class information. Consequently, avoid screening social media profiles until a candidate has made it through an initial round of interviews. **BQ**

Shelbie J. Byers and Marc A. W. Stearns are attorneys with the law firm Drewry Simmons Vornehm LLP.

Shaping the Next Decade



Ian Steff

Innovators will ensure a prosperous third century for Indiana.

Governor Mike Pence and Lieutenant Governor Eric Holcomb sent a clear message on Indiana's commitment to strengthening and accelerating Hoosier innovation earlier this summer. When they announced the state's plan to invest \$1 billion in Hoosier innovation and entrepreneurship over the next 10 years, they showcased Indiana's dedication to building our strategic partnerships across the state. When 21st century problems arise, Hoosiers will play a leading role in solving them.

As chief innovation officer for the Indiana Economic Development Corp., I help implement this bold vision centered on collaboration, and momentum is indeed on our side. I see Indiana-based companies enabled by world-class talent solving billion-dollar challenges every day as I travel the state. Hoosiers define innovation and entrepreneurship. It's in our DNA. Each week, a new tech firm, advanced manufacturer, agribusiness or life sciences venture chooses Indiana as a place to grow. More Hoosiers are working than at any point in our state's history—working together to ensure Indiana's third century is just as prosperous as our first two by embracing technological change and differentiating our products and services from our competitors.

However, Indiana's leadership in innovation didn't develop overnight, and it will only continue to grow with our shared efforts. We must consciously choose to compete nationwide and globally for investment, ideas and talent. Indiana's \$1 billion innovation and entrepreneurship ini-

tiative will help further strengthen an environment that enables big ideas to thrive in our state, foster talent that will fuel the ideas' growth and drive investment capital to take those ideas to the market. It is our job as a

Innovation is breaking from the status quo. It's a departure from the way we do things: putting ideas together that, at first, seem incompatible.

state to ensure bright-minded innovators have the tools they need to succeed. And, of course, we want to keep these individuals right here in Indiana.

By bringing together educators, community leaders, industry partners and, most important, idea generators, we will further propel and spark innovation across Indiana.

Innovators will find additional resources throughout their regions to grow their ideas. These tools range from business incubators to programs at our state's universities.

Entrepreneurs will gain increased support at all stages of developing their businesses, from leveraging co-working spaces and shared infrastructure to accessing new investors and specialized advisers interested in helping them grow.

Community and industry leaders will have support through matching grants to help spur advancement and create vibrant communities that attract talent and foster new ideas.

And most important, we will seek to further empower the youngest

generation in schools across the state to embrace their innovative instinct through entrepreneurial competitions and mentorship.

We will be calling on stakeholders, students, investors and business

and education leaders statewide for their guidance, leadership and commitment to innovation and entrepreneurship in our state. This is your plan. You'll help shape, implement and determine its ultimate success. We need your input.

Through this vision, we are communicating to the rest of the nation and to the world that Indiana is in it to win. We indeed choose to compete. The governor often asks, "Who will be the next Colonel Eli Lilly, Bill Cook, Madam C.J. Walker or Scott Dorsey?" I have the utmost confidence that Hoosiers will come to know these future innovators and Indiana's next homegrown billion-dollar idea very soon. Whether they're in school, tinkering in their garages or reading these words, we want to make sure they stay here and have the resources they need to take their idea to the next level in Indiana—a state that works. **EQ**

Ian Steff is executive vice president and chief innovation officer of the Indiana Economic Development Corp.

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When you do what you love for a living, you're bound to be happy. However, it's not fun when you're pulled away from your job to deal with government regulations. That's why we created INBiz. It's the state of Indiana's one-stop resource for registering and managing your business, and it helps all businesses stay compliant with Indiana requirements. **Check it out for yourself at INBiz.in.gov.**

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