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OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2021

Northwest Indiana Business Magazine

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Altered workplaces

*Companies' return-to-office plans include
more open spaces, sanitation and cloud solutions*

*Michael Kidd
President and CEO
U.S. Business Systems*



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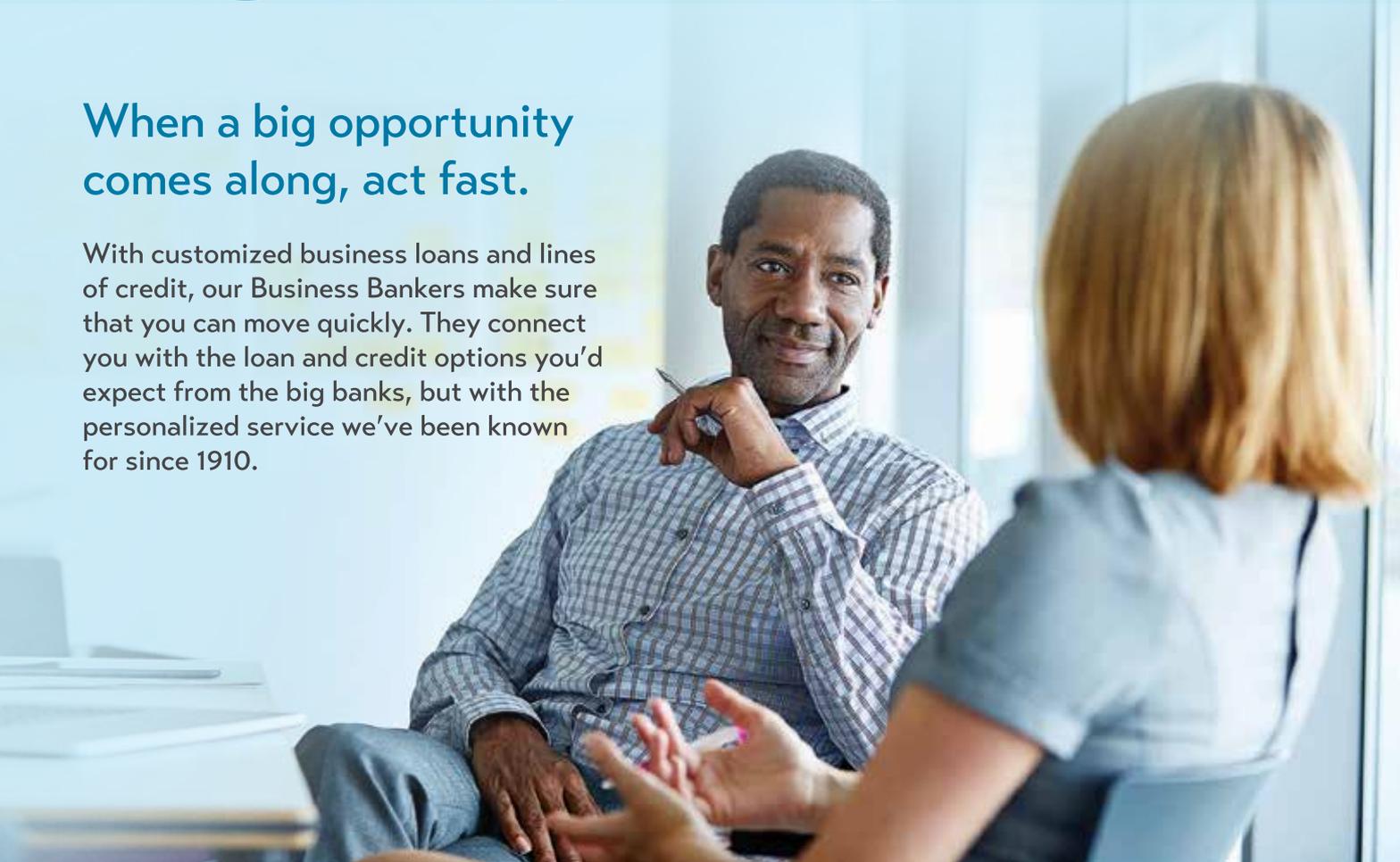
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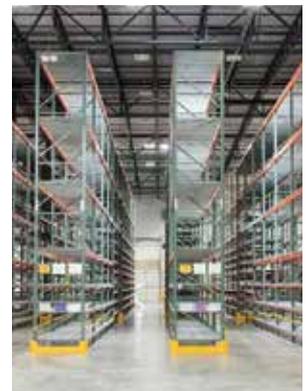


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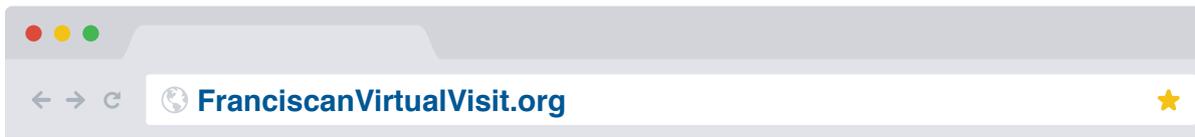


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GOOD BIT

540,000

Hoosiers or 17.7 percent of Indiana's workforce are employed by manufacturers.

▶ PAGE 18

IN THIS ISSUE

There's no question the crisis brought on by the pandemic has changed how the world functions. Businesses the past year have adapted to new ways of doing things, including implementing a range of safety protocols for employees as well as how they interact with customers. Adapting has led to innovations and new opportunities. Companies discovered that allowing their employees to work remotely meant providing better cybersecurity measures and moving sensitive data to the cloud. Development forged ahead with the expansion of logistics centers to accommodate the growing e-commerce sector. Investments also were made to preserve Indiana's position among the nation's top manufacturing states. Businesses that sold products online learned regulations were in constant flux and required regular monitoring. In his first year leading IUN, Chancellor Ken Iwama navigated the campus through uncharted waters. Janis Logsdon's passion for performing endured as she took the stage again. The Campagna Academy's mission to provide guidance to youths never wavered and landed state recognition for its longevity. Working together got the Region, and world, through the crisis, a point noted by Tony Oss, chair of the managing board of the Northwest Indiana Forum. Enjoy this edition!

— Larry Avila, managing editor

PICTURE PERFECT

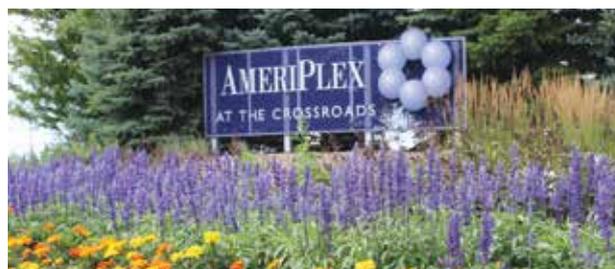


Photo provided by Holladay Properties

Holladay Properties developed AmeriPlex at the Crossroads in Merrillville, a 400-acre mixed-use business park in the early 2000s. The company has been investing in NWI for 20 years. ▶ PAGE 30

QUOTE TO REMEMBER

“You want something that's easy to clean and sanitize, it's one of the best ways to keep your employees safe and healthy.”

— Rita Bacevich, HDW Commercial Interiors, about asking employees to keep a clutter-free work area ▶ PAGE 12

 **READER POLL**

This issue's poll focuses on the ways the Region attracts business.

Tell us what you think by scanning this QR code with your phone.



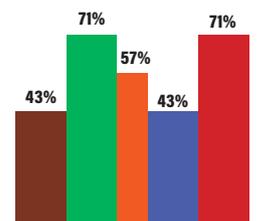
What is the Region's top economic development asset?

- ▶ Proximity to metro Chicago
- ▶ Excellent transportation system
- ▶ Access to well-trained workforce
- ▶ Great quality of life
- ▶ Suitable sites to custom develop

STORY IS ON PAGE 30

LAST ISSUE'S POLL

Our last question was: What is your best incentive (besides money) for keeping great employees? Full results at <http://nwib.link/fxpy>



- ▶ Flexible work schedule, including working from home
- ▶ Perks like paid sick days, vacations or maternity leave
- ▶ Health care and other benefits
- ▶ Opportunities for professional and personal growth
- ▶ Including working from home

AROUND THE REGION



Learn about people, companies making difference at work and in their communities

LARRY AVILA

Accounting

Anita Ison, CPA, joined South Bend-based **Kruggel Lawton CPA** as a senior manager.

Banking

Merrillville-based **Centier Bank** announced the following staff and executive appointments: **Miranda Wilkening** was named to the bank's mortgage lending team; **Lupita Pacheco-Lopez**, small business banker at the bank's Highland branch; **Jason Taeye** joined the bank's Michiana business banking team; **Scott Norman**, vice president, business banking for the bank's greater Indianapolis market; **Yolanda Davis**, vice president, community reinvestment act officer; **Frank Marquez** joined the bank's mortgage lending team; **Dermot O'Doherty** was named senior vice president, chief digital officer; **Michelle Maravilla** was promoted to senior vice president of human resources; **Brad Duncan** was named a small business banker at the downtown Indianapolis branch; **Dana Howard** was named branch manager of the bank's Carmel location.

Old National Bank has expanded its wealth management leadership, adding

Jim Steiner as chief investment officer and president of a to-be-established RIA, **Joe Colianni** as president of the bank's high net worth advisory group and **Eric Holman** as director of risk management.

South Bend-based **1st Source Bank** promoted **Brett Bauer** to CFO and treasurer of **1st Source Corp.** and **1st Source Bank**, and **John Bedient** was promoted to chief operations officer of **1st Source Bank**.

Business

Michigan City Chamber of Commerce President Katie Eaton was elected to a three-year term on the board of directors for the **Indiana Chamber Executives Association**.

Sage-Popovich Inc., a Valparaiso-based aviation and consulting firm, hired **John Brattain** as vice president of maintenance; **Joel Brumm** was named quality assurance analyst manager; **Gustavo Perez-Hernandez** was named an aviation analyst in the valuation and asset management division; and **Alex Boatright** was hired as an aviation parts sales associate.

Economic development

The **South Bend — Elkhart Regional Partnership** appointed **Kristin Pruitt**,

executive vice president and chief administrative officer, **Lake City Bank**, and **Andrea Short**, president, **1st Source Bank**, to four-year terms on its board of directors; and appointed board members **Shannon Cullinan**, executive vice president, **University of Notre Dame**, and **Laura Walls**, president and CEO, **Marshall County Economic Development Corp.**, to the board's executive committee.

Education

Kelly Friend was named vice chancellor for student success for **Ivy Tech Community College's South Bend** campus.

Kevin Goebbert, associate professor of meteorology at **Valparaiso University**, received a grant from **Unidata**, in partnership with the **National Science Foundation**, to continue developing meteorological technologies. Valparaiso's share of the award, totaling more than \$40,000, will fund a three-year project. **Luke Venstrom**, associate professor of mechanical engineering at the college, was awarded the **Paul H. Brandt Endowed Professorship of Engineering**.

Santiago Schnell, chair of the department of molecular and integrative



BANKING
Yolanda Davis



BANKING
Frank Marquez



BANKING
Dermot O'Doherty



BANKING
Michelle Maravilla



BANKING
Brad Duncan



BANKING
Dana Howard



EDUCATION
Kelly Friend



FINANCE
Jack DeHaven

physiology at the **University of Michigan Medical School**, was appointed the **William K. Warren Foundation Dean of the College of Science at the University of Notre Dame**.

Mindy Capaldi, associate professor of mathematics and statistics at **Valparaiso University**, was selected for a two-year term as a visiting scientist, engineer and educator program director for the **National Science Foundation** in Alexandria, Virginia. The NSF rotator program offers visiting scientists, engineers and educators to serve as directors and make recommendations about which proposals to fund; influence new directions in the fields of science, engineering and education; support interdisciplinary research; and mentor junior researchers.

Finance

Jack DeHaven joined **Oak Partners Inc.**, wealth and retirement planning in Crown Point, as a financial adviser.

Government

Don Harbin was named new fire chief for the **city of Whiting Fire**

Department. He is a lifetime resident of Whiting and has a bachelor's degree in accounting from Purdue University Calumet. He has been with the Whiting Fire Department for 23 years and previously held the ranks of pipeman, engineer, lieutenant and captain. Harbin is the 16th fire chief for the city of Whiting.

Gov. Eric Holcomb appointed **Rebecca Holwerda** commissioner of the **Indiana Department of Administration**.

David Rosenberg was named executive vice president of the **Indiana Economic Development Corp.** Rosenberg most recently served as vice president of operations for **Market Street Group** in Indianapolis. He will oversee the **Indiana Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative**, and advance economic development priorities focused on building the state's economy, workforce and entrepreneurship.

The **Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians**, operators of the **Four Winds Casinos**, with three locations in Michigan and one in South Bend, have

elected new tribal council members and its first woman to serve as chair. Recently elected council members include **Rebecca Richards**, who also was elected chair; **Sam Morseau**, who also was elected secretary; **Mark Topash**, member-at-large; and **Barbara Ann Warren**, elders representative. Richards is the first woman to serve as chair since the tribe received federal restoration in 1994.

Health care

Methodist Hospitals appointed **Lauren Trumbo** chief financial officer and vice president of finance. The Gary-based health system operates a full-service acute care facility in Gary and another in Merrillville as well as several medical and physician offices around Northwest Indiana.

Robert Krumwied, the executive who consolidated Region mental health care services into a central organization, was memorialized by the group he helped form. **Regional Care Group** in Merrillville honored Krumwied by renaming the Geminus building, the Krumwied building.



GOVERNMENT
Don Harbin



GOVERNMENT
David Rosenberg



HEALTH CARE
Lauren Trumbo



HEALTH CARE
Tommasina Papa-Rugino

AROUND THE REGION



HEALTH CARE
Ashley Perkins



HEALTH CARE
Renae Atkins



HEALTH CARE
Yaseen Alkaddoumi



HEALTH CARE
Taylor Coleman

Franciscan Health hired **Dr. Tommasina Papa-Rugino**, neurology, at Franciscan Physician Network in Munster; **Dr. Ashley Perkins**, obstetrician and gynecologist at the St. John Health Center; **Dr. James Pickford**, internal medicine, Franciscan Physician Network 400 North Health Center, Michigan City; **Dr. Kirthika Vijayakumar**, obstetrician and gynecologist, Franciscan Physician Network Family Wellness Center, Munster; **Dr. Kevin Burke**, gastroenterologist, and **Alexandrea Burnett**,

nurse practitioner Franciscan Physician Network Michigan City and Porter County.

Northwest Medical Group hired family nurse practitioner **Renae Atkins**; **Dr. Yaseen Alkaddoumi**, hematologist, Valparaiso; **Dr. Taylor Coleman**, general surgeon, Valparaiso; **Dr. Anne Hollingsworth**, internal medicine, Michigan City; **Dr. Subba Rao Nagubadi**, urology, La Porte.

Dr. Maria Finnell was named chief medical officer for the **Indiana Family and Social Services Administration**.

Finnell most recently served as the director of clinical operations and associate medical director for FSSA's Office of Medicaid Policy and Planning.

Information technology

Illinois-based **Pulse Technology**, with Chesterton operations, named **Shannon Gomez** a business development executive.

Law

Gov. Eric Holcomb appointed Newton County native **Derek Molter** to the



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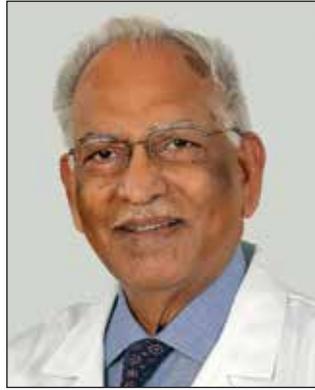


HEALTH CARE
Anne Hollingsworth

Indiana Court of Appeals. He replaces retiring **Judge James Kirsch**. Molter earned a bachelor's degree from Indiana University and a law degree from the Indiana University Maurer School of Law.

Logistics

The **Ports of Indiana**, which operates the **Port of Indiana-Burns Harbor**, announced the following appointments and promotions: **Bernard Weithman** was named the new **Ports of Indiana-Mount Vernon** port director; **Doug**



HEALTH CARE
Subba Rao Nagubadi

Mitchell was named information technology manager; and **Erica Jackson** was promoted from controller to chief financial officer.

Manufacturing

Patrick Industries Inc. of Elkhart, a manufacturer and distributor of component and building products serving the recreational vehicle, housing and furniture industries, promoted **Jeffrey Rodino** to president of the company. **Andy Nemeth** will continue serving as



INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
Shannon Gomez

chief executive officer. He had previously held the title president and CEO.

Jonathan Ballon was named chief digital officer at Michigan-based **Electric Last Mile Inc.**, which has a manufacturing facility in Mishawaka.

Nonprofit

Nelsy Marcano was named education director for the **Lubeznik Center for the Arts** in Michigan City.

Michael Gaudreau, vice president of casino operations at the **Hard Rock**



LOGISTICS
Bernard Weithman

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AROUND THE REGION



LOGISTICS
Doug Mitchell



LOGISTICS
Erica Jackson



NONPROFIT
Michael Gaudreau



NONPROFIT
Joe Hall

Casino Northern Indiana in Gary, was appointed to the advisory board of the **Salvation Army of Lake County**.

Capt. Joe Hall of the **Valparaiso Police Department** was named chair of the **Tobacco Education and Prevention Coalition** for Porter County.

Utilities

NiSource Inc. of Merrillville, parent of **NIPSCO**, named **Melanie Berman** senior vice president and chief human resources officer, and vice president

and chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer.

News

The Hammond-based **Digital Crossroad** data center has landed a \$28 million investment, which will allow operators to expand. **Energy Solutions Group**, a sustainable energy investment and development firm from Pennsylvania, has invested with **United Leasing and Finance** to fund the continued expansion of the Digital Crossroad campus.

Digital Crossroad commissioned the first phase of the 100MW campus in October and will use the funds to address growing customer demand.

Centier Bank opened its newest branch in St. John at 9621 Wicker Ave. on July 12.

Sullair, a Michigan City-based maker of compressed air equipment, has hired its first two graduates from the **Michigan City High School Compressed Air Academy**. The initiative is a partnership between the **Economic Development**



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Notre Dame Federal Credit Union dedicated its new Region branch in Whiting in the Illiana Building, 1200 119th St., Suite A, with a ribbon cutting in July.

Arcline Investment Management, a growth-oriented private equity firm with offices in San Francisco and New York, purchased controlling interest of Michigan City-based **Dwyer Instruments** from the Clark family and the firm's management.

The **School of Education at Indiana University Northwest** received a perfect evaluation from the **Council for the Accreditation for Educator Preparation** for its bachelor's and master's degree programs. CAEP is a nationally recognized accrediting body for educator preparation. The organization's accreditation is valid for seven years.

bNutty of Portage and **Indiana Face Mask** of Rensselaer were among 16 companies recognized by the state for completing the **Export Indiana Accelerator Program**. The statewide initiative assists Indiana companies in developing export plans to sell their products or services globally.

Crossroads YMCA is taking over the **Franciscan Health Fitness Centers Schererville**. The organizations said the plan is to fully transition Franciscan Health Fitness Centers Schererville into a Crossroads YMCA location by January.

Performance Plus, a provider of assorted cleaning services, has purchased **Complete Cleaning Services** in Michigan City. Complete Cleaning Services employed 17 people, who all have been retained, including company President Mike Breitzka.

Peoples Bank, a wholly owned subsidiary of Munster-based Finward Bancorp, broke ground in mid-August on its first full-service banking center in Cedar Lake at the corner of 133rd Avenue and King Street across from Hanover Central High School. The building is expected to be completed by March.

Ember Recreational Vehicles Inc. of Bristol is investing \$4 million to construct an 87,750-square-foot building on 15 acres in Bristol Commerce Park at 1728 Commerce Drive. The company, which employs 23 people, could grow to as many as 150 employees by the end of 2023, the Indiana Economic Development Corp. announced in mid-August.

Franciscan Health's planned downsizing of its Hammond

hospital is forcing the closure of **Kindred Hospital Northwest Indiana**. In a layoff notice filed with the state, **Triumph Hospital NW Indiana**, doing business as Kindred, a provider of long-term acute care, said it will cease operations and begin employee separations Oct. 10. A total of 110 people work for Kindred Hospital in Hammond, including medical, administrative and support staff. ■



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Altered workplaces

Companies' return-to-office plans include more open spaces, sanitation and cloud solutions

LARRY AVILA

For many professionals who worked from home for more than a year because of the pandemic, a typical day may have started with a stroll to the kitchen for coffee then to the home office.

Then after firing up the computer and checking emails, the next task likely was signing into a remote meeting via video chat software. This routine was practiced by many who were told by employers to stop

reporting to the office until the crisis subsided and then had to learn how to be productive at home, an environment filled with assorted distractions.

When the world appeared ready to resume normal routines, employers began the methodical process of returning their worksites back into bustling business hubs. Some companies say they were prepared and anxious for a return to the familiar, while others

sought expert guidance to ensure their workplace was prepared to operate in the new post-crisis setting.

Professionals say working remotely had advantages, but the preference is still face-to-face with co-workers and clients.

"During the pandemic, we had virtual meetings on Zoom with (clients), and now when we contact them to update them on their IT or print issues, they want us to come to their office and not do Zoom," said Michael Kidd, president and CEO of U.S. Business Systems in



General Insurance Service made an extensive plan that followed CDC guidelines before asking employees to return to work.

“I think we’re all finding that the pandemic changed how business is conducted. Before, if you needed to visit someone in Atlanta, you’d get on a plane and go there, but now, because people have grown accustomed to virtual meetings and are comfortable with technology like interactive boards, you can collaborate without the need to travel.”



— Chip Miceli, Pulse Technology

Elkhart. “It appears that most people are tired of working remote and being alone, and they want to be sitting next to their co-workers and meeting with their vendors in person.”

Businesses deemed essential continued operating throughout the crisis but followed Centers for Disease Control and Prevention protocols to ensure a safe working environment for employees. General Insurance Services in Valparaiso was an essential business and developed procedures for staff if they had to report to the office or meet with clients.

GIS is operational, but the environment is not the same as it was before the pandemic.

“I wouldn’t say it’s business as usual but as close to that as possible,” said Stephanie Domazet, vice president of sales at GIS.

She said many GIS staff still conduct virtual meetings and sales staff are meeting with clients but require them to follow company safety protocols as well as honor any safety requirements of whom they are visiting.

Office reboot

When GIS began planning for staff to return to the office, initial steps involved following CDC guidelines to create a return-to-work plan and conducting multiple surveys with employees.

“The plan consisted of employees returning in three phases, installing plexiglass at our front desks, securing additional cleaning supplies, increasing office cleaning, providing hand sanitizers and requiring masks unless (employees were) seated at their own desks, and requiring social distancing,” Domazet said.

GIS also placed a sign-in board where staff had to log their temperature, answer a question regarding any COVID symptoms, and when they left for the day, staff were asked to log anyone they were in contact with for 15 minutes or more during the day to streamline any contact tracing that might need to be done.

GIS’s process might seem tedious, but staff adapted.

A benefit of the crisis was greater use of technology, whether it was virtual meetings or digital documents.

“Digital has been faster,” Domazet said. “(Clients) used to request (documents) on paper; now they want it emailed, and they have learned how to sign things digitally. So, I think digital abilities have made clients feel they need things even faster than before because digital has the ability to be done instantly.”

Kidd said the pandemic shifted office paperwork to digital to limit touching items by multiple people.

“Most businesses (we work with) post-COVID have been open-minded to us moving them into the cloud for software and for (data) storage,” Kidd said.

He said these moves offer cost savings to businesses of between 35% and 50%, because using the cloud eliminates the need for servers and databases to back up hard drives as well as the physical space and power required for the equipment.

“Adopting cloud services created operational efficiencies and better remote connectivity,” Kidd said.

As more businesses use cloud services, it’s likely to drive growth in data center development, such as the Digital Crossroad in Hammond.

Kidd said, as businesses allowed employees to work remotely, there also was a greater move toward voice-over-internet phone systems.

“We’ve seen significant growth in voice over the internet,” he said. “There’s no need for a phone jack for this type of phone system, and VOIP allows (employees) to take their office phones with them, so they’d have all the functionality of their work phone either on their home phone or mobile device.”

Digital security

Increased use of cloud-based software and data storage made improving cybersecurity a priority, Kidd said.

“Data security and virus/ransomware was the biggest concerns (with remote work),” he said. “We helped many businesses with (Microsoft) Office 365 and (Microsoft) Teams software for remote collaboration.”

U.S. Business Systems also worked with many clients to install improved firewalls, which the company constantly monitors to prevent breaches from corrupting clients’ computer systems and networks.



Photo provided by General Insurance Services



Photo provided by Chester Inc.

Chester Inc. employees meet a Vale View client during a site visit. Most businesses require workers to follow CDC guidelines for wearing masks and other safety precautions.

“Our business on the IT side has been growing tremendously, and we expect it to be moving this way in the future,” he said.

Additional cybersecurity also is a priority for clients of Impact Networking.

Christopher Zvirbulis, general sales manager and partner for Impact, who oversees the company’s Indiana operations, said his company has seen a major shift in requests for additional support for remote workers.

“When people are working from home and using their own computers, there is so much risk involved,” he said. Defenses provided by an employee’s home internet service provider may not offer the same security used by their employer in an office setting.

“General business security to stay ahead of the bad guys is easier said than done,” Zvirbulis said. “Threats are becoming more sophisticated, and we have teams of people regularly monitoring for threats.”

Impact has invested more than \$11 million in security systems to protect its data as well as client information, Zvirbulis said.

Enhancing collaboration

Chip Miceli, CEO of Pulse Technology, which has operations in Chesterton, said when people are working remotely, they still want to feel as if they were sitting in the same room with their co-workers or clients.

Enter interactive boards.

“This has been one of the biggest things and requests to us,” Miceli said.



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With exponential use of virtual meetings during the crisis, among the chief complaints of virtual meetings were foggy visuals.

“People wanted a better experience for their Zoom meetings, especially when brainstorming was involved,” Miceli said.

Pulse clients with multiple locations wanted interactive boards at all their locations, which allow people to write messages on them, upload documents or visuals to share in real time.

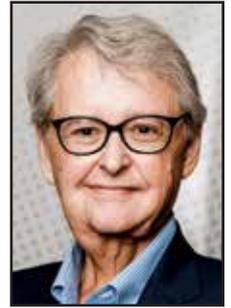
“Someone who wrote on board in Indiana and were having a meeting with someone in Illinois could instantly see what they were writing,” Miceli said.

The interactive boards also were found useful for clients who had locations in different parts of the country. Increase use of the technology also presented potential cost savings, Miceli said.

“I think we’re all finding that the pandemic changed how business is conducted,” he said. “Before, if you needed to visit someone in Atlanta, you’d get on a plane and go there, but now, because people have grown

“It appears that most people are tired of working remote and being alone, and they want to be sitting next to their co-workers and meeting with their vendors in person.”

— Michael Kidd, U.S. Business Systems



accustomed to virtual meetings and are comfortable with technology like interactive boards, you can collaborate without the need to travel.”

Office changes

Rich Shields, director of marketing and business development at Chester Inc. in Valparaiso, said there was no shortage of innovation the past year. Chester Inc. worked with a veterinary clinic to use video technology so they could meet virtually with pet owners and their pets, much like doctors have been meeting with patients during the pandemic.

“I think it was one of the cool things we were able to do,” Shields said. “The same

collaborative tools some of our clients used for virtual meetings, a veterinary clinic also was able to use to see animals, so it was great that we could provide that technology for another application.”

Kidd said U.S. Business Systems is operating as it always has but with some modifications.

“We are completely remodeling our office to open the workspace to allow more room for group meetings and collaboration,” he said. “We have been working with multiple people in 10-by-10 rooms, so we have been removing these walls and spacing everyone out more.”

Kidd said the best way to ensure clients are receiving the best service is

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“(Clients) used to request (documents) on paper; now they want it emailed, and they have learned how to sign things digitally. So, I think digital abilities have made clients feel they need things even faster than before because digital has the ability to be done instantly.”

— Stephanie Domazet, General Insurance Services

by making sure his staff are on the same page from dispatch to fulfilling supply requests to on-site services for both print and IT and sales. He said all the changes are guided by CDC protocols.

Kidd said his employees who could work remotely were allowed to do so, while those who had to be on site followed internal procedures guided by federal health rules.

“We still allow (some) employees to work from home since we know that they have been extremely functional even in their private setting,” he said. “We were essential since we provided services to other essential businesses and remained open and 100% staffed to take care of our client base.”

Miceli said there have been some changes in requests from customers. His firm has been contacted by several school districts seeking air purifiers for classrooms and businesses, particularly those with cubicle-style setups, seeking plexiglass partitions.

“Requests for plexiglass have gone through the roof,” Miceli said. Plexiglass also was requested by restaurants, who wanted additional protection for hostesses and between tables.

“It’s gotten to a point where I think people just want to feel more secure,” he said.

Miceli said his firm worked with clients to preserve office aesthetics as much as possible.

“We did all we could to keep things looking good,” Miceli said.

He said businesses have prioritized sanitizing and need solutions to sanitize large areas quickly.

“Initially we weren’t sure what people would want, but after doing some research, we found products like sanitizer sprays that could be carried on backpacks so you could disinfect an area faster,” Miceli said.

Rita Bacevich, president of HDW Commercial Interiors in Merrillville, said she has seen sites creating more open workspaces to allow for “touch-down areas” for employees who had been working remotely who may drop by the office for a day.

“Also, instead of initially maxing out an area, we are creating distance and make talking points with clients about adding seating later if and when needed,” she said.

Bacevich said she encourages clients to suggest to their employees to keep desks as clutter free as possible.

“You want something that’s easy to clean and sanitize, it’s one of the best ways to keep your employees safe and healthy.” ■

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MANUFACTURING

ALL IN ON MANUFACTURE

INDIANA SETS SIGHTS ON BECOMING NATION'S LEADING PRODUC

Doug Ross

State officials are well aware that more than 540,000 Hoosiers or 17.7 percent of Indiana's workforce are employed by manufacturers.

The state, officials say, arguably is the nation's most manufacturing-intensive state, and sector leaders want to retain that designation well into the future, so they are taking steps to ensure its ongoing vitality.

As manufacturing technology evolves, so will the skills workers need in that industry.

Mitch Landess, vice president of innovation and digital transformation at Conexus Indiana, is focused on helping manufacturers prepare for the future.

Students learn in school about the industrial revolution hundreds of years ago, but the revolution is continuing. As new technologies come online, industry adapts to them and evolves.

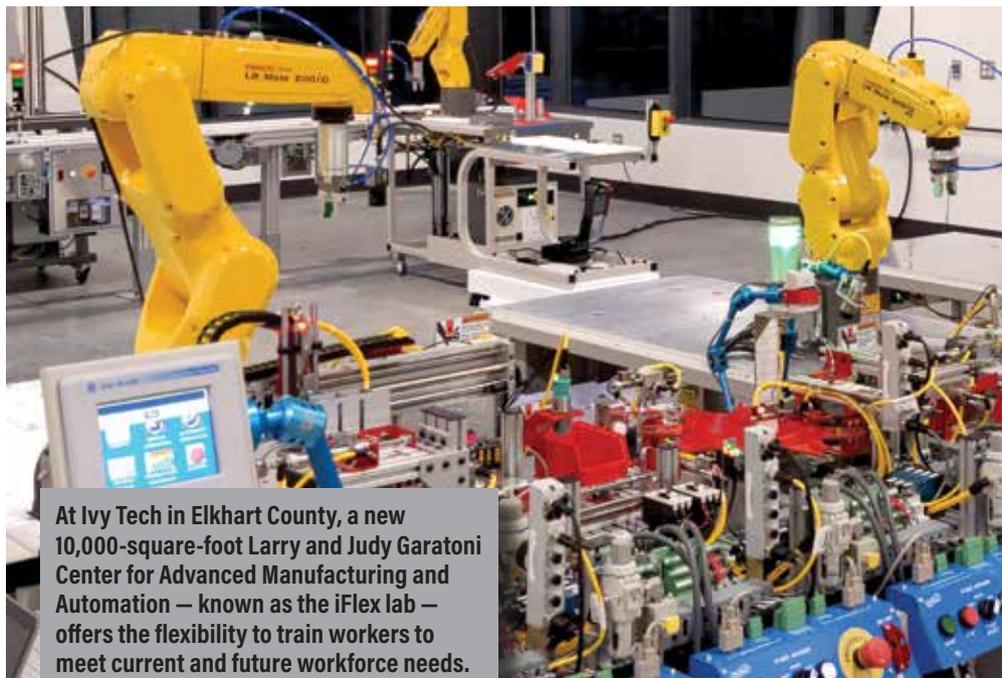
Robust information technology developments are being embraced by manufacturers for what's referred to as Industry 4.0, Landess explained.

"The future of advanced manufacturing is headed, like anything else we do in tech, at an ever-increasing pace," said Juan Lopez, dean of the School of Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering and Applied Science at Ivy Tech in South Bend/Elkhart. "Advanced manufacturing is making jobs cleaner, safer and changing the nature of what you consider entry-level work."

Lopez recently toured a factory that had two lines — an older one and a newer one.

They had the same gigantic, heavy machines making the exact same product. At the old line, the worker was closer to danger, having to pay extreme attention. At the other, a worker was behind a safety shield to monitor what the machinery was doing.

"Same processes, same machine, but one had automation and the other did not," Lopez said.



At Ivy Tech in Elkhart County, a new 10,000-square-foot Larry and Judy Garatoni Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Automation — known as the iFlex lab — offers the flexibility to train workers to meet current and future workforce needs.

Landess said that's all part of industry's evolution.

"Extract humans from monotonous and strenuous and dangerous work and get them doing the human stuff," he said.

Automation advances

Landess said the saving grace for the workforce as manufacturers embrace automation is that machines must be carefully programmed and monitored to ensure they're functioning properly.

"This is enabling and uplifting for upward mobility for the workforce," he said.

Giant companies can afford to embrace new technologies quickly. Landess is helping small and medium manufacturers with the Manufacturing Readiness Grant program. Conexus Indiana, a nonprofit, manages the grant program in partnership with the Indiana Economic Development Corp. and in collaboration with the Next Level Manufacturing Institute. The grant program spurs private sector investments to modernize Indiana's manufacturing sector.

The grant program has been wildly successful. Initially, organizers announced a \$4 million program offering up to \$200,000, with the private sector expected to provide at least half the cost of each project. They expected between 20 and 40 projects would be launched.

"We had 60 applications in the first three days, and it was supposed to be a two-year program," Landess said. "The program was oversubscribed."

He said high interest in the program surprised state leaders, which later led the state to give additional funds to the program. More than 120 awards have been granted, Landess said.

"Reading these applications, you find yourself saying, 'I had no idea we had a company doing that here,'" he said.

A peer review team of industry professionals looks closely at the details of grant applications. Landess said filling out the grant application can take four to eight hours and forces the business owner to focus on the bigger picture, not just the nuts and bolts of operating the business on a day-to-day basis.

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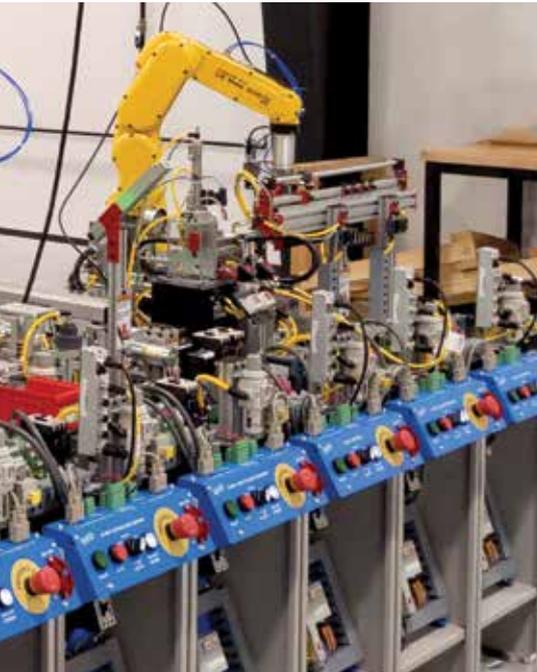


Photo provided by Ivy Tech Community College;

Investing to grow

Troy Bengford, owner of Custom Cut Décor in Elkhart, is using a Manufacturing Readiness Grant to add 3,200 square feet to his production facility. He's ready to hire more workers to operate the machinery.

An employee told him about the grant program, Bengford said.

Bengford's story begins with his school days. As he rode the school bus each day, Bengford sold more than 2,000 jigsaw puzzles he created in the woodshop, he said. He's still cutting wood, but he's doing so much more.

"We are a rapidly growing business," Bengford said. "COVID hit us with four times normal sales, (so it) really helped us in that respect."

The pandemic forced people to stay home, and as they looked around at their homes, they decided to redecorate.

"Mom and dad's running the rat race 24/7, 365," Bengford said. "They're sick of looking at the same old crap hanging on the walls for four years."

With extra time on their hands during the pandemic, many spent hours online, "looking to see what's out there," he said.

Custom Cut Décor is among the winners from this trend.

Bengford still operates a website development business. He got a large contract with a client who basically said, "We want you available 24/7 if something goes down."

"Basically, that meant (a) 9-to-5 job," he said. "I was bored as hell."

Bengford married his internet experience with his woodworking experience, and sales have gone global.

"Have you ever seen these letters cut out of tin? Old barn tin?" he asked. A woman whose antique shop was selling his products challenged him to try it.

He then began selling products on Etsy. "That really took off like mad," Bengford said. Amazon Handmade then approached him.

"Within three months, we were doing three times the sales we were doing for two years on Etsy," Bengford said.

"Letters is probably 80 percent of my total sales," he said, but he began doing other shapes to augment sales and started doing wholesale work.

Custom Cut Décor has machinery for metal, wood and plastics to fabricate just about anything the customers want, he said.

The state Manufacturing Readiness Grant Bengford's business received will allow him to add a 3,200-square-foot structure. He already has an 8,000-square-foot production facility.

Bengford is looking for workers.

"The programming on the front end is not an entry-level skill process, but because of the advanced software we use, if someone has basically graphic design skills, in two or three weeks, I can have somebody ready."

"I see this employee crunch," he said. "I see automation becoming the wave of the future."

Growth in robotics

At Sullair in Michigan City, robotic welders work seamlessly with the production line to build bases for air compressors. Sullair's difficulty in finding skilled welders led the company to turn to robots to do the work, said Chad McKeever, vice president of operations.

Sullair recently installed an 80,000-square-foot fabrication facility.

Sullair's parent company, Hitachi, had acquired a Michigan firm that programs robots, so the sister company solved Sullair's problem.

Understanding the type and gauge of steel and the potential for heat warpage, along with the type of weld, takes a lot of programming. But in about 90 days, it all came together.

"It was the first time that we had worked together," McKeever said. "We had to work with them during COVID, which was probably the biggest challenge."

The line was fully installed and ramped up for production in late spring 2021.

"The robots are assembling the frame that is the structural base" of air compressor units that are used around the world, McKeever said.

"We see air as the fourth utility," he said. "It's a utility required in order to make something transglobal."

McKeever said every manufacturing facility around the world uses air compression.

Robots' strength is their ability to function in environments that are challenging for humans, including extreme heat and cold.

"I think that robots are good for any type of a position that requires high standards and repetition that would be difficult to achieve every single cycle out of a human," he said.

McKeever said robots won't replace the dexterity and skills of an operator, but they can handle repetition without the injuries a human might sustain.



Advanced manufacturing is making jobs cleaner, safer and changing the nature of what you consider entry-level work."

— Juan Lopez
Ivy Tech



MANUFACTURING

As manufacturers work to control costs, especially the growing cost of health care, they will be more likely to use robots that don't need to sleep and whose health care is only in preventative maintenance that keeps them in operation.

"Robotics will be a solution that we'll need to evaluate to be a competitive manufacturer in the United States," McKeever said.

Sullair is working to enhance and upskill workers, he said, including

developing apprenticeship programs. "As a manufacturer, we can no longer count on trade schools or universities to supply our employees with the specific skills that we require," he said. "With Hitachi, we believe we should control our own destiny."

Training a workforce

Sullair and other air compressor manufacturers in La Porte County are being served by a new manufacturing lab and

training program at Ivy Tech Community College's campus in Michigan City.

"We know it's the world's capital for air compression manufacturing," Chancellor Aco Sikoski said.

Thus, Ivy Tech is fulfilling its mission to offer training for jobs available in local industries.

A compressed air academy at Michigan City High School also is offered in partnership with Sullair.

Ivy Tech's lab experiences set it apart when it comes to higher education, Sikoski said.

"We are heavy on hands-on exercises," he said. Students are required to work in the lab to understand processes, equipment and safety as part of earning their certificate or degree.

Jennifer Furmanek, dean of the School of Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering and Applied Science at Ivy Tech in Valparaiso, said the college is setting up training for specific industries, including a certificate program for Urschel Laboratories employees.

"It's one that we've created for them," she said.

The Steelworker for the Future program offers a certificate and paid internships, with a guaranteed job for those who successfully complete the training program. The two internships help Cleveland-Cliffs Inc. vet the students for the best positions for them, Furmanek said.

"They're really down on employment right now," so this training program is essential for the steelmaker, she said.

She said whoever needs more education with their employees, Ivy Tech wants to help.

Sikoski said the training is part of manufacturing's future as it evolves into Industry 4.0.

"Manufacturing is going to be very integrated between technology and information technology," he said.

The future is going to be vastly different, with developments including use of a 3D printer to manufacture replacement parts in the workplace, he said. The electronic file could be sent from the manufacturer to the printer to lesson downtime for customers.

The energy industry is evolving, too, which also will affect the labor market.



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Sikoski's campus is doubling down on training workers for solar installation jobs.

At Ivy Tech in Elkhart County, a new 10,000-square-foot Larry and Judy Garatoni Center for Advanced Manufacturing and Automation — known as the iFlex lab — offers the flexibility to train workers to meet current and future workforce needs.

"We are expanding the future of advanced manufacturing," said Lopez, the Ivy Tech dean.

Classes offer micro-credentials to prove to employers that the student has industry-ready skills. In addition, a new degree in smart manufacturing and digital integration focuses on the next generation of automation, including smart manufacturing with enterprise-level software.

"You want every part of your production to know what every other part of your production is doing," Lopez said.

A corner of the lab is dedicated to an integrated smart factory system. Robots operate in conjunction with assembly lines. Software allows

quality control, order management and handling, and more.

Humans will handle troubleshooting and larger-scale programming.

Lopez said the point of the training program is to turn students into workers prepared to deal with challenges, whatever they might be, in the future. The hands-on experience at Ivy Tech is important to truly understand the technology.

That's vital to manufacturers as they continue to evolve.

Other uses for robots

At Purdue University Northwest's Commercialization and Manufacturing Excellence Center, Associate Director Mont Handley is working on Project TRAVERSE, which aims to use a robotic arm to harvest tomatoes. That addresses both a shortage of workers and the need to do backbreaking, sun-baking labor.

There's a lot of education to do, both for the researchers working on this project and for the robotic arm.

Some of the successes in the artificial harvesting field are in the 20% range,

which isn't going to cut it. "I've grown tomatoes all my life, and that's kind of how they grow," some ripe and some green, he said.

The robotic arm has a camera attached, and a worker can see the live feed at home, using a standard home gaming system to select ripe tomatoes for the robot to pick.

This offers job opportunities for house-bound people, perhaps kept there because of a pandemic, and does some deep learning for the artificial intelligence driving the robotic fieldworker, Handley said.

"This could translate to manufacturing at some time, this idea of a remote workforce," he said.

Think big, and it could even apply to operating machinery on the moon or Mars or some other inhospitable location, Handley said.

"These technologies can be ways to create new jobs," he said. "There's options, there's opportunities."

Industry is ever-changing, and individual firms need to keep investing in technology to keep it. ■

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Making sense of sales tax



EXPERTS SAY RECENT COURT RULINGS CREATE MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS FOR ONLINE SELLERS

LAUREN CAGGIANO

The retail world has evolved a great deal in the last two decades or so, largely because of the internet and e-commerce.

As internet access and adoption are rapidly increasing worldwide, the number of digital buyers has grown proportionately. In 2020, more than 2 billion people purchased goods or services online, and during the same year, e-retail sales surpassed \$4.2 trillion U.S. dollars worldwide, according to Statista, a German

company specializing in market and consumer data.

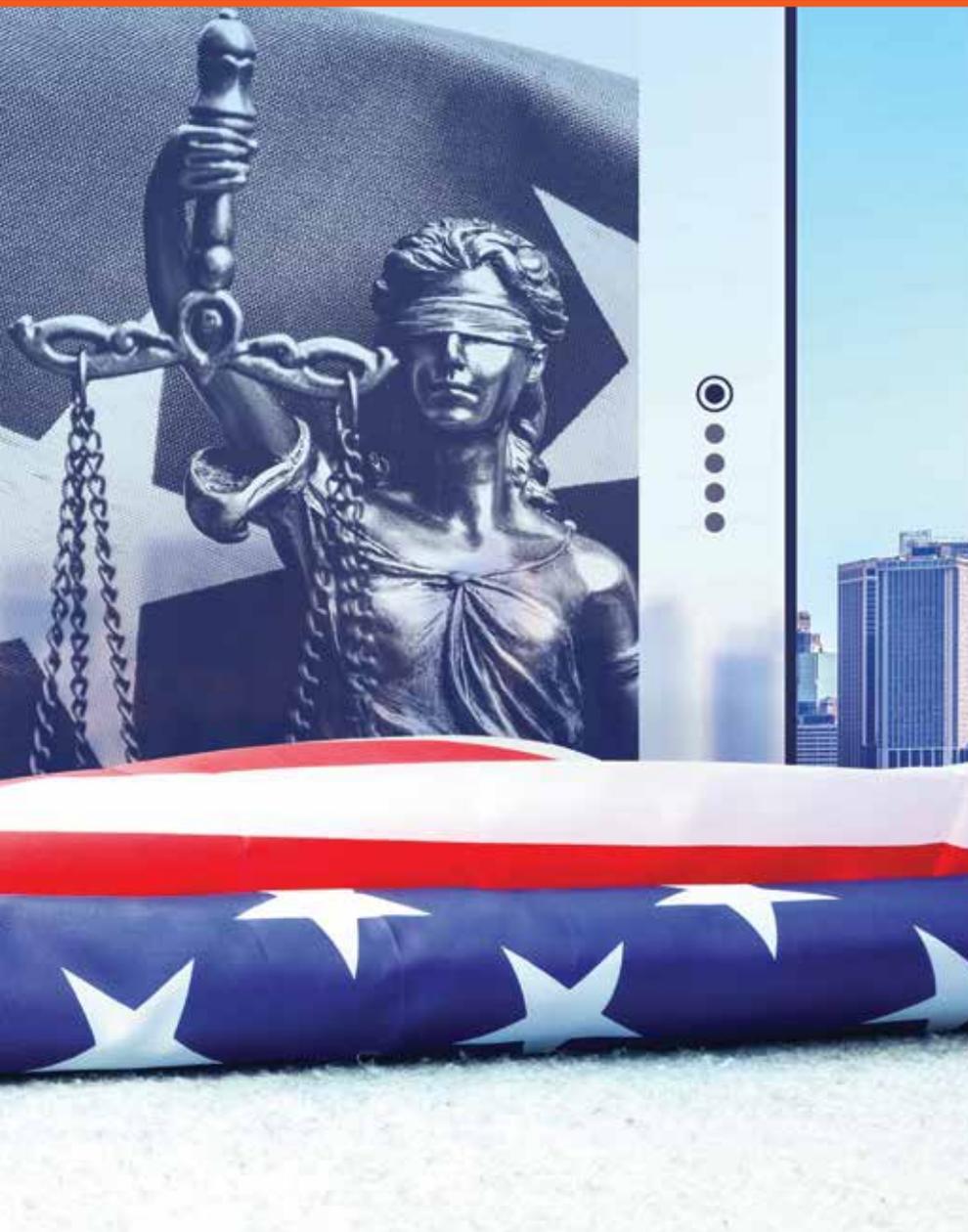
These figures, while impressive, don't tell the whole story. One recent development has had more weight than others perhaps. It pertains to the collection of in-state sales tax on out-of-state purchases in an online retail setting.

On June 21, 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in the landmark case *South Dakota v. Wayfair*. It allows states to mandate entities without a physical presence in a state with more than 200 transactions or \$100,000 in-state

sales to collect and remit sales taxes on transactions in the state. This decision overturned the Court's 1992 previous decision in *Quill v. North Dakota* and 1967 decision in *National Bellas Hess v. Illinois*. After this most recent decision, states, retailers and other stakeholders have been asking "What's next?"

Game changer

J.T. Eagan, a clinical assistant professor of accounting at Purdue University Northwest and accounting professional, spent the first decade of



sales transactions or gross receipts activity within the state. No physical presence is required.

This represents a line in the sand, if you ask Eagan.

“The Supreme Court found in favor of the state,” he said. “They basically said we are going to go ahead and allow economic nexus.”

Eagan said the world has just changed too much.

“But at no point did the court ever opine as to the text to determine this qualification,” he said. “What is the threshold for the number of transactions or total amount of sales?”

According to Eagan, the court never spelled this out. Instead, it’s up to the individual state to make the call. While South Dakota defined it as \$100,000 or more in sales and/or 200 transactions, the court never made this determination.

“States are actually able to do whatever they want (with respect to sales tax),” he said.

“So, you see there are some states that have higher bright-line tests, lower bright-line tests, and some haven’t (made a determination).”

Defining food

Further complicating matters is the fact that what’s considered taxable also varies state to state. Certain states tax food, and how food is defined is another wild card.

“If you have certain ingredients in your food, it can be taxable (or not),” Eagan said. “For instance, in the state of Indiana, a Twix bar is considered food because it has flour.”

Any candy that has flour is considered food — not candy — and therefore is not subject to the 7% tax, he said.

his career working for a big, nationally known accounting firm and gained a great deal of experience with respect to state and local taxes.

“(Among the areas) I would specialize at the state level included income taxes, direct and indirect taxes — indirect meaning the sales taxes,” he said. “During that time, I saw the administrative costs that it takes to facilitate a proper sales tax collection.”

He said the administration is just mind boggling.

“I think it’s burdensome, plain and simple,” Eagan said.

Fast-forward to the South Dakota v. Wayfair case in 2018, and it gets even more interesting. Before June 2018,

Eagan said Wayfair was following the laws on the books when it didn’t collect sales tax. At the time, the law had specified that a retailer had to have a physical presence in the state — also known as “nexus” — in which it was collecting sales tax.

\$4.2T U.S. dollars spent in e-retail sales worldwide, according to German-based Statista, which specializes in market and consumer data.

The Supreme Court case challenged this notion, citing the concept of “economic nexus.” Economic nexus requires an out-of-state seller to collect and remit sales tax once the seller meets a predetermined level (a threshold) of

Eagan offers a local example of a retailer that’s impacted by this seemingly arbitrary determination. The Northwest Indiana retailer ChicagoLand Popcorn is a purveyor of gourmet popcorn. According to Eagan,

“States are actually able to do whatever they want (with respect to sales tax). So, you see there are some states that have higher bright-line tests, lower bright-line tests, and some haven’t (made a determination).”

— J.T. Eagan
Purdue University Northwest



“And what a shame that is, because that totally defeats the entire purpose of the internet and having that amazing ability to effectively get what you want when you want from where you want,” Eagan said.

These legislative hurdles put the onus on the business owner to ensure they’re in compliance.

Eagan said businesses need to examine their books to determine if they’re close to the thresholds for transactions or sales. Eagan’s advice: Start small and start mitigating your exposures by looking at what amounts to the most activity on a state-by-state basis.

Mike Ralston, special policy counsel at the Indiana Department of Revenue, said business owners must be mindful of where they’re making sales and keep records to streamline future reporting.

“You need to look at total transactions in each state, to give you an idea whether you’re approaching the (threshold that means) you need to register in that state,” he said.

Although, this can quickly amount to a lot of paperwork and be resource intensive. In some ways the sales tax

CEO Dwayne Walker had to put in the time to determine if his product is considered “food” and tax exempt in a state that doesn’t charge sales tax.

If you ask Walker, his product is in fact food, but that distinction hasn’t really entered the equation at this juncture. In business since 2014, Walker said he has worked with a consultant to stay in compliance with tax code.

“The way we work (now) is that if you buy in Indiana, you get charged sales tax,” he said. “If you’re outside of Indiana, you don’t get charged sales tax. The reason that we did it that way ... is we haven’t exceeded the (volume) threshold for any given state.”

However, if the rules change in any given state, Walker said he feels

confident that he and his team are well positioned to pivot as necessary.

Staying in compliance

ChicagoLand Popcorn is a real-life example of the concept of nexus in execution. This term refers to the threshold for the number of transactions or the volume of sales in these different states, and how they can differ. In other words, it can be an accounting nightmare.

“So now this small Northwest Indiana business has to go through and think about and do the research on their product,” Eagan said. “To me, it’s also inhibiting interstate commerce to some extent.”

He said, at some point, a business may decide the rules are too complicated in a given state.

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landscape is even more complicated than before.

Ralston said, while the Wayfair case addressed a very specific issue, it didn't set a single rule. There has been a movement in recent years to more toward more uniformity.

In the meantime, Ralston said there are resources to help small business owners cut through the clutter. For instance, he recommends consulting the Streamlined Sales Tax website, Federation of Tax Administrators and state tax commissions.

Being proactive is always the best approach, but if a business owner falls behind on sales tax remittance, Ralston is clear about the consequences.

"Just keeping your head down is not a good strategy," he said. "You need to be aware of what your responsibilities are."

He said if a business discovers they have outstanding obligations, they should move expeditiously to meet those requirements, because the liability is going to be cumulative.

"The longer you wait, the worse it's going to get," Ralston said.

Seeking out the help of a certified public accountant also can help on the front end.

Megan Applegate, a CPA with Michigan City-based Applegate & Co. PC, is well versed in matters pertaining to sales tax collection and remission. She helps clients register with the appropriate state and anticipate the transaction figures.

Applegate also helps clients file with the state, whether monthly, quarterly or annually.

She makes it a point to monitor real-world trends that might shape tax policy. For example, Applegate said the pandemic has brought with it the onset of remote work setups as the norm.

"Things have changed as far as how people work, and you had a lot more employees (who) possibly worked remotely," she said. "The question then becomes: 'do you have a physical presence there if you have employees (who) are working remotely?'"

Like all tax advisers, Applegate said she and her team are on the lookout for forthcoming guidance on this matter, as it would likely affect tax policy. ■



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Rendering provided by Crow Holdings



Domino's Pizza Inc. recently chose Merrillville to build a \$50.3 million production and warehouse 110,000-square-foot facility.

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NORTHWEST INDIANA FINDS STRENGTH IN INDUSTRIAL MARKET AS HOT SPOT WITH AMPLE ACCESS TO MIDWEST

ELIZABETH DAVIES

For years, Chicago held the utmost appeal for commercial builders. It was a transportation hub, a corporate center, a bustling metropolis.

But years of high taxes and red tape have developers shifting their focus elsewhere: Namely, to the Hoosier state.

Just 30 miles from Chicago, the Indiana state border presents with an unassuming nature not unlike that of its Midwestern roots. For the business world, where appeal lies in profit margins and efficiency improvements, that state border represents far more than meets the eye. On the other side lies a business-friendly legislature, tax incentives and congestion-free highways. It's a market developers can't help but be drawn to.

Indiana's appeal

"There are a number of reasons behind the growth," said Aaron McDermott, co-founder and president of Latitude Commercial. "One part is a combination of Chicago, Cook County and the state of Illinois doing such a poor job

at making that area good for business, as well as Indiana doing a very good job of attracting new businesses."

From the view at Latitude Commercial, a business-focused real estate company based in Crown Point, Northwest Indiana's industrial market is showing particular strength right now.

"Our proximity to airports, rail, the ports and the highways make it attractive for distribution centers to locate here to get goods to all parts of the Midwest,"

McDermott said.

Despite the strong demand for commercial space, building new sites is a particularly expensive proposition.

Construction costs have skyrocketed, labor is in short supply and many businesses that are experiencing a spike in demand need new space now — not after a building has come to fruition two years from now.

That's where the lure of speculative buildings comes in. Established by

experienced developers who save costs through creative designs and economies of scale, these buildings are empty shells that later can be customized to fit specific business needs. In fact, spec buildings offer companies a low risk, fast entry into their new market. They can take occupancy in weeks, rather than years. Tenants know the infrastructure they need — loading docks, overhead doors, water sources, fiber optic lines — are already in place. The red tape has already been cut, and launching operations can be immediate.

"Like much of the country, the current demand for spec space in Northwest Indiana is very strong right now," said Terry Larson, secretary/treasurer for Larson-Danielson Construction Co. Inc. of La Porte, whose company is designing a 115,000-square-foot speculative building. "There is simply not enough available space to satisfy the demand."

He said steel prices and longer delivery time frames also have created headwinds to bringing a spec building to market.

No signs of slowing

In the past 12 to 18 months, Northwest Indiana has experienced an increase in both building and tenant sizes.





Rendering provided by Domino's



The Diversey Building in Portage recently signed two more tenants for its 52,900 square feet of space in the AmeriPlex at the Port.

Rendering provided by Holladay Properties



BUILDING

Empty spaces are being rented relatively quickly.

It's the result of economic fallout from the pandemic on urban areas such as Chicago. Residential growth in Indiana boomed first, and now is being followed by an industrial market that's been fortified by changing consumer demands after the pandemic.

"The most significant example of this trend is Amazon, who has entered the market, absorbing both speculative industrial space and build-to-suit space in our market," said Michael O'Connor, vice president of development and leasing at Holladay Properties. "Developers of speculative industrial space have followed the Amazon lead and are entering the market."

For all of the negatives that came along with a global pandemic, there has been an economic upside for online retailers and distributors. Indeed, consumer spending is strong, with no signs of slowing.

"COVID has certainly led to an increase in demand for distribution services and increased demand for a variety of consumer products," O'Connor said. "The COVID impact to the economy certainly resulted in a number of losers but also a number of winners. The winners are driving the demand for speculative industrial space in the near term."

They will likely continue to gain interest from other retailers, who are

quick to play catch up with Amazon's business spike.

"More and more retailers such as Walmart, Target — and even local companies like Strack & Van Til — are offering pick up or delivery services directly from their stores," Latitude Commercial's McDermott said. "This could have a big impact on the industrial market if retailers don't see the need to buy expensive land and erect class A retailer locations when they may be able to get away with a much smaller presence in the market but build a large distribution center nearby."

As evidenced with Amazon, the industries most interested in Northwest Indiana are distribution sectors — specifically, those focused on consumer products, food production and automotive sectors. Holladay also reports demand from smaller tenants — those looking for between 5,000 and 20,000 square feet.

And the characteristics of speculative buildings are changing, as e-commerce-related warehousing grows. Tenants are looking for tall interior clear heights — up to 40 feet in some cases. They want efficient dock access and right-sized office build outs, along with nods toward sustainability: rooftop-mounted solar panels and EV charging stations.

Of course, when potential tenants ask, developers are quick to supply.

"We have planned the flex-industrial product to provide appealing designs, representative of institutional quality space while benefiting from economies of scale, which smaller tenants would not achieve in smaller, single tenant buildings," O'Connor said.

A particularly striking example of speculative building success is the

250,000-square-foot development by Crow Holdings in Merrillville. It opened with just one tenant, taking up half the building. In the year since, two additional large tenants have settled into the balance of the building.

"That should catch the attention of a lot of developers around Chicago and the Midwest," McDermott said. "What a lot of us have been saying for years is true: There is a large shortage of product like that around here."

That successful Merrillville speculative site is in Holladay Properties' AmeriPlex development, where business is in high demand and growing.

"We are glad to have made land investments in Northwest Indiana 20 years ago," said Tim Healy, chief executive and president of Holladay Properties. "We knew the day would come when

“People come here for the Dunes, the proximity to Chicago and the lakefront. We're seeing people come for all Northwest Indiana has to offer.”

— Rich Shields
Chester Inc.

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY



► **Tim Healy**, Holladay chief executive, is glad his company invested in Northwest Indiana some two decades ago. "Close enough to Chicago without all the Illinois baggage," he said.



► **Terry Larson**, of Larson-Danielson Construction, sees spec building in high demand for Northwest Indiana. His company is designing a 115,000-square-foot speculative building.



► **Aaron McDermott** is co-founder and president of Latitude Commercial. He believes Northwest Indiana's infrastructure and location make it a hot spot for industry.



► **Michael O'Connor**, of Holladay Properties, says speculative buildings include creative design concepts to accommodate the distribution industry while balancing rising construction costs.



► **Matt Zaia**, vice president of development, says a key component to Domino's choosing Northwest Indiana for its new facility is proximity to Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin.

Illinois would reach a tipping point with its noncompetitive business climate."

He said Holladay has been championing the virtues of Northwest Indiana for two decades. "Close enough to Chicago without all the Illinois baggage," Healy said.

Consider the example of Domino's Pizza Inc., a global company that recently chose Merrillville to build a \$50.3 million production and warehouse facility. There, the 110,000-square-foot facility will provide pizza dough for

Domino's stores throughout Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin.

"We're thrilled to build our newest supply chain center in Merrillville," said Matthew Zaia, Domino's vice president of development. "We look forward to

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opening our new center, which will help Domino's stores around the Region provide great-tasting pizza to customers every day."

Merrillville was the ideal location, Zaia said.

"Logistics, the location and proximity to existing stores were all heavy drivers in our decision to choose this location," he said. "We also wanted to ensure that the center location was not only great for today but for future store locations as well."

Not only does the state also offer a low tax base for the new Domino's facility, the Indiana Economic Development Corp. also offered Domino's up to \$2 million in conditional tax credits and up to \$100,000 in conditional training grants based on the company's job creation plans.

"We could not be more excited to be in the Hoosier state and its hard-working workforce," Zaia said. "We're so grateful for the infrastructure investments that continue to be made and the great relationships that we've been able to establish with the local and state offices."

More than a distribution hub

The speculative market isn't the only area experiencing growth, however. Architectural and construction firm Chester Inc. of Valparaiso focuses primarily on custom design-build, builds and expansions — a market that's particularly busy for the industrial industry.

"During the pandemic, we saw shifts for overall office and commercial builds and some uptick in the industrial sector," said Rich Shields, Chester's director of marketing and business development.

Case in point: Chester recently worked with a local machine shop to build an expansion on their longtime location. The company needed a shift to fit their changing needs and putting on a custom expansion — rather than moving to a larger building entirely — allowed the company to maintain its Northwest Indiana location. As a bonus to the local economy, the expansion gives the employer the opportunity to retain its existing workforce while hiring additionally from within the community.

"We find it's more beneficial to customize with design-build construction," Shields said. "Why give them something

they may not need immediately, but the option to grow and expand as their business expands?"

After all, Chester's manufacturing client knew exactly what many relocating companies are just now finding out: The people who live and work in Northwest Indiana enjoy their communities.

"We're seeing an influx of companies who want to retain and expand their

talent," Shields said. "This is a safe place to raise a family, and the school systems are great."

Shields said Northwest Indiana residents love the location and neighborhoods.

"People come here for the Dunes, the proximity to Chicago and the lakefront," he said. "We're seeing people come for all Northwest Indiana has to offer." ■



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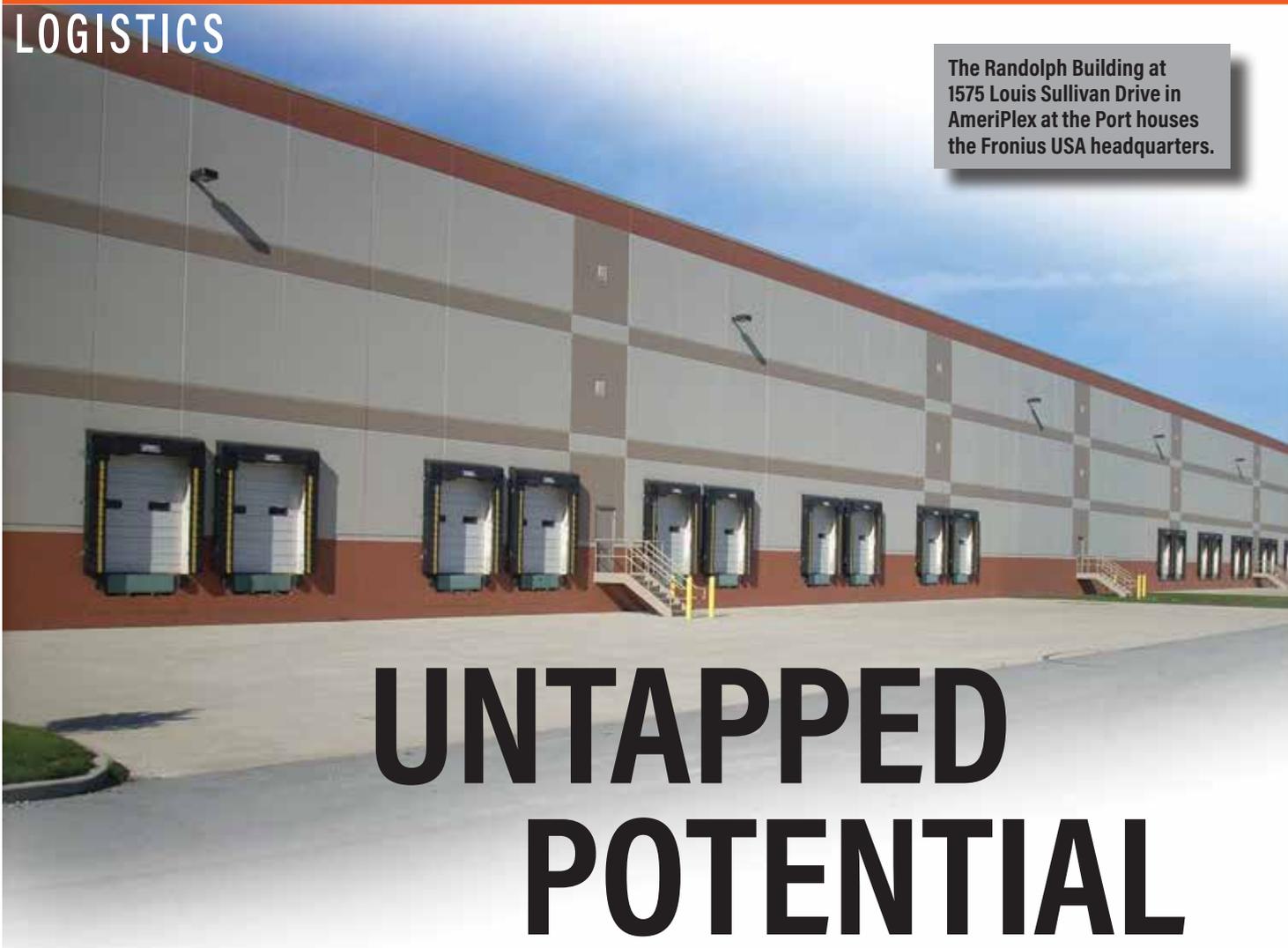
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The Randolph Building at 1575 Louis Sullivan Drive in AmeriPlex at the Port houses the Fronius USA headquarters.



UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

EXPERTS: REGION IN POSITION TO BECOME MAJOR LOGISTICS HUB IN BOOMING E-COMMERCE SECTOR

CHRIS ADAM

Growth in e-commerce is changing the business landscape.

Some experts suggest that brick-and-mortar retail might not be the kind of development communities seek. Instead, they are opting for warehousing to accommodate those companies that specialize in e-commerce. For example, Amazon is opening new delivery sites in Merrillville and Valparaiso.

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission recently conducted a study, which landed national honors, that examined e-commerce and its impact on development in Northwest Indiana. It focused on what the Region can do to raise its profile in that sector and to draw businesses that specialize in that

area. Economic development experts say future development in the Region will be influenced by e-commerce.

Growing interest

According to Eman Ibrahim at NIRPC, the team learned a great deal about the growing e-commerce sector across the nation and in Northwest Indiana. For one, they learned e-commerce is quickly changing cities and suburbs.

“While traditional retail is adapting to change, brick-and-mortar stores have always had distribution hubs and always will for stocking and restocking the shelves and racks for consumers,” said Karen Lauerman, president and CEO of the Lake County IN Economic Alliance. “E-commerce is just a part of that retail fulfillment evolution.”

She said, in every scenario, it’s a consumer purchasing goods and expecting delivery of those goods.

Lauerman said, while the NIRPC study notes the drastic change in retail, companies are consolidating, changing models, modes of operation and becoming more in-tune with their true target — the actual purchaser of goods not just those browsing in person or online.

But the delivery of those goods might become the problem.

Urban freight delivery growth in Indiana is expected to expand 40% by 2050, increasing congestion and negatively impacting air quality. Cars and trucks are the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions, especially trucks, which produce four times more nitrogen than cars and 22 times more particles than petrol.



Looking to the future

As home shopping grows, malls and other shopping centers will likely need to be refurbished into logistics hubs, supply spaces or removed altogether, and the land redeveloped for other uses.

E-commerce warehouses will grow larger in urban locations and generate more daily truck traffic, which local communities and regional entities need to consider in their planning, experts say. Express delivery services may result in challenges to mixed-use developments with limited freight zones and multiunit housing with limited storage for packages and fresh food deliveries.

In NIRPC's report, the team made several suggestions for what the Region can do to raise its profile in this sector:

- Improve transportation network connectivity to mitigate congestion on major arterials and interstates by analyzing freight data to identify truck freight bottlenecks.

- Establish a regional real estate market outlook for warehouses, fulfillment centers and logistics. Through the collaboration of the Northwest Indiana Forum and other economic development agencies, a true regional market study and cost comparison is already in the works to address

However, the use of EVs (electric vehicles) and autonomous vehicles (AVs) is increasing in the delivery process. Amazon and others already are committed to converting as quickly and reasonably as possible.

"Northwest Indiana boasts an enormous amount of rail, proximity to air freight and the Port of Indiana-Burns Harbor," Lauerman said. "If utilized correctly in the supply chain, (the) logistics industry could help reduce the amount of environmental impact."

Ibrahim, planning manager for NIRPC, pointed out another consequence.

"E-commerce also will impact employment, where job training should be made available to accommodate advances in technology," she said.

The Region must prepare for this shift and comprehend the broad range of e-commerce impacts to benefit from its influence on our future, Ibrahim said.

Ivy Tech Community College offers educational opportunities in advanced logistics. Lauerman said several of the major developers in Lake County plan to incorporate workforce training to ensure a steady pipeline of workers.

The further expansion of e-commerce will impact urban logistics and change roadway system use and needs. It will increase demand for facilities such as warehousing, distribution centers and last-mile delivery. These facilities, located increasingly within urban areas, require interstate highway access to accommodate more frequent daily truck traffic.

These operations also require larger workforces than traditional warehouses, even with increased automation. The trend inevitably will lead to more trips by employees coming from areas with limited transit service options and working multiple shifts, experts say.

Additionally, it increases the number of nonpeak-period trips into residential areas, impacting safety. These trips include traditional delivery services such as FedEx, UPS, USPS and independent contractors who use personal vehicles to transport packages for companies like Uber.

"E-commerce is an important way for regional economic transformation and development, improving the quality of economic operations and enhancing

international competitiveness," said Scott Weber, transportation planner and analyst for NIRPC.

Lauerman said that, for almost two decades, transportation, distribution and logistics, which includes third-party logistics, warehouse, cold storage and e-commerce facilities, has been one of the target industries that the seven-county Region attracts.

"And we continue on that path to capitalization on our infrastructure assets," she said.

NWI's transportation network employs many modes that accommodate travel needs.

The Region is home to 5,800 linear miles of roadways equaling over 13,000 total lane miles. It is also a great freight hub in the central U.S. The Region should harness the opportunities presented by e-commerce to ensure our communities leverage the benefits, experts say.

"Retail stores may be diminished, but distribution centers continue to be fundamental for expanding logistics



Photo provided by Holladay Properties

Large storage space for goods waiting to be delivered to customers will replace some retail, regional experts say.

networks," said Peter Kimball, regional planner for NIRPC. "Living near a shopping location becomes less important when ordering everything online and having it delivered to the home."

Kimball said the potential for working remotely enabled by the internet allows for greater opportunities to live in remote locations.

“E-commerce is an important way for regional economic transformation and development, improving the quality of economic operations and enhancing international competitiveness.”

— Scott Weber
Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission



high-growth areas. The future of retail is more likely omnichannel in nature, and an omnichannel approach to retail can be applied to any form of a shopping center or big box store in any setting. Many large chain retailers have substantially reduced their footprint in recent years.

However, the concept of the traditional town center is making a comeback. It purposely includes mixed uses of retail, work and entertainment with residential and accessible transit.

Retailers have been forced to reconsider their role in the marketplace and find new, creative ways of getting customers back in their stores with the increase of online shopping, the experts said. For example, some retailers introduced “retailtainment,” a concept from the late ’90s that provides customers with unique and entertaining experiences that promote shopping on new levels.

“NWI still needs to work on repurposing the vacant retail spaces,” Ibrahim

- transportation, distribution and logistics, including e-commerce distribution facilities.
- Create loading zones on high traffic roads to make it easier for delivery drivers to find space and access buildings without impeding other road users.
 - Increase and prioritize funding to improve urban freight movement and continue to raise the Region’s profile as a thriving place to do business. Raising the Region’s status is ongoing with LCEA and other regional economic development partners.

- Work with intermodal facilities and e-commerce carriers to identify locations with high freight movement levels and map out strategies for alleviating freight-related congestion.
- Redevelop blighted sites, vital for inner-ring communities with no land available to grow their tax base.
- Property owners and real estate investors need to focus on location, innovation, building efficiency, and flexibility by capitalizing on urban areas with high population density and



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said. "As a result of e-commerce, some physical shops and retailers struggle, and some are forced to close."

Ibrahim said empty spaces have increased in malls and shopping strips.

"We need to forecast demand for future land development and the requirements of logistics use to accommodate future e-commerce needs," Ibrahim said.

Lauerman said it is important to note the Region does not have an abundance of vacant large-scale stores.

"Many of our storefronts currently available are smaller in footprint or are hospitality and restaurants," she said. "LCEA always looks at our open retail space for all projects, provided the community will welcome that new purpose and rezone or provide special use variance for the end user (company) and its operation."

Big names bring opportunities

E-commerce, including Amazon, have targeted Northwest Indiana for growth.

"Northwest Indiana has a number of advantages in today's climate, specifically the tax environment and fiscal stability of Indiana compared to other states," said Brandon Dickinson, economic development director for the city of Valparaiso. "If Northwest Indiana communities can meet the opportunities while enhancing quality of life, this could be a time of tremendous growth for both residential and commercial efforts. It's an exciting time with a lot of possibilities."

He said, because of its location between Chicago, Lafayette and Indianapolis, I-65 seems like a natural spot for e-commerce distribution centers.

"Indiana is a Crossroads of America for a reason — we're well situated logistically for these," Dickinson said.

The Gary airport is one of those big pluses. It has been focusing its efforts on growing the freight side of its operation. The airport recently landed UPS as a major tenant.

"The Gary, Indiana, airport was the optimal place to position a new UPS gateway to handle the demand for next-day-air pickup volume in the area," said Ed Moser, UPS vice president of industrial engineering. "The proximity

of the airport, versus Chicago O'Hare, allows more flexibility in pickup time for local customers and reduces overall UPS driver expense and miles driven."

Holladay Properties has developed two of the larger mixed-use business parks in Northwest Indiana: AmeriPlex at the Port in Portage and AmeriPlex at the Crossroads in Merrillville. Both business parks are 400 acres and were built in the early 2000s.

"We have been peddling land and warehouse space in Northwest Indiana for 20 years and never have we seen such demand for land and e-commerce activity," said Tim Healy, CEO of Holladay Properties. "Northwest Indiana is being recognized as a viable and economically advantageous location to tap the growing NWI market and easily service Chicago, Indianapolis and southwest Michigan." ■

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Musical inspirations



Teacher transforms passion for piano into successful Valparaiso business venture

PHILIP POTEPPA

A 30-year arts and business reputation steeped in tradition and success helped Judith Neville assume the ownership of Gratz Piano in Valparaiso to guide a new musical chapter.

Originally opened as Gratz Piano in downtown Valparaiso in 1985, Judith and her husband, David, purchased the business from the Gratz family at the end of 2015 and reopened it in January 2016 with slight rebranding

Wirt-Emerson School for Visual and Performing Arts in Gary, became the lead musical educator to offer instruction in piano, voice and guitar.

“Being from Merrillville, I had known Mike Gratz, who started this business, since 1994,” Neville said.

“When Mike passed away in February 2014, the family continued with the store, and son Adam decided to concentrate more on the piano-tuning side of the business, which allowed us this opportunity to continue the rest of the

degree in piano performance at Spelman College in 1980 and her master’s degree in music and piano performance at Miami University in 1982.

“I’ve learned throughout the years to let music be able to breathe as it is being created,” she said. “We did some months when we closed during the height of the pandemic, but then found this was also the time when people were looking to get back to music as a way to feel better.”

Students at Gratz Opus 118 Music & Dance begin as young as 3 years old and continue well beyond the age of retirement.

Jan Yudt of Valparaiso describes herself as one of Judith’s “both new and old students.”

“I took piano lessons when I was young and then decided that now, even though later in life, I have time now to return to piano,” said Yudt, who has been taking piano instruction from Judith for a year.

“Judith is great in every attention to detail for her teaching,” Yudt said. “She teaches in a way that makes music come alive.”

Yudt said Neville can depict sounds in music, such as a waterfall, and make it really sound like a waterfall.

“I smile every time I’m playing piano in her studio during my lessons,” Yudt said.

Judith and David have three children, two of whom also graduated with college degrees as music majors.

“I’ve also loved to be a musical guide for children, both my own and my students,” Neville said.

She finds it interesting how music has continued to be much the same in many ways throughout the centuries for the appreciation of the classics and the core foundation of how it is taught.

“But in other ways, it has also changed,” Neville said. “Today, I get more and more requests for sheet music for the background music associated with favorite PlayStation video games.” ■



Judith Neville has continued a three-decade musical tradition of piano lessons and a sheet music retail showroom at Gratz Opus 118 Music & Dance in Valparaiso.

Photo by Philip Potempa

as Gratz Opus 118 Music & Dance at 2701 Beech St.

“When the original store was in operation, it had already established itself as a destination, offering sheet music, music lessons and the largest piano showroom in Northwest Indiana,” Neville said.

“I was already known, along with my husband, for our Neville Ministries Inc., and after much discussion, we decided we would purchase the portion of the Gratz business that focused on the education and sheet music sales.”

Neville, a former piano instructor at Valparaiso University and 16-year veteran piano teacher at the

business for sheet music sales and the piano lessons and education aspect.”

Along with music instruction, Gratz Opus 118, which spans a retail space and lesson rooms of more than 7,200 square feet, continues the tradition started by Mike Gratz with a large inventory of sheet music, method books and repertoire for piano, voice and guitar. Before the pandemic in spring 2020, the business also branched into dance instruction in 2017, but it was forced to pause it during the COVID-19 response.

“A good teacher will embrace change and make use of any tools available,” said Neville, who earned her bachelor’s

A year of learning

Ken Iwama leads Indiana University Northwest through crisis, now looks forward to growing Region presence

PHILIP POTEPPA

Indiana University Northwest Chancellor Ken Iwama has a clear answer about the highlight of his first year leading the Gary campus.

“It was Aug. 1, 2020, when I began my time on campus as we were all working together to plan for what was next in the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Iwama, who is the seventh chancellor at IUN. “By the time we arrived to the end of my first school year here at IUN, despite a time of conflict and side-taking in other places, we experienced none of that here on campus.”

He said humanity is alive and well.

“When I saw faculty, staff and students together with our community for our end-of-the-year commencement, it was a great way for me to mark my first year here in Northwest Indiana,” Iwama said. “I always remember that moment.”

Before IUN, Iwama was founding vice president for the division of economic development, continuing studies and government relations for the College of Staten Island of the City University of New York. He also served as chief of staff and deputy for two College of Staten Island presidents. Before working at that college, he was general counsel for the state-operated school district of Jersey City.

Iwama holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from the University of New Hampshire, a Master of Arts in labor and employment relations from the Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations, and a law degree from Seton Hall Law School.

Iwama said among the words heard often during the first year of his term as chancellor were “pivot” and “unprecedented,” references which became common for many around the world in 2020 and 2021.

“We are forever changed living through this pandemic, and it’s been a time for

myself and people everywhere to re-assess and take a step back as we adapt,” Iwama said.

The crisis taught everyone the importance being flexible, Iwama said.

“Being able to return to in-person learning in our campus has always been key as something that is core to our education experience and our values to give every student our investment of time and attention,” he said.

Dave Ryan, executive director of the Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce and a member of the IU Northwest Board of Advisors, describes Iwama as a proven leader and welcome new identity for Northwest Indiana.

“The Region is very fortunate to have had strong, visionary leaders at Indiana University Northwest throughout its history, with chancellors Bruce Bergland and William Lowe leading the way since 1999,” Ryan said.

“As one of the most diverse, urban and industrialized areas of the state, IU Northwest strives to enhance the quality of life in NW Indiana, and on Aug. 1, 2020, university leaders chose Ken Iwama as the new chancellor of IU Northwest, in the midst of a pandemic.”

Ryan said Iwama is “a strong advocate of diversity, inclusion and collaboration,” with a “proven record” from his tenure in New York at the College of Staten Island.

“Chancellor Iwama’s experience in New York, coupled with his unbridled enthusiasm and ability to work with community leaders, bode well for not only his students but also for his new faculty members, and the entire region served by IU Northwest,” Ryan said.

Ryan said the IUN advisory board appreciates the fresh perspective and bold vision Iwama brings to the campus, particularly his focus on the economic development of the Region as an anchor institution.

“We have all enjoyed working together with Chancellor Iwama during his first year in office,” Ryan said.

Among top priorities for Iwama is to grow enrollment, as he describes, “at a time of shifting demographics,” by working closely with area high schools for an early approach and partnership for promoting advanced education.



Photo provided by Indiana University Northwest

Iwama and his wife of 30 years, Joanne, live along Miller Beach in Ogden Dunes and agree they love their new landscape and life in Northwest Indiana.

“Our sons Patrick and Marcus and our daughter Midori all grew up when we lived along the Jersey Shore,” Iwama said. “We also lived along the beach then, and you could look to the left and see New York City.”

The view now when he looks to the left is Chicago.

“It’s a much quieter and relaxed pace here, and we are loving exploring all of the small towns and communities of Northwest Indiana,” he said. ■



A passion for the stage



Performing before live audiences a constant for Elkhart County's Janis Logsdon

MICHAEL PUENTE

Janis Logsdon has a passion for live theater productions.

In high school, Logsdon performed in musicals and plays. After she graduated, her love for performing continued at Indiana University in Bloomington.

Three decades later, Logsdon's interest in theater is just as strong now as it's ever been.

"I went to Indiana University as a theater major because I love to do musical

Nappanee before joining the Elkhart County CVB.

Once she returned to Northern Indiana after graduating from IU, she connected with local theater groups, especially musical theater.

"I've always kept my big toe in it," she said. "I've always done it, and never once ever thought about not doing it."

For several years, Logsdon performed with The Company, based in the South Bend area. It was started by Melanie Como, daughter-in-law to the late

"I haven't done an (indoor) show in probably a year, and that's a long time for me," Logsdon said. "Usually, I do at least one show every year."

Logsdon performed in an outdoor show, "Mamma Mia," with Premier Arts in Elkhart in August 2020. She felt fortunate to land a part because she wasn't familiar with Premier Arts.

"I was like, 'I'm going to audition for this show,'" Logsdon recalled. "I knew the artistic director, but I had never really performed with them, which can be kind of scary."

Logsdon said joining theater production is like becoming part of a family.

"When you do theater, it's very much a community," she said. "You become like a family when you're doing a show."

When outdoor productions were permitted last summer with social distancing requirements, Logsdon decided to pursue a role in "Mamma Mia!"

"It can be a little intimidating going into a group you're unfamiliar with," she said. "But I was like, 'Hey, you know what? I'm just going to put it out there. And if I don't get cast, no harm, no foul.' But I was lucky enough to get cast as one of the dynamos, Rosie."

For Logsdon, it was an experience of a lifetime, and her new relationship with Premier Arts has continued.

"I just had a blast, and it opened me up to this whole other group of people," she said. "I've subsequently done three other shows with them and have just thoroughly enjoyed it."

Craig Gibson, executive artistic director of Premier Arts, describes Logsdon as a "director's dream."

"She's focused, prepared and always willing to try new things," Gibson said, who has known Logsdon for more than a decade but has worked closely with her the past two years.

"Janis always has a smile on her face, she brings joy to the rehearsal hall," he said. "As a performer, Janis has a



Janice Logsdon performs with Antwon Williams in the Premier Arts presentation of "Mamma Mia!" in August 2020.

Photo provided by Peter Ringenberg for Premier Arts

theater," said Logsdon, assistant director of the Elkhart County Convention and Visitors Bureau. "I've enjoyed singing ever since I was very young."

Logsdon's father supported her love for the theater, but he also encouraged his daughter to "have a backup plan," she said.

"I double majored in theater and telecommunications, and that's how I got into the marketing field," Logsdon said. "I've always had my hands, employment-wise, in marketing."

Logsdon worked with WNDU in South Bend and Amish Acres in

legendary crooner Perry Como.

Perry Como's son, Ronald, attended the University of Notre Dame, where he met Melanie, and settled in the South Bend area. Ronald Como passed away in January 2019 at the age of 78.

Melanie Como still lives in Granger, Indiana, and is 81 years old.

"I did a number of shows with The Company: "Chicago," "A Chorus Line," "The Sound of Music," Logsdon said.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, indoor theater performances came to a stop.



Photo provided by Peter Ringenberg for Premier Arts

Janice Logsdon performs in the Premier Arts production of "Lullaby of Broadway" in June 2021 at the Lerner Theatre in downtown Elkhart.

beautiful presence and voice; she is stunning to watch on stage."

Logsdon said Premier Arts is populated by performers from all walks of life.

"We have teachers, executives, home-makers," she said. "The theater provides an equitable playing field where everyone can contribute and shine in their avocation — no matter their occupation."

Now in her 50s, Logsdon plans to continue singing and dancing despite the time required to devote to the art.

"I get up at 6 in the morning," she said. "I work all day, then I'll have rehearsal at night, and I don't get home until 10 p.m. So, it's a big commitment."

Logsdon admits giving time to the performing arts is exhausting "but it's exhilarating at the same time."

"I love the comradery of it," she said.

Logsdon feels energized when she's around other performers.

"I love being around these other creative people and that collaborative energy that comes with working on a show, there's nothing like it," she said. "I hope that I just continue to do this until I literally can't get up off the couch." ■



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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Direction for youth

Campagna Academy holds true to founding mission to help rebuild lives of young people



Campagna Academy was honored in June by Gov. Eric Holcomb with the Governor's Half Century Business Award. The Campagna Academy Hope Center (shown here) is in Schererville.

Provided by Campagna Academy

CARRIE NAPOLEON

For almost three-quarters of a century, Campagna Academy has remained true to its mission of restoring hope and building dreams for Northwest Indiana's youth.

The way that mission is carried out may have changed over the years but the dedication to the Region's youth has never wavered.

"We are definitely changing in many ways," said Elena Dwyre, Campagna's CEO.

Campagna Academy began 74 years ago as The Rev. Michael Campagna's Hoosiers Boys' Town, an orphanage for Indiana boys. The facility evolved to include treatment for girls and ultimately transitioned from an orphanage to offer residential behavioral services and then to the residential and outpatient mental health facility it is today.

"What's nice about Campagna is it offers a full continuum of care," Dwyre

said. Clients start in a very intensive environment and move through treatment with the goal of returning to their homes.

Currently, Campagna is the only residential treatment provider in the Region with a program certified to work with children with intellectual and learning disabilities, and with both medical and

psychiatric needs. More than 150 children are on campus at any given time receiving various levels of care and services.

"The needs of the children are changing significantly," Dwyre said. Children needing assistance from Campagna need more specialized care, such as substance abuse treatment and psychiatric care.

"I think that is one of the things about Campagna ... the mission has remained the same," Dwyre said. "We have been able to successfully adapt to meet the needs of the children and their famil(ies)."

Not every child getting treatment at Campagna is involved in the system. Many families have children that need intensive psychiatric care that provides treatment specialized for child and family.

Campagna also offers extensive outpatient substance abuse treatment. About 40% of youth in residential treatment need some level of assistance for substance abuse.

Getting the youth served by the facility through the program is not enough. Dwyre said Campagna has added a six-month after-care program for the youth and their families.

Dwyre said the program helps prevent recidivism and helps ensure the family stays together. The team works with the child and the family on mental health, educational needs and community support to help ensure the child does not end up back in care.

"We always aim at keeping kids close to home," Dwyre said.

Clients come from different sources, such as parents who place their children in Campagna for its specialized

2021 VIRTUAL CAMPAGNA HOUR

► Meet with Campagna Academy's CEO, COO, CFO and foster care team virtually at 8 am Oct. 26. Contact Beth at Bsamatowicz@cahope.org or 219.322.8614, ext. 332, to sign up.

care or youth in state guardianship.

"Regardless where they are coming from, they are experiencing severe trauma," Dwyre said.

Campagna Academy was honored in June by Gov. Eric Holcomb with the Governor's Half Century Business Award in recognition of its longevity and service to its employees, community and the state. Campagna has operated for 74 consecutive years.

The governor recognized 101 businesses with either the half century or century honor. More than 1,160 Indiana companies have been recognized during the award's 30-year history.

"I'm honored to recognize these dedicated Hoosier business leaders who have created a lasting impact not only on their communities



"At the end of the day, you feel grateful that families are entrusting you with the life and treatment of their children."

— Elena Dwyre
Campagna Academy

but to the state as a whole," Holcomb said.

Dwyre said the community's investment in Campagna has helped support its mission. Local foundations like the Legacy Foundation, Anderson Foundation, Crown Point Community Foundation and the Foundations of East Chicago, among others, have been extremely supportive of Campagna's mission and understand the financial challenges the organization faces in delivering on that mission.

"It's extremely challenging and a big responsibility," Dwyre said. "At the end of the day, you feel

grateful that families are entrusting you with the life and treatment of their children."

Jason Akers, vice president of Campagna's board of directors, said getting the message out about the Campagna mission and how it has evolved over the years is one of the board's goals.

"I think a lot of people can relate to Hoosier Boys' Town," he said. "It's so much more nowadays."

Akers said often people underestimate just what it is Campagna does for the Region's youth. "If they didn't have a place like this, I don't know where they would end up," Akers said.

With the guidance of Dwyre, Akers said the board is trying to innovate and be ahead of the times in terms of the care rendered to Campagna's clients. Akers encourages the public to participate in Campagna Hour, a program offered every other month that showcases the facility and its mission.

"People would be really surprised and proud Campagna Academy is in their community helping the children," Akers said. ■



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Collaboration yields results

Leaders find breaking down silos effective means to get more done for community

TONY OSS

The past 12 to 18 months have shown how important we all are to each other. World events have conspired to isolate families and individuals, but we have persevered.

People work best when they work together. Diversity of viewpoints, ideas and beliefs will bring about the best solutions. Through all the recent challenges to how we work and play, we have continued to find new ways to work together in teams and collaborate to find solutions to problems.



► **Tony Oss** is director of preconstruction services with Larson-Danielson Construction in La Porte and serves as chair of the managing board of the Northwest Indiana Forum.

We have been fortunate to live in a state where teamwork and collaboration over many years have created exceptional financial stability for our state government. The efforts to maintain fiscal responsibility in the Indiana statehouse now has afforded us with a tremendous opportunity.

Earlier this year, Gov. Eric Holcomb and the Indiana Economic Development Corp. (IEDC) launched the Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI), a bold, transformational program that will dedicate \$500 million in state appropriations to promote strategic investments to make Indiana a magnet for talent and economic growth. The state has committed to awarding grants up to \$50 million to up to 10 regions throughout the state.

Through this initiative, the state is encouraging neighboring counties,

cities and towns to partner to create a shared vision for their future, mapping out the programs, initiatives and projects that are critical for them to retain talent today and attract the workforce of tomorrow. Fortune often shines brightly on those most prepared!

Never has our Region been more prepared to capture the type of opportunity put forth by the State's READI initiative. Almost three years ago, the Northwest Indiana Forum embarked on a game changing initiative for Northwest Indiana. With the input of more than 500 business leaders, legislators, entrepreneurs, concerned citizens and more, the strategy, Ignite the Region, Northwest Indiana's strategy for economic transformation was developed.

The overall goals of Ignite is to focus on growing per capita income and investment in Northwest Indiana, creating a paradigm shift in the area of entrepreneurship and innovation, increasing our infrastructure while making sure we continue to connect to the impressive assets already here. In addition, attracting and developing a talented workforce and connecting them to meaningful work, Ignite aims to create not only livable places but places where people want to live, where they belong and feel part of something bigger than themselves.

The collaboration and teamwork developed among businesses, nonprofits and local governments through the Ignite the Region plan during the past two years have set the table for our Region to not just apply for transformational programs like READI but to win!

The mission of the READI grant aligns perfectly to the goals and strategies

set forth for Northwest Indiana in the Ignite plan. The Northwest Indiana Forum, the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) and other partner organizations have been working with local nonprofits and governments to develop our Region's application for the READI program. The response and effort put forth by everyone has generated ideas and insights not only for READI but also to prepare our Region for more opportunities and growth in the future.

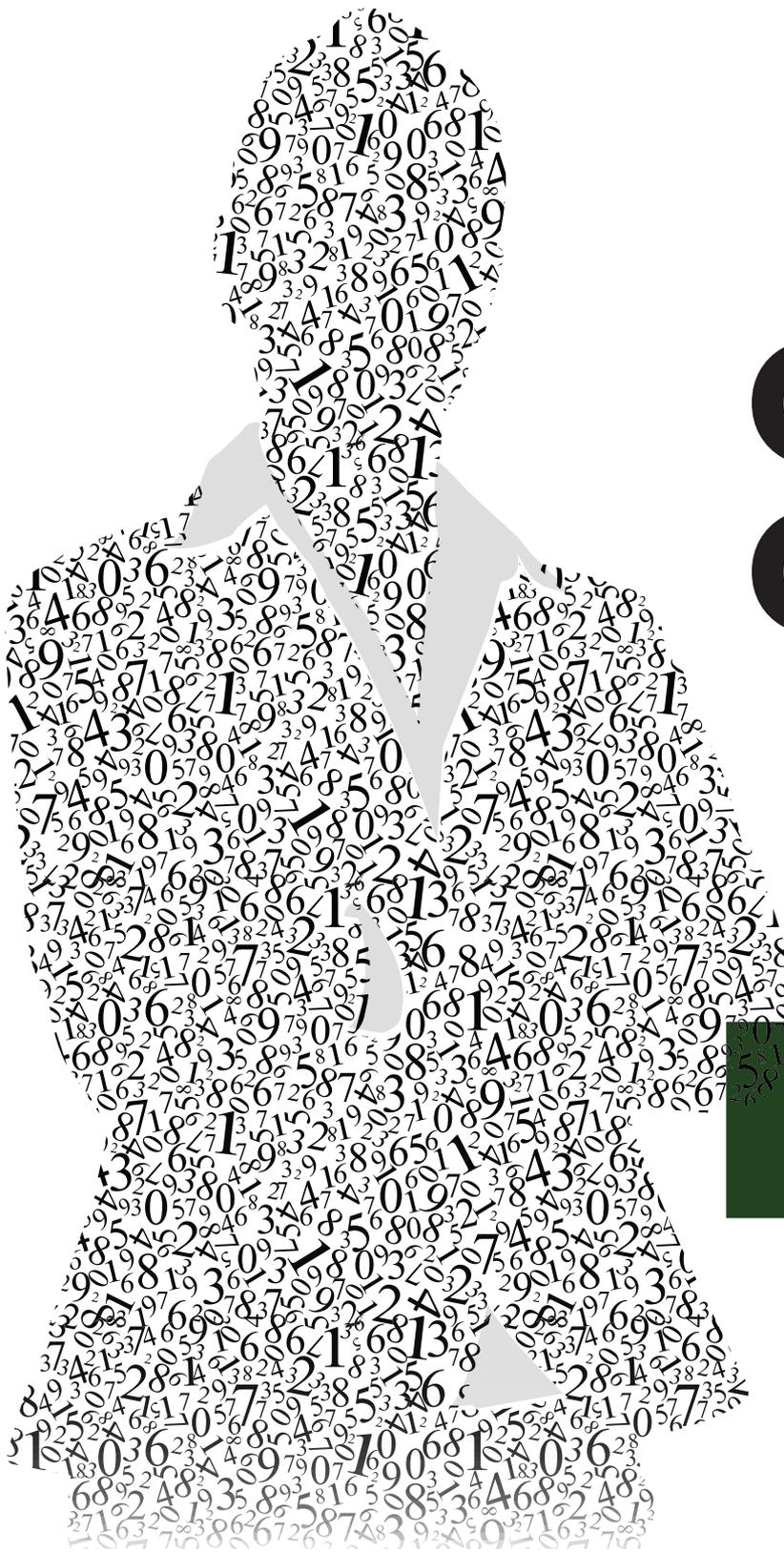
For decades Northwest Indiana struggled to tell the story of our Region to the rest of the world. The collaboration and teamwork put into the Ignite the Region plan has not only told the story of our spectacular corner of Indiana, but it has helped set the course for our Region to achieve more than we ever thought possible. Our time is now. Northwest Indiana is ready to Ignite!

The spark that is the Ignite the Region plan has created a fire that we must continue to work together to fuel.

Andrew Carnegie once said, "Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results."

Teamwork and collaboration must continue to be our fuel to take the Region to the next level. Together our Region is one of the most capable, productive and diverse in the nation. Together we can accomplish all the things that we envision for our home. Together we must work to continue to see the value in forward movement for every community in the Region. ■

“The spark that is the Ignite the Region plan has created a fire that we must continue to work together to fuel.”



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