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The Human Side of Business

Employers find taking care of workers benefits bottom line

*TJ Kanczuzewski
Chairman/co-founder
Inovateus Solar*



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Left to Right: Stevan Desancic, President, The Progress Group, Inc., with Alek Desancic, CEO, The Progress Group, Inc., and Ron Knestrict, VP Business Banker, Peoples Bank

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Northwest Indiana Business Magazine

AUG-SEP 2018

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Troy Linker



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Investing in Your Team

Small investments in employee training, recognition and benefits improves morale and the bottom line

Most of us know intuitively that the human element is what differentiates us from other businesses. It is easy to lose sight of it at times when we get wrapped up in a new piece of machinery, a new process or technique. We know that anyone with a bank account can buy the technology. It takes more than money to build, motivate, and manage a team whose job it is to identify customer needs to create innovative cost-effective processes to meet those needs and to deliver the product or service to the customer.

In this issue, we focus on the human side of business. Jerry Davich shares some best practices from several local businesses that are recognized one way or another as good places to work. Being recognized as a company where people want to be has financial benefits. Studies show that businesses whose employees feel they are treated well are rewarded with financial returns between two and three times higher than average, with 50 percent lower turnover, and with higher customer satisfaction.

The demographics of the Region is changing. The overall population for NWI is shrinking, aging, and becoming less White and Black and more Hispanic and Asian. As the demographics change, so does the local workforce. Bob Moulesong talks with local leaders who share their data and perspective on how the local economy is adapting to the changing workforce.

Technologies come and go, but the need for a well-trained workforce is constant. Lauren Caggiano talked

with local experts who offer programs and assistance to employers who want to find new workers and retrain their current workers. Training helps employees of all ages feel confident they can learn, even mid-career, preventing them from becoming stuck in a role without any opportunity to advance.

Indiana's unemployment rate has been under the national average for the last several years creating a job seekers market. Lesly Bailey shares ideas for employers who want to update their benefits packages with a focus on lowering their turnover and recruitment costs by retaining and promoting their current workers.

Also in this issue, Carrie Napoleon introduces us to some wellness activities that include a chance to socialize and relax afterward with a drink or two. Jerry Davich profiles CPA firm Swartz Reston and tells us why they are older than they think. John Cain and Jack Walton update us on things to do and see in NWI and South Bend. Sol Estrada and Andriana Cattan explain how the SLYCE leadership program is making a difference in their lives as they strive to make a difference for others. Larry Avila takes a look at high school football and how victories leads to fans and more funding. Finally, Dr. Vanessa Allen-McCloud president of the Urban League of NWI reminds us that courageously speaking out against injustice can lead to change.

Thank you for reading this issue of *Northwest Indiana Business Magazine!*
 —Troy Linker

Around the Region

Stay current with local people, news and events

LARRY AVILA

Business

CLH, CPAs and Consultants was recognized for reaching its 25th business anniversary in 2017 during the **Economic Develop Corp. Michigan City's** biennial awards banquet in May. EDCMC recognized local companies, which have made substantial investments in their business during 2016 and 2017 and also honored businesses celebrating anniversary milestones. CLH was one of six businesses recognized at the event.

Lakeside Wealth Management of Chesterton in June restructured its management team to accommodate future growth. Staffing updates include: **Kelly Shikany**, financial adviser, was named a co-director, wealth management division; **Craig Draper**, in-house counsel and retirement plan consultant, will continue his role as in-house counsel but will also be director, retirement plan division; **Elizabeth Marks**, former director of operations, has shifted to director of strategic development; **Michele Shifley**, formerly director of operations—retirement plan division, is director of operations for both the retirement plan and wealth management divisions; **Amanda Herren** was named new director of human resources and technology.

Vanta Coda was named new CEO of the **Ports of Indiana**. He replaced Rich Cooper who retired July 1 but will remain with the organization through the end of the year. Coda brings 25 years of experience in maritime and multimodal operations on the Great Lakes, Gulf of Mexico and Ohio River. He most recently served as the executive director for the Duluth Seaway Port Authority. The Ports of Indiana is a statewide port authority managing ports on the Ohio River—Jeffersonville and Mount Vernon, and Lake Michigan—Burns Harbor.

Banking

Peoples Bank of Munster in partnership with the **Legacy Foundation** and **Accion**, have formed the **Small Business Development Pilot Project**. The program is designed to promote small business development in low- to moderate-income communities of Lake County, the organizations said in a June 4 joint statement. **Turon Cummings** of Whiting and owner of **Creative ConEcepts**, received the first grant through the program.

Construction

Chester Inc. of Valparaiso was honored by **Chief Buildings** for

its work on building additions to Polycon Industries in Merrillville and Ratner Steel in Portage. The additions at both businesses helped the companies create a combined 150 new jobs, according to Chester Inc. Chief, which is based in Nebraska and has a location in Rensselaer, annually recognizes outstanding building projects. The awards presented by Chief recognized Chester Inc.'s architectural and construction services division.

Carl Sutter, an executive with Wisconsin-based **McMahon**, an engineering and architectural design firm, with an office in Valparaiso, was elected to a three-year term as Region 3 director of the American Society of Civil Engineers. Sutter, a senior vice president, leads McMahon's environmental and infrastructure division.

Bruce Mitchell, a ready-mix driver with **Ozinga**, which has several locations across Northwest Indiana, took third place June 2 at the 10th annual Indiana Ready Mixed Concrete Association Mixer Driver Competition. The IRMCA competition tests drivers on a written exam, truck inspection and up to 10 driving challenges. Mitchell has been with Ozinga since 2002 and has 25 years of experience as a ready-mix driver.



Business
Amanda Herren



Business
Craig Draper



Business
Elizabeth Marks



Business
Kelly Shikany



Business
Michele Shifley



Business
Vanta Coda



Construction
Carl Sutter



Education
Regina Biddings-Muro

Education

Regina Biddings-Muro, a 14-year administrator at **Purdue University Northwest**, left her post at the college in June to take over as vice president of university advancement at California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, Calif., in early August. Biddings-Muro, an East Chicago native, served as vice chancellor of institutional advancement at Purdue Northwest since 2012, after serving as chief of staff from 2004 to 2011. Under her direction, PNW has increased fundraising each year.

Tatiana Botero, associate teaching professor of Spanish at the **University of Notre Dame**, was named 2018 Indiana teacher of the year for university-level instruction by the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese. She will receive the award at a ceremony Nov. 2.

The **Ivy Tech Foundation** was ranked as the top fundraiser among community college systems nationwide, according to a survey conducted by the Council for Aid to Education. At \$16.4 million, the amount raised by Ivy Tech exceeds the second-place community college fundraiser by 43 percent, according to the 2017 Voluntary Support for Education (VSE) survey. This is the ninth consecutive year that Ivy Tech has taken the No. 1 spot on the list, the college said in a statement. Ivy Tech, which operates campuses around the state, including Northwest and North Central Indiana, said about 90 percent of the funds raised are

used for scholarships, instructional equipment and technology, and educational programs, which means millions of dollars are invested annually to directly enhance student success.

The University of Notre Dame in May announced that it received a \$10 million anonymous donation, which will help in its efforts to reduce poverty through evidence-based programs and policies. The funds will go to the college's Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO), a research center in its department of economics. The money will support two new faculty positions and grow the center's Social Innovation Fund, which supports pilot programs that aid in anti-poverty efforts. The search for the two new faculty positions will begin this spring, the university said.

Julie Gardner, assistant professor of biology at the **University of Saint Francis - Crown Point**, recently was named to the 2018 American Society for Clinical Pathology's 40 Under Forty list. Gardner also is the director of USF Crown Point's Medical Laboratory Technician program. ASCP's 40 Under Forty program spotlights 40 accomplished pathologists, pathology residents and laboratory professionals younger than 40 who have made significant contributions to the profession and stand out as the future of laboratory leadership.

Gaming

Ameristar Casino Hotel East Chicago opened its new 15,000-square-foot \$6 million

landside high-limit slots and table games room, located inside its pavilion area in late May. The new landside gaming area opens as the casino continues its \$15 million renovation to its four-level casino gaming floor, which is scheduled to be completed by October. Indiana's Ameristar is the first Northwest Indiana casino to take advantage of a 2015 Indiana law, which allows the state's casinos to move a part of its gaming operations to land. The Indiana Gaming Commission approved Ameristar's proposed gaming transition last November.

Blue Chip Casino, Hotel & Spa in Michigan City announced plans in late May to add almost 15,000 square feet of meeting space. Construction is expected to start before year's end with a projected completion by fall 2019, Blue Chip said in a statement. Once completed, Blue Chip will have more than 45,000 square feet of rentable event space.

Technology

Merrillville-based **Cimcor Inc.**, a developer of security, integrity and compliance software, was awarded the **2018 Fortress Cybersecurity Award** in the software category for Organizational Excellence, Threat Detection, Endpoint Detection and Compliance by The Business Intelligence Group. Cimcor Inc. ranks in the top 100 in Cybersecurity Venture's Cybersecurity 500 list of the world's hottest and most innovative cybersecurity companies.



Education
Tatiana Botero



Government
Stefanie Krevda



Health Care
Jessica D. Williams



Health Care
Krishnaveni Gorantla

Government

The **Department of Labor** in June approved Gov. Eric Holcomb’s waiver request, allowing the recently formed Governor’s Workforce Cabinet to fill the role of the state’s federally mandated workforce development board. The Governor’s Workforce Cabinet launched in August 2017 and leads Holcomb’s Next Level Jobs Initiative, the program that connects residents with the skills and training they need to land high-demand,

high-wage jobs. The initiative provides funds to adult workers and Indiana employers to cover costs of training and education. The Department of Labor said in its review of Holcomb’s request that it was, “determined that the requirements requested to be waived impede the ability of Indiana to implement its plan to improve the workforce development system. Therefore, (Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor) approves

this waiver for Program Years 2018 through 2020.”

Stefanie Krevda has been appointed by Gov. Eric Holcomb to fill a vacancy on the **Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission**. Krevda replaces Angela Weber whose term expired. Krevda has worked in public service and in the nonprofit sector for 10 years. She presently serves as the executive director of external affairs at the IURC. Krevda previously served as chief of staff and interim director of

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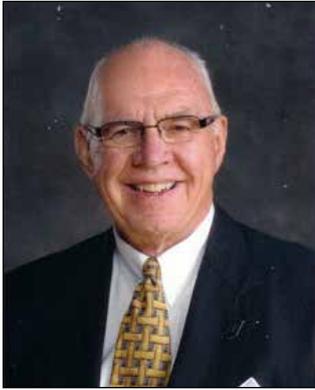
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Health Care
Leigh Morris

the state of Indiana Personnel Department, special assistant to the CEO/president at Lumina Foundation, and as a legislative and policy aide to former Gov. Mitch Daniels.

Health Care

Leigh Morris was named interim president and CEO of the **Visiting Nurse Association of Northwest Indiana**. He takes over for Ann O’Heir who served the role since 2015. The VNA board of directors said Morris



Health Care
Robert Clemency

will lead the organization while it continues its search for a permanent chief executive. Morris is an adjunct associate professor in the graduate school at Valparaiso University and was president of La Porte Regional Hospital for 21 years. Visiting Nurse Association of Northwest Indiana, founded in 1970, serves Porter, Lake, La Porte, Jasper and Starke counties.

Pinnacle Dermatology of Lombard, Ill., in June announced it acquired Skin, **Vein & Cosmetic**

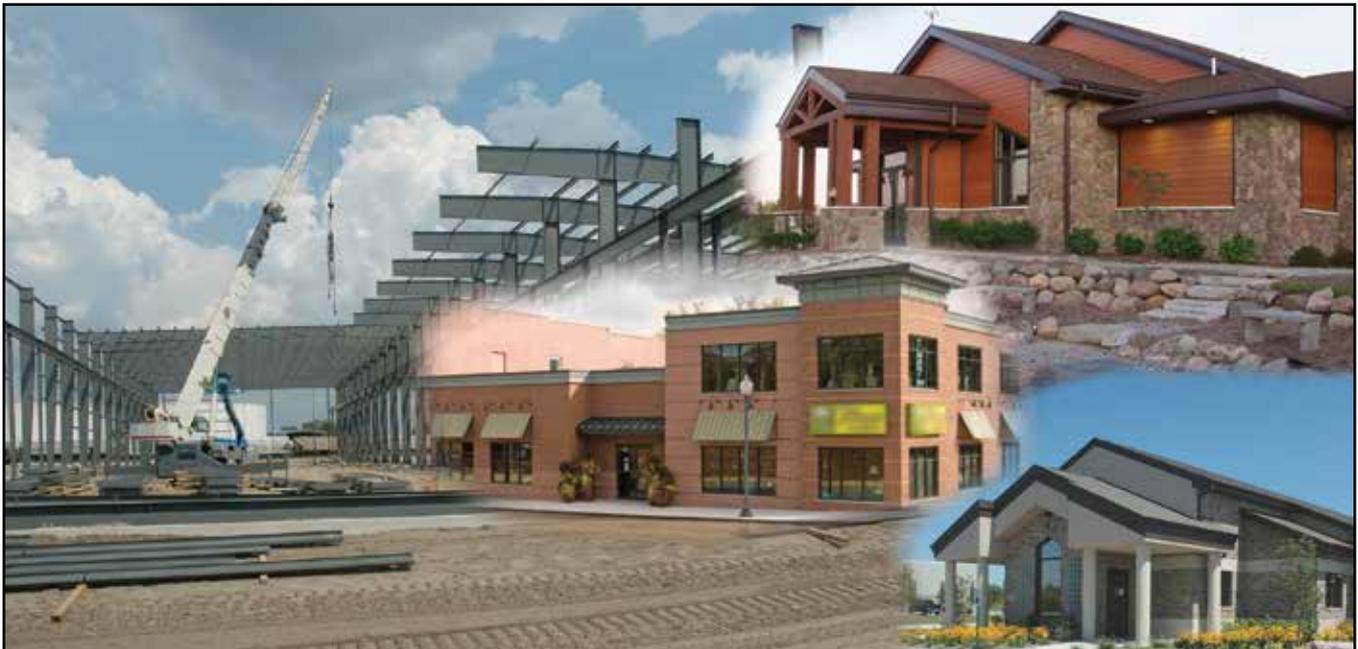


Health Care
Sameer Z. Ahmed

Surgery Clinic in Munster. Dr. **Ahmad Fathi** and his team will join Pinnacle Dermatology. Pinnacle said it is adding an additional dermatologist Dr. **Olga Radkevich-Brown** to the Munster practice. Fathi was the president and owner of Skin, Vein and Cosmetic Surgery Clinic for more than 30 years. The addition of Fathi’s practice brings Pinnacle’s locations to 21 across Illinois and Indiana. Its other Northwest Indiana locations include Valparaiso and La Porte.



Tourism
Carrie Snyder



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Dr. Sameer Z. Ahmed, an oncologist/hematologist with **Franciscan Physician Network Oncology and Hematology Specialists**, will begin seeing patients at Franciscan Health Rensselaer's Cancer Center. Board-certified in oncology, hematology and internal medicine, Ahmed completed a fellowship in hematology and oncology at the Indiana University School of Medicine and an internal medicine residency at Jewish Hospital in Cincinnati. He also was a resident at Aga Khan University Hospital in Karachi, Pakistan. He received his medical degree from Dow Medical College in Karachi.

Health insurance giant **Anthem Inc.** said in late June that it had completed its purchase of Aspire Health, the nation's largest nonhospital, community-based palliative care provider. Nashville-based Aspire provides services under contracts with more than 20 health plans to consumers in 25 states, including Indiana. Financial terms of

the transaction were not disclosed. Anthem in a statement said Aspire Health will operate as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Anthem, and its associates will join Anthem's diversified business group. Indianapolis-based Anthem Inc. serves more than 74 million people through its affiliated companies, including almost 40 million within its family of health plans.

Community Hospital in Munster recently welcomed Drs. **Robert Clemency** and **Krishnaveni Gorantla** to Community Care Network Inc. The CCNI physicians of Community Healthcare System are affiliated with Community Hospital in Munster, St. Catherine Hospital in East Chicago and St. Mary Medical Center in Hobart. Clemency, a podiatrist, is board certified in foot, reconstructive rear foot and ankle surgery and completed his residency at Franciscan Alliance, Midwestern University. He received his medical education from the Scholl College

of Podiatric Medicine at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science. Clemency has offices in Munster, Schererville and St. John. Gorantla, an obstetrician-gynecologist, is board certified in obstetrics and gynecology. She completed an internship at the University of Illinois Hospital and her residency at St. Joseph Hospital. Gorantla's office is in Munster.

Munster-based **Community Hospital** marked National Nurses Week by honoring two of its nurses for their commitment to patient care. **Mary Puntillo**, a clinical nurse educator received the 2018 Nursing Excellence Award and **Grozda Vranic**, a patient care technician in the Family Birthing Center, was presented the 2018 Patient Caregiver Excellence Award. Vranic, a Crown Point resident, has worked at Community Hospital for more than 13 years. Puntillo of Highland has worked for Community Hospital for more than 35 years.

Amanda Arredondo, a registered



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nurse at **St. Catherine Hospital** in East Chicago, was presented with the 2018 Nursing/Caregiver Excellence Award. A total of 16 nurses at St. Catherine were recognized during National Nurses Week, though Arredondo was chosen for the top honor. Arredondo, a critical care nurse in the Intensive Care Unit for six years, began her health care career as a nurse fellow at St. Catherine Hospital. St. Catherine is part of Community Healthcare System. Other nursing excellence honorees were: **Katie Cruz**, 6 West; **Sharon Gutierrez**, **Stephanie Daniels**, **Vera Moore**, **Natasha Hudak**, **Lisa Luna**, all 5 West; **Jennifer Rarick**, ICU; **Madeleine Lim**, intermediate care; **Rebecca Kraus**, endoscopy; **Adrienne Walker**, post-anesthesia Care; **Stephanie Hamilton** and **Nina Stur**, case management; **Juanita Woodfaulk** and **Mayra Manriquez**, acute rehabilitation; and **Shannon Lowden**, nursing administration.

Dr. Jessica D. Williams is the newest member of **Porter Physician Group's Northwest Indiana Cardiovascular Physicians** practice in Valparaiso. Williams was raised in Gary and completed additional pre-medicine courses at Indiana University Northwest. Williams earned her medical degree from the University of Louisville School of Medicine in Kentucky. Williams completed an internship and residency in internal medicine at the University Hospitals Case Medical Center/Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. Williams is fellowship-trained in cardiovascular disease from the University of Cincinnati Medical Center, and is board certified in both internal medicine and cardiovascular disease.

Manufacturing

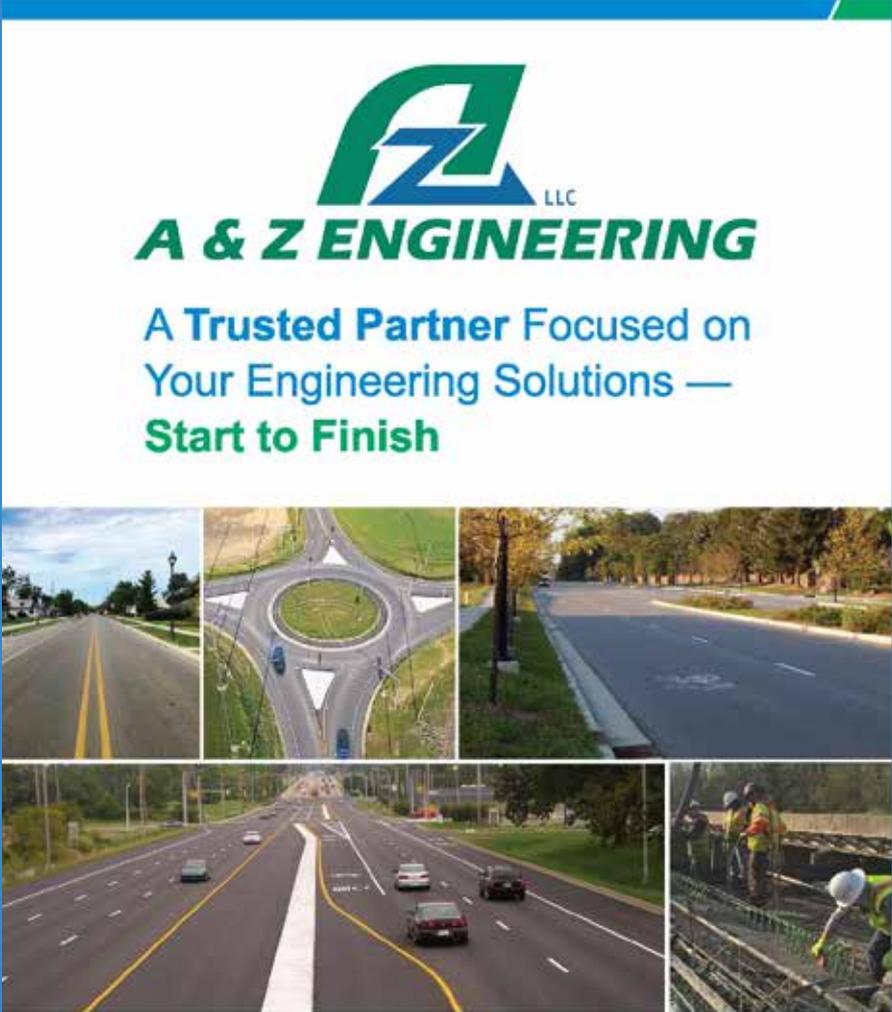
ArcelorMittal USA's impact on the country and Northwest Indiana remains strong, according to its latest corporate responsibility and sustainability report. The company has issued the report annually since 2009 to showcase its contributions to the economy as well as the community.

ArcelorMittal has a presence in 14 states and employs about 18,000 people in those facilities. Highlights of the 2017 U.S. report include:

- Achieved a best on record lost time injury frequency rate of 0.95, which includes full-time employees and contractors at ArcelorMittal USA LLC facilities, Monessen and AM/NS Calvert, a 23 percent improvement

over 2016.

- Produced more than 15 million tons of raw steel and invested \$246 million for the ArcelorMittal USA business unit and \$99 million for joint venture AM/NS Calvert to enhance production capabilities and improve efficiency.
- Contributed \$10.6 billion in total economic impact, including more



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than \$2.1 billion in employee wages and benefits alone at ArcelorMittal USA LLC facilities and AM/NS Calvert. This does not include expenses related to active and inactive pension and retiree health care.

- Implemented 36 energy projects with enough energy savings to power 12,400 homes for a year.
- Contributed \$8.3 million in total community investment, including cash grants, employee donations and company matching gifts. Approximately half was in support of education, particularly science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).
- Donated more than 3,550 hours of time by employees to local nonprofit partners through ArcelorMittal-sponsored volunteer projects and increased skills-based volunteerism in STEM by 22 percent since 2016.

Luxembourg-based ArcelorMittal is a global steel and mining company,

with a presence in 60 countries. In 2017, ArcelorMittal had revenues of \$68.7 billion and crude steel production of 93.1 million metric tons.

Nonprofit

Goodwill Industries broke ground June 4 on its Gary campus at the corner of Ridge and Clark Roads. Goodwill said the \$8 million project will bring 100 jobs to Northwest Indiana and almost \$9 million in annual economic impact to the community. The new store is expected to be completed by Spring 2019. Goodwill's 105,000-square-foot Gary campus will feature an Outlet Store and The Excel Center, a free high school for adults 18 and older, as well as a Community Career Center, offering free job search assistance for anyone seeking employment. The Outlet Store will replace Goodwill's Gary Clearance Store.

The **United Way of Porter County's annual golf outing** raised more than \$57,000 through

the support of more than 50 businesses and 140 golfers, who sold out the event. Rain failed to hinder participants who ventured out to the Valparaiso Country Club, which featured a party on the Green theme. This year's tournament winners were:

- Scramble winner: **Robert Scheller**; Merrillville Assistant Chief of Police **Jim Donahue**; **Natalie Achten and Larry Achten** (Lake Porter Physician Group team)
- Peoria winner: **Chris Mallonee, Chuck Lager, Scott Oostman and Damian Rico** (The Times Media team)
- Mens' Longest Drive: **Tom Gurgess** (Southern Glazers Wine & Spirits team)
- Mens' Closest to Pin & Longest Putt: **Jason Topp** (Hoepfner, Wagner & Evans team)
- Ladies' Longest Drive: **Natalie Achten** (Lake Porter Physician Group team)
- Ladies' Closest to Pin: **Ahna**

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Dunn (NITCO team)

- Ladies' Longest Putt: **Judy Kukulka** (StoryPoint team)

Last year, United Way supported 65 safety net programs impacting more than 69,000 Northwest Indiana residents.

Recreation

Members of the leadership team for the new \$17 million **Hammond Sportsplex and Community Center** have been named. Hammond native **James Taillon** was named the center's general manager, and **Kymerli Roberts** of Hammond was named assistant general manager basketball/volleyball. Taillon is a graduate of Morton High School and Vincennes University where he played baseball for two years. He most recently served as co-owner, president/CEO of Tailco Beverages. Roberts is a graduate of Morton High School and earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice at Indiana University Northwest in 2013 and later earned a Master of Science in sports administration from Valparaiso University. The new 135,000-square-foot sportsplex is expected to be completed by September.

Tourism

Carrie Snyder, owner of **Sky Zone Mishawaka**, was recognized as Wow Franchise Partner of the Year for her consistency in bettering her guests' experiences by actively engaging with the community. Snyder owns three franchise locations. She opened her first site in Fort Wayne in 2013. Snyder's other location is in Holland, Ohio, near Toledo.

Indiana Dunes Tourism and **Visit Michigan City LaPorte** on May 9 honored businesses, organizations and individuals for providing outstanding service to the community and visitors.

The **Recognition of Service Excellence** or **ROSE Awards** recognize those who go the extra mile to make Porter and LaPorte counties great places to live and visit. The program takes place annually during National Travel and Tourism Week.



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Indiana Dunes Tourism ROSE Awards recipients included:

Attraction of the Year: **Eagle Aircraft Community Improvement Award**; **Kouts Downtown Park Conservation Award**; **Westchester Migratory Bird Sanctuary Festival of the Year**; **Indiana Dunes Outdoor Adventure Festival**; Fine Dining Restaurant of the Year: **Bartlett's Gourmet Grill and Tavern**

Hospitality Professional of the Year: **Debbie Garner**, Expo Center Hotel of the Year: **Country Inn and Suites by Radisson**, Valparaiso Legislator of the Year: **Karen Tallian**; **Chuck Moseley** (Portage); **Ed Charbonneau** (Valparaiso); **Mike Bohacek**; and **Scott Pelath** (Michigan City) Newcomer of the Year: **The Port Drive-In** Partner of the Year: **Country Inn**

and Suites by Radisson, Portage People's Choice—Hotel of the Year: **Riley's Railhouse** People's Choice—Restaurant of the Year: **Industrial Revolution Food Wars Winners**: **Northside Diner** and **Woodfire Meat Market Deli Mexican and Greek** President's Choice Award: **Fuji Japanese Restaurant** Professional of the Year: **Maura Durham**, Duneland Chamber of Commerce Putting Porter County on the Map: **National Park Service, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore Recreation Location of the Year**: **Sammie L. Maletta Public Marina** Retailer of the Year: **Old World Market** Shining Stars: **Danielle**, Spring House Inn; **Ronnie**, Industrial Revolution; **Nathan**, Industrial Revolution; **Jessica**, Don Quijote Restaurant Unity Award: **Nancy Moldenhauer**, Green Drinks Unity Award; **Ed Kis**, posthumously **Unsung Hero**: **Gabis Arboretum** Volunteers of the Year: **Dave and Sandy Keammerer**

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News

Gary/Chicago International Airport was among six Indiana airports awarded a share of \$16.8 million in infrastructure grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation in June. The funds are part of a \$677 million first allotment of \$3.2 billion in grants through the Federal Aviation Administration's Airport Improvement Program for airports across the country. Gary/Chicago International is receiving \$4.75 million for runway rehabilitation. Other Indiana airports receiving funds include:

- **Anderson Municipal - Darlington Field**: \$2.7 million, runway rehabilitation and lighting
- **Fort Wayne International**: \$5.4 million, runway rehabilitation
- **Eagle Creek Airpark**, Indianapolis: \$2.8 million, taxiway construction
- **Kokomo Municipal**: \$360,000, taxiway rehabilitation
- **Paoli Municipal**: \$832,500, runway extension

USDOT said the 241 grants awarded nationally will fund 346 infrastructure projects that include runways, taxiways, aprons, and terminals. The project will improve safety and efficiency in the nation's system of airports.

CareEnroll, a company that assists consumers in enrolling in health care plans and maintain coverage, announced June 19 it will expand its LaPorte-headquarters and Fishers-based satellite office. The company, which was founded in 2015 by Phil Woods, plans to hire up to 197 new workers by the end of 2021, according to a press release from the Indiana Economic Development Corp. CareEnroll has hired more than 80 full-time employees since it opened, and is hiring customer service representatives and auditors for its LaPorte and Fishers locations. According to the IEDC, the company will invest more than \$3 million to renovate and update its 14,400-square-foot headquarters at 1900 W. Severs Road in LaPorte. Updating also will include new equipment and software. The IEDC offered CareEnroll up to \$1.5 million in conditional tax credits and up to \$100,000 in training grants based on the company's plan to create new jobs in Indiana. LaPorte County also offered workforce development training assistance to the company, IEDC said.

State and local officials on June 13 dedicated the new **Phase I St. Joseph Energy Center** natural gas fueled power generating plant at 54745 Walnut Road in New Carlisle. The plant is about 15 miles west of South Bend. It began generating power in April and can produce 700 megawatts of electricity, which is enough energy to serve 500,000 homes. The first phase of the project, which represents about \$700 million in investment, took about six years to complete from planning to construction, according to plant representatives. Energy generated by the plant is delivered into the nation's power grid through PJM Interconnection, a regional transmission organization, which serves 13 states in the northeastern U.S., Washington, D.C., northern Indiana and southern Michigan. Representatives for the

plant said the project did not receive any assistance from tax incremental financing or any state tax benefits. The plant's developers paid for installation of 3miles of sewer line to the city of South Bend and built a \$10 million water treatment plant, which was given to the town of New Carlisle. The plant today employs 21 people with average annual salaries of \$92,000, according to plant representatives. The St. Joseph Energy Center project consists of two phases. The second part also involves construction of a 700-megawatt natural gas fueled power plant, which still is in the planning stage, according to

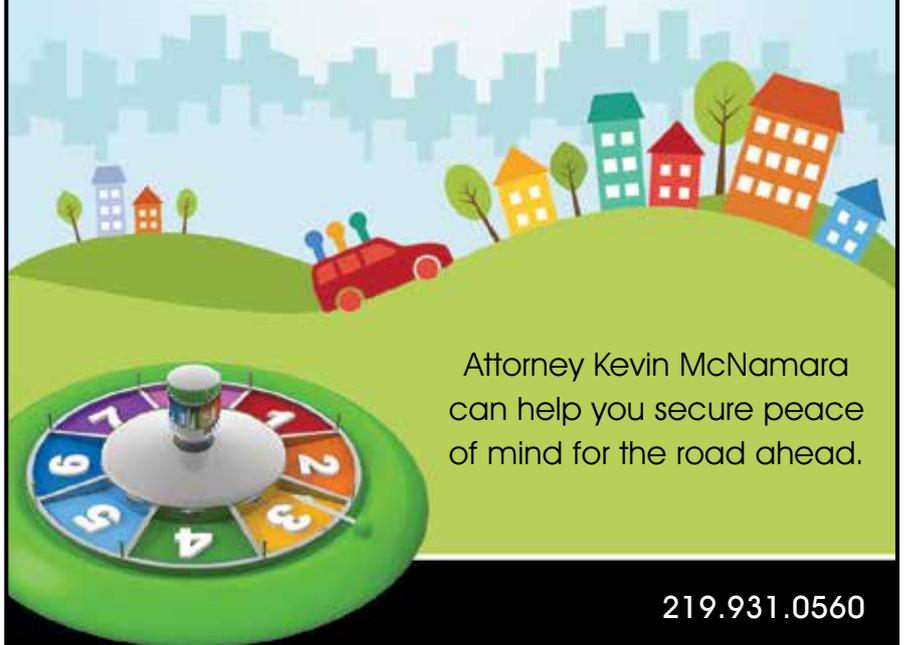
company representatives. The plant is owned by **Ares EIF Group**, a New York-based investment organization, and **Toyota Tshusho**, part of the Toyota group of companies, which operates in several business segments, including energy plant development.

Minnesota-based **Polaris Industries Inc.** announced May 30 that it will acquire **Boat Holdings LLC** of Elkhart, owned by the Vogel family. The all-cash transaction is valued at \$805 million. Boat Holdings brands include Bennington, Godfrey Pontoon Boats, Hurricane and Rinker. Boat Holdings is the largest producer

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of pontoon boats in the U.S., one of the largest and fastest growing segments in the marine industry, according to Polaris. Boat Holdings generated about \$560 million in sales in 2017.

Rockwell Automation, a Milwaukee-based Fortune 500 company specializing in industrial automation and information, announced June 5 it plans to consolidate operations from Champaign, Ill.,

and Memphis, Tenn., to Indiana. A statement from the Indiana Economic Development Corp. said the move combined with Rockwell's projected growth could create up to 231 new jobs in Indiana by the end of 2023. Rockwell plans to invest more than \$16.4 million to renovate and equip a 369,000-square-foot facility at 4255 S. 500 E. in the All Points at Anson development along I-65 in Whitestown

about 30 minutes northwest of Indianapolis. The state said Rockwell plans to be fully operational in Indiana by spring 2019 and will partner with Switzerland-based Kuehne + Nagel, a logistics company, to operate the facility. The IEDC will offer Rockwell up to \$1.75 million in conditional tax credits based on the company's job creation plans. The incentives are performance-based, meaning the company is not eligible to receive incentives until Indiana residents are hired, the state said.

New electric vehicles produced by California-based **SF Motors** could start rolling off assembly lines at the former **AM General** production plant in Mishawaka before year's end. The company is investing \$160 million into the plant and expects to create up to 467 jobs by 2020, with at least 200 positions being filled before the end of this year. AM General, a heavy vehicle and contract automotive manufacturer, is best known for producing the rugged Hummer sport utility vehicle as well as the Humvee. SF Motors will renovate and equip a 675,500-square-foot manufacturing facility, which served as the former AM General commercial assembly plant at 12900 McKinley Highway in Mishawaka. The vacant facility will be equipped to manufacture at least two lines of its first electric vehicle models and serve as the company's primary U.S.-based manufacturing plant. The Indiana Economic Development Corp. is expected to provide SF Motors Inc. up to \$3.847 million in conditional tax credits and up to \$500,000 in training grants based on the company's job creation plans. The IEDC also offered up to \$653,000 in conditional tax credits from the Industrial Recovery Tax Credit program, which encourages companies to invest in former industrial facilities requiring significant rehabilitation or remodeling. St. Joseph County also is considering additional incentives. Founded in 2016, SF Motors has headquarters in Santa Clara, Calif., with facilities in China and Indiana, and research and development facilities in the U.S., Germany and China.



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The Human Side of Business

Employers find taking care of workers benefits bottom line



Photo provided by Centier Bank

Michael Schrage, left, president and chairman of the board of Centier Bank, cuts the ribbon at the company's onsite health clinic.

JERRY DAVICH

A decade ago, when the Great Recession torpedoed the economy and stock markets, Michael Schrage organized a meeting for Centier Bank's hundreds of employees.

Schrage told his leery workers that there would be dark days ahead. He told them it was unclear how bad things could get. He told them to brace themselves for a rocky period in the history of a company in business for more than a century.

He also told them there would be no firings or layoffs related to the recession's wrath.

"No matter what," Centier's president and chairman of the board told his employees.

Chrisanne Christ, a senior partner in the bank's human resource department, remembers thinking to herself, "I can't believe he is saying this."

Schrage said it, and he meant it. "I think he would sell his wedding ring to avoid something bad from happening to this bank and its employees," says Christ, who's been at Centier for 22 years. "It's about trust. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of your clients."

Civility in the workplace has become a cliché in a business world that too often is defined by a cutthroat culture of profits first, customer satisfaction second and trust as an afterthought. Such a harsh description is the antithesis to companies that continually get

recognized for being among the best places to work—such as Centier.

Since 2007, the bank has been among the "Best Places to Work in Indiana," according to the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. Last year, the bank received national attention by American Banker publication, ranking No. 5 among the nation's "Best Banks to Work For" between \$3 billion and \$10 billion in assets.

Coincidence? Don't suggest that to Schrage and other CEOs of firms that repeatedly make such lists of recognition.

"What makes Centier different and unique is that culture and values come first," Schrage says to anyone who will listen.

Again, he means it.



Alyse Ellman, vice president of talent and organizational capabilities for White Lodging Services, Merrillville, says support from the company's leadership team fosters a great working environment.

“There is a strong connection between a high-trust culture and business success,” states the opening line in the 2016 study, “The Business Case for a High-Trust Culture.” It was conducted by Great Place to Work, a global research and consulting firm helping businesses become extraordinary by creating high-trust, high-performance cultures.

“In fact, the connection is so strong

that strategy-minded leaders, who care deeply about the financial well-being of their business, should make building a high-trust culture a top priority,” the study states.

For more than 30 years, Great Place to Work has studied and recognized organizations with high-trust cultures, in part through the best workplaces lists produced in partnership with Fortune magazine. For these companies, a

defining feature of being recognized as a great workplace is a high level of organization-wide trust, as reported by employees, not by ownership.

Several of the compelling business outcomes associated with a high-trust culture include: stock market returns two to three times greater than the market average; turnover rates 50 percent lower than industry competitors; and increased levels of innovation, customer and patient satisfaction, and employee engagement.

“It took four years to complete this study, to verify the robustness of the results and rule out alternative explanations,” said Alex Edmans, professor of finance at the London Business School, in the study. “So what did I find? I found that the 100 best companies to work for in America delivered stock returns that beat their peers by 2 to 3 percent per year over a 26-year period.”

“Simply put,” he said, “companies that treat their workers better do better. And this fundamentally changes the way that managers should be thinking about their workers.”

Respecting workforce

Several companies throughout Northwest Indiana are already doing this, with positive results in the workplace and in their profit margins.

“Communication is key, and we continue to provide an environment of trust where those conversations can happen openly and collaboratively,” says Alyse Ellman, vice president of talent and organizational capabilities for White Lodging Services, based in Merrillville.

Earlier this year, White Lodging was named a winner of the Gallup Great Workplaces Award. The firm participates in Gallup’s Q12 Engagement program, which focuses on building engaged workforces.

The Gallup Q12 focuses on companies ensuring that associates know what’s expected of them, even in times of uncertainty; providing the materials and equipment they need to be the best they can be in their role, empowering associates to do what they do best, recognizing and thanking them for a

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job well done, and focusing on their continued development.

“Having buy-in from our executive leadership team is key to our success in creating a great place to work,” Ellman says. “Their support, direction and enthusiasm ensures that we will continue to provide the kind of environment where our associates feel productive, engaged and successful.”

Workplace perks that associates enjoy at the corporate office include a state-of-the-art workout facility, yoga classes, fully-stocked breakrooms, discounts on hotel rooms around the country, and the opportunity to have breakfast with their CEO to discuss what’s going good, and what isn’t going so good.

“For example, areas of opportunity for the company and an innovation box where associates can comment anonymously on enhancements they would like to see,” Ellman says. “White Lodging believes that providing an engaging and dynamic environment will increase retention, performance and overall commitment from our

associates.”

At Inovateus Solar in South Bend, which delivers high-quality, personalized solar development, EPC and solar supply services, company officials are all about workplace PEACE. It’s an acronym for Passion, Engagement, Ambition, Creativity, Esprit de Corps, or “spirit of the team.”

“Our employees must have these values rooted in their personalities,” says Mauricio Añón, the firm’s director of marketing.

Every six months, the company recognizes and celebrates an employee who best defines those workplace attributes, with a paid day off and a charitable donation in their name.

The 40-employee firm, which is marking its 10-year anniversary as Inovateus Solar, was recognized by the Indy Chamber as one of the 2018 Best Places to Work in Indiana, under the helm of chairman and co-founder TJ Kanczuzewski.

“Everything starts with a mission and a vision to accomplish the goal,” says

Kanczuzewski, who authored the book, “Building a Brilliant Tomorrow,” reflecting the firm’s values.

Añón adds, “We focus on teamwork and then break down into smaller teams, or what we call pods, to accomplish specific tasks. This gets the whole team engaged, and it gives everyone the opportunity to contribute ideas and to work collaboratively to execute tasks.”

Shaping workplace culture

At Lakeside Wealth Management in Chesterton, “Employees come first, clients come a very close second,” says Jenn Brown, corporate communications manager. “As cliché as it sounds, we are a family at Lakeside. We have created a culture that encourages our team to engage with each other both personally and professionally.”

“We celebrate the good times together, and we struggle through the hard times together,” she says. “Our clients know they have a whole team supporting them, not just their forward facing adviser.”



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TJ Kancuzewski, chairman and cofounder of Inovateus Solar South Bend, says in business, everything starts with a mission and a vision to accomplish the goal.



Photo provided by Lakeside Wealth Management

Company outings help build a collaborative environment at Lakeside Wealth Management in Chesterton.

How does a business create an environment that's collaborative where employees feel empowered and engaged to help their company be successful? "Trust them," Brown says enthusiastically.

"Lakeside's executive team encourages our employees to push, try new things and think outside the mind of a typical financial firm," she says. "Our team knows that if we fail at something, it's OK. Employees feel empowered because the management and executive teams are engaged day in and day out."

For example, the firm began including its operation teams in client meetings to give them a sense of ownership and connectiveness to their clients' accounts.

"This allows our operation teams to see how impactful their work is to the success of our clients and our team," Brown says, noting the company has 38 employees, including 19 licensed advisers.

Workplace civility impacts productivity and, ultimately, profits, she insists.

"Our atmosphere is not a kill-or-be-killed type of an environment," Brown says. "We hold each other accountable,

but each person knows they have a team behind them, willing to step in and help when needed. Clients can see that, too."

"At the end of the day, our client referrals are priceless, and we want those

referrals to include the type of people we are, not just the products we offer or the advice we give about the markets," she says.

Benjamin Bochnowski, president and CEO at Peoples Bank, says there is



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no magical algorithm to cultivating civility in the office.

“Like anything, it is a lot of hard work,” he says. “That means continually engaging our employees, responding to their needs, and making sure the company provides value for its employees. It’s a continual process, requiring listening, making changes, and balancing it with the expectations of our other stakeholders.”

One of the bank’s core values is integrity.

“We take that to mean many things, including acting ethically but also acting with respect,” Bochnowski says. “Respect is essential in understanding each other, both internally in the workplace and externally with our customers.”

The bank also emphasizes another value learned at a young age—empathy.

“Putting yourself in someone else’s shoes is extremely powerful in terms of coming up with creative solutions to all sorts of problems, and ultimately,

that helps us create value for all of our stakeholders,” Bochnowski says. “It gets better results for the customers, empowers our employees, helps us better serve the community, and creates better relationships that lead to better returns for our shareholders.”

Providing opportunities

The corporate leadership at Ameristar Casino Hotel in East Chicago understands that it’s in the entertainment business, “so having fun is important,” says Roxann Kinkade, director of public relations for Pinnacle Entertainment Inc.

Two examples include making music videos with team members while competing with other properties’ videos, and hosting an annual full-production talent show.

“The winner wins the opportunity to travel to another Pinnacle Entertainment destination to compete with the other property winners,” Kinkade says.

Workplace harmony begins with

leaders who care about and who listen to their team members.

“Having specific tools in place, such as surveys, roundtable discussions and an open door policy at every level ensures that two-way communication is how team members and leaders interact on a daily basis,” she says. “We also strive to hire caring and compassionate people who love serving others.”

The casino also provides opportunities for team members to give back to the community with a variety of volunteer events for local charities. The most popular is its annual Thanksgiving dinner event for the Salvation Army.

“It goes way beyond civility,” Kinkade says. “It’s about creating a culture of caring, having genuine compassion, concern and respect for our fellow team members, our guests and the community. It’s of utmost importance to our business.”

The casino’s “Living Our Values Award” program recognizes team



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members who bring those values to life by doing their best work. Each month or quarter, up to five team members are selected in the categories of Integrity, Excellence, Care, Innovation and Ownership. At the end of the year, five team members are selected and each awarded \$3,000, with a special parking space for the year.

Those kinds of perks lead to a better bottom line, too.

At Centier Bank, 2017 was a banner year with an 11 percent increase in total deposits, a 26 percent rise in mortgage loans, and a 13 percent increase in total assets.

“The secret ingredient really isn’t so secret,” Christ says. “It’s putting your people first.”

The bank’s organizational charts show its employees, or “associates,” at the top, followed by its clients, then management personnel, and finally Mike Schrage at the bottom.

“That’s honestly how it is here,” Christ says.



Photo provided by Peoples Bank

Peoples Bank employees show their support for the United Way.

“It’s not about pampering employees. It’s about treating them like family,” she says. “Not only during the good times but especially during the bad times.”

The bank is now up to 875 employees,

including most who attended that 2008 meeting held by Schrage when the Great Recession hit.

“Just as he promised, no one was laid off,” Christ says. “That’s the kind of trust I’m talking about.”

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Employment Times are Changing

Region's changing demographics attract health care, service-based jobs



Photo provided by Indiana University Northwest

Micah Pollak, economics professor at Indiana University Northwest, explains the economic impact of graduates who move away from the Region. The population in Northwest Indiana is aging, according to research by the Center of Regional Development at Purdue University.

BOB MOULESONG

Northwest Indiana is undergoing a demographic transformation. Changes to the age, race, gender and ethnicity of those in the Region present challenges and opportunities, experts say. As in life, it's how we respond to those changes that will dictate the success of our future.

Between 2010 and 2018, the population of the seven counties that make up Northwest Indiana experienced a decrease of more than 11,000 people, according to research by the Center

for Regional Development at Purdue University.

"That may not sound like a large number, but it contrasts with a 3 percent growth in the state and a 6 percent growth in the country," says Anthony Sindone, an economics professor at Purdue University Northwest.

The population decreased in every age category younger than 55. Conversely, every age category north of 55 saw increases.

"What that tells us is that the population of Northwest Indiana is aging,"

Sindone says.

According to Micah Pollak, an economics professor at Indiana University Northwest, the negative impact hits certain age groups harder than others.

"The two age groups that lag the most behind the national average in terms of growth are ages 20 to 24 and 45 to 54," Pollak says. "These two age groups are important, as they represent the segments of the population that are most crucial for economic growth and prosperity in a region."

Sindone says those age groups are following the money.

“The lack of high-paying jobs related to manufacturing and/or logistics has contributed to the exodus of workers who should be in their highest earning years,” he says.

The population in the age 20-to-24 group, represents the next generation of workers, including millennials and recent college graduates. This group is typically highly mobile, willing to move in search of work and likely to consider beginning a family and settling down to live wherever they may end up.

“They represent the young, skilled workers that we have educated and want to keep in the Region,” Pollak says.

The same research shows changes in race/ethnicity. The white population decreased by 4 percent and the black population by 7 percent, while the Hispanic population increased by 14 percent and the Asian population by 22 percent.

What’s the driver in these changes?

“While cultural backgrounds can play a role, ultimately the choice of a profession has more to do with the economic forces and structure in place in a community,” Pollak says. “A young worker may choose to go into the lawn maintenance industry rather than finance because they lack the resources to acquire the education and experience necessary.”

Evolving workforce

The Region’s changing demographics are impacting Northwest Indiana’s employment landscape.

Great Lakes Communications Answering Service LLC, a state-of-the-art communication management and answering service, is one business adapting to that change. It handles hundreds of calls daily for businesses across Northwest Indiana. Sherry Rundlett and Tabettha Alvarado, owners of the Crown Point-based company, went through the rigorous process of becoming a certified women and minority business enterprise by the Indiana Department of Administration.

The WMBE certification allows Great

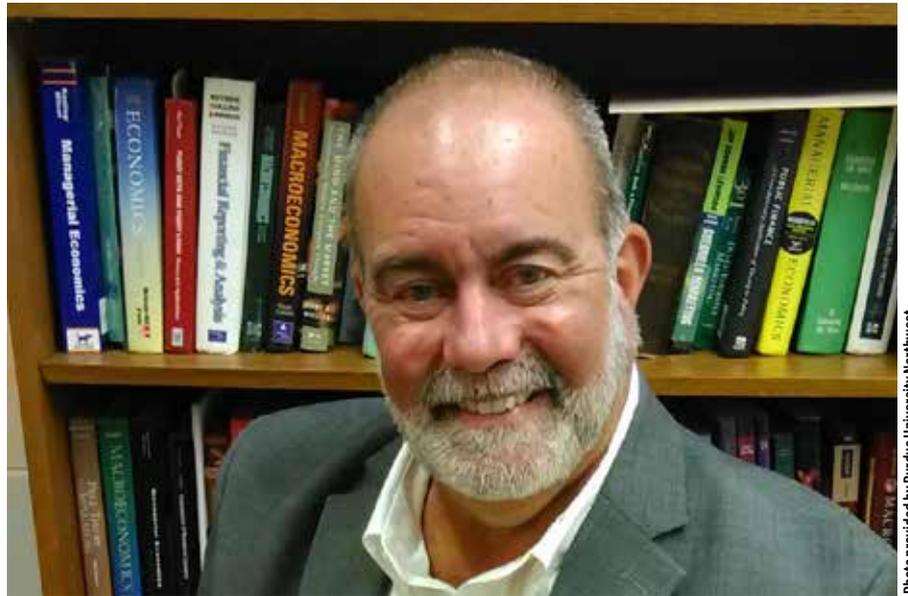


Photo provided by Purdue University Northwest

Anthony Sindone, an economics professor at Purdue University Northwest, says higher-paying jobs would attract younger workers to the Region.

Lakes to bid on government contracts that require minority business owners and allows them to be hired by companies that need to work with minority-owned businesses as part of their government contract.

“The certification helps us professionally,” Rundlett says. “Other businesses we deal with understand the stringent work it takes to become certified, and that lets them know how hard we are willing to work.”

“From a personal perspective, I believe we receive respect from others,” Alvarado says. “Clients and potential clients understand that our certification translates into our perspective on business.”

Great Lakes hires bilingual employees when possible, providing insight into the diversity of the Region.

“We have physicians with an office in East Chicago,” Rundlett says. “Many of the calls they get are from people speaking Spanish. We need to be able to take the message, understand the nature of the call, and be able to communicate with someone who may be in distress.”

Rundlett and Alvarado say they occasionally run into other business owners who are surprised their company is owned by women.

“One of our clients is a plumbing service that is owned by a woman,” Alvarado says. “We love the look on

faces when we share that one.”

Overall, Rundlett and Alvarado say they receive respect and admiration from other business owners who know how hard it is to run a company, regardless of race or gender.

Employment needs

Declining population hasn’t affected job growth in the seven-county Region.

Linda Woloshansky, president and CEO of the Center of Workforce Innovations, says employment projections show Northwest Indiana will gain 4,000 new jobs during the next five years.

And where are those jobs?

“A major area of growth is in the field of health care,” says Sindone with Purdue University Northwest. “Look around the Region, and you see a large number of independent and assisted living complexes being built. That’s a direct response to our aging population in Northwest Indiana.”

“We are seeing a large increase in the need for nurses, nurse assistants and medical technicians in almost every field,” said Kathy Neary, workforce consultant for Ivy Tech Community College. “At Ivy Tech, we are experiencing an increase in the number of students in several health care programs.”

Pollak and Sindone report

similar increases at IUN and Purdue, respectively.

Center for Regional Development at Purdue University statistics show health care and social assistance are the No. 1 employer in Northwest Indiana, with more than 45,000 jobs, well above the national average. Jobs in these fields also are listed at the top in terms of projected growth, with more than 2,700 of those new jobs

in the various categories defined as health care and social assistance.

The increase in health care professionals is tied to the increase of Asians who migrate to the Region. The 22 percent increase in the Asian population during the past 10 years includes physicians, surgeons and nurses who now call Northwest Indiana home.

That number may grow significantly, if a study underway by Region

hospitals and community health centers bears fruit. The plan is to form a consortium to host medical residents in such specialties as OB-GYN, psychiatry, general surgery and family, internal and emergency medicine, starting as soon as 2019. The group received a \$75,000 grant from the state to study the feasibility of the program. The state still has \$7 million in funding available for residency programs.

The flip side of high-paying jobs in the health care field are the relatively low-paying ones in the field of accommodation and food services. The projected increase in food preparation is almost 2,000 positions during the next five years.

Experts see the increase in jobs as a positive, but the pay for these positions is considerably lower.

“We often ignore that 79 percent of jobs in Northwest Indiana are service-based,” says Pollak with IUN. “The largest and fastest growing service-based industries in Northwest Indiana are relatively low-paying retail stores and food service.

“With a workforce that has become tailored for these low-skill service jobs, it becomes difficult to attract more desirable service-based and professional businesses.”

Diversifying the Region

Talk to educators and workforce developers in the Region, and they all speak the same language: how to attract and retain high-paying jobs, continue to build a diverse and educated workforce, and rebuild the employment infrastructure that declined with manufacturing automation. Several initiatives are underway.

One Region is a nonprofit organization that strives to grow population, attract and retain talent, and increase household income in Northwest Indiana.

“We are focused on how to attract and retain talent by making Northwest Indiana a better place to live,” says Leah Konrady, president and CEO of One Region. “One initiative is to foster a significant investment in placemaking like the South Shore Rail Line to drive population growth.”

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In 2017, One Region embarked on a benchmark research initiative with economists at Valparaiso University, Indiana University Northwest, Purdue University Northwest and the Center for Workforce Innovations to assess places across the country with a turnaround story in attracting millennials.

Another initiative One Region fosters is to make the region a welcoming community to diverse employers and employees.

“Diversity of people leads to creative ideas and innovation,” Konrady explains. “As people are deciding where to live, they often factor in the inclusiveness and diversity of a place. The more we, as a Region and as individuals, can embrace and include a wide range of demographics, the more innovative and resilient our Region will become.”

The pro-business environment created by Indiana’s state and local government has made new manufacturing, transportation, and supply chain and logistics attractive

alternatives for both employers and employees.

Ivy Tech has engaged with government officials and local businesses to provide educational and hands-on programs to meet the growing industrial need, according to Neary with Ivy Tech.

“We are creating a nimble workforce that is adaptable to business needs,” Neary says. “For example, as older workers prepare for retirement, companies turn to Ivy Tech to create training programs for their younger employees to step into those better-paying jobs.”

Neary cites a growing request from businesses for students nearing completion in advanced manufacturing, health care, supply chain logistics and building construction management. Ivy Tech said these Region businesses are seeking the following types of graduates from their programs: NIPSCO: advanced manufacturing; Porter Hospital: health care services; CORE Construction: building construction; Schnider: supply chain;

and NITCO: information technology.

Creating transportation, which makes it easier to commute to Chicago, also will bring in a diverse group of employees.

“The Region does have individuals with professional service skills who often commute to Chicago for the better-paying professional services positions,” says Woloshansky with the Center for Workforce Innovations. “While they work in Chicago, they live and spend (their income) in Northwest Indiana.”

Valparaiso has developed a bus line that commutes daily to both airports and moves workers to the South Shore station in Ogden Dunes. That also increases the attractiveness of the area for commuters.

“We can all find examples of individuals, friends, neighbors or children, who are eager to contribute to the economy of Northwest Indiana if the numbers make sense to them or if the position is unique or specialized enough to attract them,” Woloshansky says.



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Need Training?

Region builds up resources to keep workers' skills sharp



Photo submitted by Tonn and Blank

Tonn and Blank Construction apprentices Chris Stuek, left, Karrigan Scheffer and Vincent Czarnecki, right, work on a project for the Michigan City company. Apprenticeship programs have been part of the company's labor force since its inception, says Jon Gilmore, president and CEO.

LAUREN CAGGIANO

Technology has changed the way we do business, but the need for qualified talent has remained constant. Local experts in the field of workforce development and employers who are reaping the benefits of better-trained labor say the present and future of the regional labor landscape will continue evolving because business needs routinely change.

Helping employers, talent

Linda Woloshansky, president and CEO with the Center of Workforce Innovations Inc. in Valparaiso, says her

organization advances both the causes of workers and employers in the Region. “We are a workforce development organization that finds solutions to issues keeping people behind in finding work and helps employers overcome issues keeping them from finding talent and expanding,” she said.

To that end, they employ a “spectrum of strategies,” with skills development and placement into jobs being the main focus. This in turn allows companies to hire and maintain talent.

Woloshansky says, with its rich industrial past, Northwest Indiana is poised to benefit from apprenticeships.

She said the apprenticeship model is a “fantastic approach to (addressing) the skill development issue.”

What makes apprenticeships unique is that they allow for a “combination of experiential learning with a company and academic training,” because apprentices are usually working on an associate degree while on the job.

Tonn and Blank Construction in Michigan City is one employer that has benefited from apprentice labor.

“We have had apprentices since the beginning,” said Jon Gilmore, president and CEO. “We look at it as a win-win-win.”

That's because the apprentice gets paid on-the-job training while earning a degree, and the employer gets the advantage of having access to lower-cost labor and a "well-trained workforce at your fingertips." In turn, he says his company can pass that savings on to their clients and parent company.

Gilmore said his company has what he refers to as an "optimal mix of journeymen and apprentices" on job sites. He says this allows more seasoned contractors to scout for up-and-coming talent and maybe place them in specialty roles, including layout technology.

Speaking of specialty, Gilmore said an apprenticeship in the trades is unique because it exposes them to various skilled trades and work settings, so they can decide what they want to pursue after graduation.

Gaining skills

According to Woloshansky, employers in industries outside the trades can benefit from innovative programs such as the Midwest Urban Strategies' partnership with CVS Health. Woloshansky is a board member with the organization and has seen great growth come from the partnership's efforts in a short time. Midwest Urban Strategies represents a coordinated effort between 12 Department of Labor Region 5 urban workforce development boards to marry traditional workforce development practices with economic development.

Woloshansky refers to the partnership with CVS Health as a "well-developed apprenticeship model where individuals are oriented to the business." With this on-site model, apprentices in Indiana can learn the ins and outs of all the aspects of the business, she said.

"CVS wants their folks to have a good understanding of how their business works," Woloshansky said.

Woloshansky is optimistic that apprentices (and perhaps future employees) have a broader skillset and knowledge base. And these are the kinds of skills that can be translated to other types of jobs, too. In a November 2017 statement, CVS Health said it had set a goal of hiring 5,000 new



Photo provided by Center for Workforce Innovations

Hundreds of high school students from around the Region learned about various trades at the 2017 Construction and Skilled Trades Day program at the Lake County Fairgrounds in Crown Point in late November. Representatives with the local Ironworkers apprenticeship program are shown working with students.

apprentices by 2022.

Dr. Michael Hicks, a professor of economics at Ball State University, said the Midwest Urban Strategies model has the most promise for Indiana because it's more likely to stand the test of time.

"We tend to be focused on occupations, but we really should be focused on skills," Hicks said. "Occupations will go away, but the need to problem solve won't."

He provided a real-world example of a bricklayer. While the established profession will likely not survive automation, the skills needed to perform this task will always be in demand.

That's why a firm command of middle-school math and science is so vital, Hicks said.

Educating and empowering youth is one thing, but Woloshansky's organization wants people to feel confident they can learn, even mid-career. She said sometimes workers feel "frozen" and are stuck in a role where they have little or no opportunity to advance.

But there are options.

"In Northwest Indiana, we want to develop a learning community for employment purposes," Woloshansky said. That means encouraging workers to look to school systems, nonprofits,

government agencies, higher education and other sources for ways to advance and thereby increase earning potential.

Reaching Hispanics

Esperanza Ministries, a nonprofit stakeholder, has used training dollars to its advantage. Working alongside local municipalities, churches and community partners, it provides a safe and caring space to serve the physical, educational and spiritual needs of its clients.

Margarita Hart, executive director of Esperanza Ministries, said a community health worker (CHW) is vital because it is "someone trusted in the community serving to help individuals least likely to access health care and social determinants of health."

CHWs are usually entry-level, but they are charged with a great deal of responsibility, Hart said. Esperanza Ministries and partners from the private sector developed a program to "skill up" the Hispanic population while meeting the need for community health workers. This work was done in collaboration with the Indiana Minority Health Coalition, Indiana Community Health Worker Association, HealthVisions Midwest, Ivy Tech Community College and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College.

In 2017, 100 Hispanic participants were trained, certified and placed in community health worker positions in both health care and manufacturing settings. Additionally, participants received mentoring and English language training throughout their learning process. This program was introduced in Marion, Lake, Allen, Tippecanoe and Clark counties, areas with the highest population and

unemployment rates for Latinos.

Focusing on Hispanics was strategic because this segment of Indiana's population has an above-average unemployment rate compared to the state average and experiences a significantly lower-than-average personal income, as well as a lower post-secondary degree attainment.

The state's Skill Up Grant provided the basis for ongoing certification

classes, which will assist in filling the overall health care profession's skill gap in Indiana and afford opportunities to one of the state's most rapidly growing populations.

In reviewing the results from the yearlong pilot, Hart said the grant was successful as employers were pleased with the results. Latino community health workers' knowledge of the culture of the communities in which they serve can prove to be invaluable for health care providers.

"To us it makes a lot of sense to have (Latino) CHWs because these are individuals who are engaged in the community and can bring back intelligence you don't get in a hospital setting," Hart said. "In that way, it's an effective and economical way to impact outcomes."

Next Level Jobs

On the government front, Woloshansky points to the state's Next Level Jobs initiative as a potential avenue for both employees and employers looking for financial resources.

Next Level Jobs is part of Gov. Eric Holcomb's Next Level Indiana agenda to skill-up workers. The state is shifting its focus to high-priority industries and high-demand jobs driving Indiana's 21st century economy forward.

Information from Nextleveljobs.org notes the 2017 General Assembly approved funds for Indiana's Workforce Ready Grant program to provide free training for working-age residents in the state's highest demand jobs. These industries have higher median salaries and are rapidly growing in Indiana, including advanced manufacturing, building and construction, health and life sciences, information technology and business services, and transportation and logistics.

Employers also can take advantage of the Employer Training Grant program from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. Employers in any high-demand business sector can be reimbursed up to \$5,000 for each

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new employee who is trained, hired and retained for six months, the state said. The caveat is that newly trained employees must see a wage gain as a result of new training; however, there is no wage requirement for new-hire trainees.

There is a \$50,000 cap for each employer and the jobs must be middle-skill, high-demand and high-wage jobs that require more than a high school diploma but less than an associate degree, the state said.

Some experts believe job training should start in high school.

Woloshansky said career education and tech centers are effective because they reach people at a critical age.

“These centers are typically working with juniors and seniors in high school to provide them with different pathways (for learning),” she said. Internships are another outlet that can benefit both parties.

“So, there’s so much available to people and employers to take advantage of,” she says about workforce development opportunities in the Region.

Next steps

The Center of Workforce Innovations and several community partners are on a mission to “accelerate educational attainment levels and create a new culture of education in the region,” according to the 2016 State of the Workforce and Economic Indicators report released by the Northwest Indiana Workforce Board. The board is comprised of business, education, labor, community and economic development leaders responsible for the strategic vision of workforce development and governance of the one-stop system in Northwest Indiana.

Valparaiso-based Regional Education and Employer Alliance for Developing Youth in Northwest Indiana (or Ready NWI) and its partners are addressing this issue head-on.

The “Big Goal of 60 percent post-high school credential attainment by 2025” requires the 39.7 percent of adults in Northwest Indiana with higher education credentials to reach the 60 percent level projected to

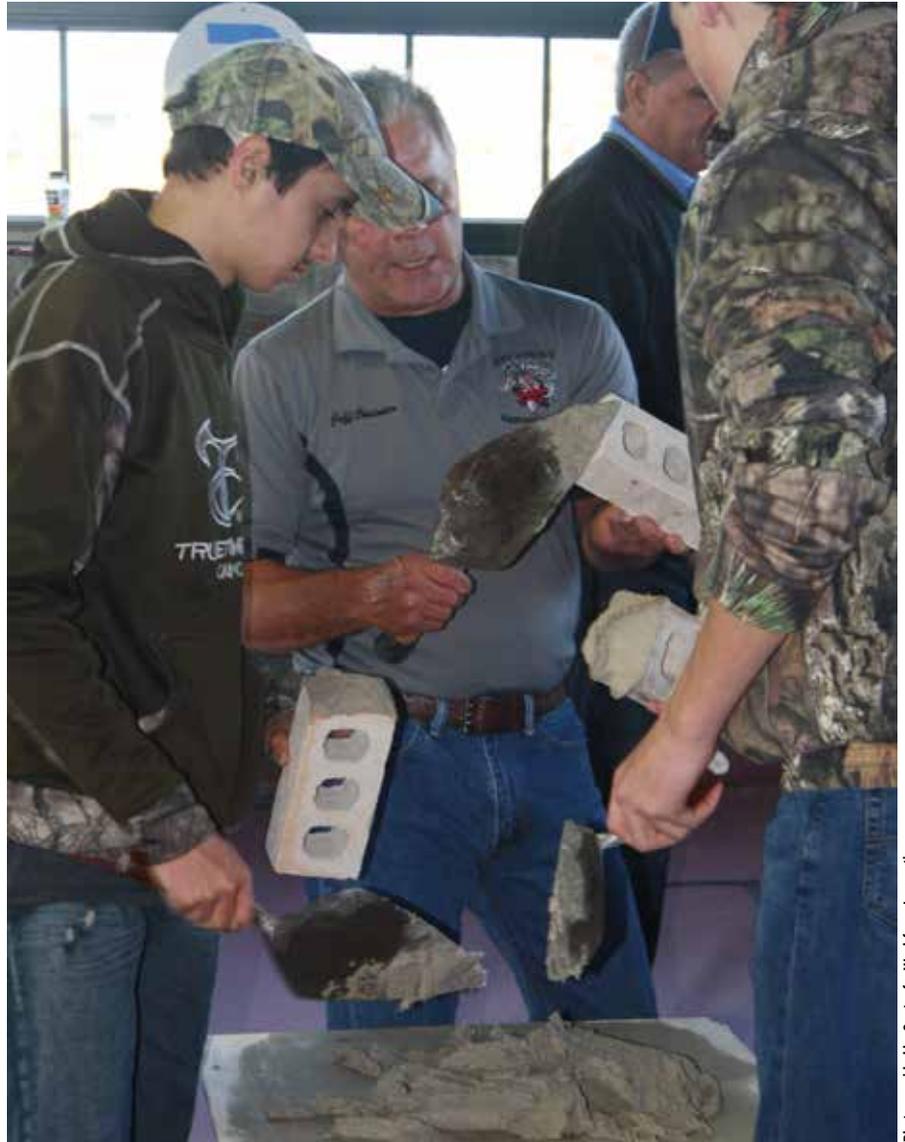


Photo provided by Center for Workforce Innovations

Representatives with the local bricklayers apprenticeship program work with high school students in November during the 2017 Construction and Skilled Trades Day program at the Lake County Fairgrounds in Crown Point.

be needed by the Region’s employers. To meet that goal, Ready NWI’s efforts include a focus on “key stages of development of the student talent pipeline middle school to high school, high school to college, and college to jobs in our region.

Ready NWI is equally focused on adult workforce advancement, in the form of acquiring new skills and credentials. That’s why during the next 10 years, the organization is committed to an annual review of progress across core indicators, including high school graduation, college remediation trends, college and university enrollment, and college and university awards.

Workforce training resources

Employers don’t have to go it alone when it comes to skilling up their workforce or attracting new talent. These organizations can help:

Center of Workforce Innovations

innovativeworkforce.com

(219) 462-2940

Midwest Urban Strategies

midwesturbanstrategies.com

(414) 270-1736

Next Level Jobs

nextleveljobs.org

Ready NWI

readynwi.com

(219) 462-2940

Beyond the Benefit Basics

Businesses move toward out-of-box ways to attract, keep workers



Photo provided by Task Force Tips

Ed Dooley, with Task Force Tips Inc. in Valparaiso, is using experience and technology to ensure the company's product quality. The company makes fire suppression equipment and focuses on designing and manufacturing innovative tools in the industry.

LESLEY BAILEY

With low unemployment rates, the pressure on companies, especially those expanding, to find and keep good employees inches higher.

“When you look at the current economy, we’re hearing all sorts of reports of low unemployment ... from an HR perspective, the lower the unemployment rate, the fewer people are out there in a talent pool,” said Barbie Sparr, a certified employee benefit specialist and health insurance associate with Mercer, a global consulting firm.

She works with employers of all sizes

throughout Indiana to help them form and strategize human resources and wellness offerings to make sure they are meeting their goals and objectives.

“It’s more difficult to fill vacancies, and I hear stories of employers considering lowering hiring standards,” she said. “It’s a job seekers market, and employers focus on retention as the constant turnover of hiring and training new workers is a costly process and lowers productivity of the companies.”

Since Indiana’s unemployment rate has been under the national rate for about four years, companies look toward out-of-the-box benefit offerings to not

only bring new workers in but also to help keep them on staff.

“I think employee benefits weigh heavier than salary when seeking employment,” said Cyndi M. Harbin, president of the Society for Human Resource Management of Northwest Indiana. The organization strives to be a local resource for professional development and continued support of excellence in HR.

“Job seekers should consider the compensation and benefit package as a whole—this is called total rewards.”

Harbin says bonuses, better insurance with lower premiums, more paid time

off and a flexible schedule add value to a lower-paying position.

“With a little analysis, it becomes clear that the ‘total rewards’ are much more attractive,” she said.

Harbin highlights how wellness programs, on-site flu clinics and company events can be vital to keeping a full workforce.

“There are so many, many options. Some companies really get creative, and others offer benefits specific to their businesses,” she said. “The bottom line is retention, retention, retention is key. Turnover costs money that can be saved by offering a competitive benefit package and employee appreciation and recognition.

“If your employees are compensated well—with salary and benefits—they will not seek employment elsewhere.”

Focus shift

When Allison Bertl, a regional WorkOne business service manager, first started with the agency about four years ago and unemployment was higher, employers had a different viewpoint.

“There was lots of supply, if you will, and they weren’t as open to training because they could ask for what they needed and find it,” she said. “Today, the supply is a little bit less, and employers have to think about new options.

“It’s a huge turnaround for them in the way they think about attracting and retaining employees, because if they’re not giving employees the skills to help the business grow and thrive, the employees may not stay.”

Bertl, who leads efforts to help meet employer demand for a skilled workforce, said, as the spotlight has drifted from health insurance concerns, it has allowed employers to land on career avenues as a real benefit.

“Employers are able to think about career pathways more. Instead of a flat organization, they can think about career ladders and the process of how to go from one level to the next, how to create it if it doesn’t exist and make it very visible,” Bertl said. “That becomes a benefit if employees understand what it takes to go from one level to the next, and they can set goals for themselves and understand the skills needed.



Submitted photo

Cyndi M. Harbin, president of the Society for Human Resource Management of Northwest Indiana, helps celebrate the organization's 20th annual conference in April. The organization strives to be a local resource for professional development and continued support of excellence in HR.

“It’s a way to help retain employees who can have career growth in the company.”

Change and more change

Sparr with Mercer said technology and the younger generation are motivators to change.

“The younger generation and tech go hand-in-hand,” Sparr said. “Employers are having to bridge several generations with varying ages. The younger generation wants benefits around family support, and flexibility is another way to offer a benefit.”

The desire for harmony between work and family life is also driving benefit updates.

“The younger generation wants a healthier work and life balance more so than before,” Sparr said. “We’re seeing increases with parental need and

additional assistance or onsite child care. There’s a fluid dynamic between professional and personal lives.

“A flexible working environment ... almost all of us work from home at some point. A compressed work week, job sharing and rotations all go back to technology. Mobile technology makes flexible working conditions increasingly common.”

Rhonda Kaplar, human resources director at Task Force Tips Inc., has seen firsthand how benefit offerings have changed through the years. The company makes fire suppression equipment and focuses on designing and manufacturing innovative tools in the industry from its headquarters in Valparaiso.

“I have been at Task Force Tips for 19 years and have seen how benefits evolved over time,” she said. “One of the

things that attracts people to TFT is what we do. We make products that save people's lives all over the world, and for some, that is very motivational."

Kaplar said that, in today's job market, what's attractive to people in manufacturing is training and career development.

"We have an onsite training center and a training coordinator that manages a plethora of opportunities for those

that want to grow and develop outside of the job," she said. "They can go up to the training center and access tons of courses."

Benefits of training

When a skills gap exists, training and tuition reimbursement can bridge the disparity and benefit for both employers and employees.

"As employers now focus on training, it

is actually beneficial to employees long term to help them grow as well as help the businesses grow. It's a dual-focus," said Bertl with WorkOne. "It's as much about employee growth as it is about business growth and how that affects the business's ability to produce and thrive in Northwest Indiana."

WorkOne and the Northwest Indiana Work Force Board, which provides funds and resources for training, have assembled Region companies facing similar challenges with workers lacking necessary skills.

"The project was the second of its kind and unique among the state—getting a group of employers together with similar needs that they can't accomplish on their own, but with a cohort mentality they can accomplish something together," Bertl said. "It's on the brink of innovation, if you will, and a one-of-a-kind experience."

The need for industrial maintenance workers united T&B Tube Company of Gary, Task Force Tips and 5 Star Engineering and Maintenance in Portage. The companies came together to send their employees, who had the potential to build skills, to between six and seven months of training at Ivy Tech.

"This helps provide potential for wage increases, future promotions and advancement within the company," Bertl said. "The employers are going the extra mile to meet the employees' needs as well as giving them the benefit of the doubt that they will stay and that they believe in them. The companies are investing time and resources in the training and paying them during the training as well."

Beyond tried, true

While compensation, retirement and insurance have been the focus of employee benefits, there are unique aspects within these areas that companies are looking toward to keep their workers happy.

"These are the tried-and-true approaches, and today, the conversation starts around the standard," said Sparr with Mercer. "It's creating a more personalized approach to benefits and getting away from the one-size-fits all

approach. There's more choices, and it's personalized to specific needs.

"If a company's workforce has a higher incident of diabetes, we have vendors to help with that. There are thousands of different solutions, and Mercer really gets to know the clients personally."

Telemedicine and wellness offerings also can be an avenue to employee retention.

"There's employer-sponsored exchanges in digital platforms streamlined through technology," Sparr said. "Fitness and wellness always comes into play: wearable tech, standing desks and treadmill desks. Incorporating challenges and gaming into benefits programs—the gamification of benefits."

At TFT, Kaplar said there is an onsite workout center and off-site clinic. Employees and their family members can use the workout center.

"That goes hand-in-hand with the wellness piece as we are trying to provide the means to help employees with their plans in terms of losing weight or staying toned," Kaplar said.

The access to an off-site clinic is at no-cost for employees and their family members who are covered by insurance.

"It costs nothing for a visit or to get labs done, and there are zero-expense medications, and we also do annual wellness screenings," she said. "We focus on the well-being of our employees by helping to provide ways to keep them healthy."

A family-time program is another way that TFT seeks to provide a pleasant work environment. The program reimburses a dollar per mile up to \$500 when employees take their families on a road trip.

"They are asked to go to a fire department in the place where they are vacationing and drop off a bag of information and get contact information and take a picture with their family," Kaplar says. "The owner (Stewart McMillan) came up with the idea several years ago when the price of gas was really expensive, and he thought: How can we help people with that?"

Harbin said the bottom line should not be the driving force behind a business's benefit decisions.

"Too often companies cut the employee appreciation and recognition



Submitted photo

Barbie Sparr works with employers of all sizes in Indiana on strategizing human resources and wellness offerings. Sparr is a certified employee benefit specialist and health insurance associate with Mercer, a global consulting firm.

events from the budget," said Harbin with the Society for Human Resource Management of Northwest Indiana. "These are the events that motivate and encourage staff to maintain, or even increase, production."

She believes a happy workforce is a productive workforce.

"If you keep your employees motivated and encouraged, and be transparent with the business, I believe, they will remain loyal to you," Harbin said.

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Hammond and Westville, Indiana

A Different Take on Winding Down

Region finding light workout followed with a drink (or two) a good pairing



Photo submitted by Trek Bicycle Store - Schererville

Bikes fill a rack outside Pokro Brewing Co. in Griffith during the weekly pint ride organized by the TrekStore in Schererville. The bicycling store has been combining fitness with socializing to turn up interest in its products and local food options.

CARRIE NAPOLEON

Nicole Caylor says Running Vines, the name of her Chesterton winery, is a fun play on words that captures her passions.

An avid runner, Caylor says that, when she opened her winery in 2015, she really wanted to incorporate her love of fitness and running in some way with her new business. While fitness and wine might at first seem an unlikely pairing, she has found the combination to be a popular draw among fitness enthusiasts looking for

a little social interaction with their exercise.

“It’s a fun way to be accountable,” Caylor says. By taking exercise out of what would be considered a typical setting, it becomes something a little different. “It’s fun. It’s a little out of the box.”

Participants linger after exercising and wind down with a glass or two of wine with fellow class members. The class brings together a group of people who already share a common interest, and the setting helps participants

relax and interact in what might be a new social group.

“We really promote the social aspect,” Caylor says. “There is a lot of sense of camaraderie here.”

Events at Running Vines are as varied as the vintages. Caylor says she has yoga and wine classes, a popular class offering that quickly fills up. The winery also has hosted running events and Bar at the Bar sessions.

“They go over great. (Participants) are excited about it and ask for more,” she says.

Runners always are looking for that social outlet, spawning tons of running groups and various community running events. Caylor says adding the wine component is just a way to encourage people to be more social.

Gaining momentum

Caylor is not alone in seeing the appeal of combining fitness with a fun reward for participants. Fitness and alcohol pairings are on the rise and similar events are popping up around the country at places as diverse as yoga studios, gyms, brew pubs and bars. Runs and rides with a beer or wine component at the end of the event are growing in popularity and businesses are taking notice.

Life Time Fitness, with headquarters in Chanhassen, Minn., and with locations in neighboring Illinois, has begun opening bars, along with other Las Vegas-style resort amenities, at a handful of its locations as the company attempts to position itself as a one-stop destination designed to draw people in and get them to stay, corporate officials said at the time of the 2017 bar opening at the Gaithersburg, Md., location.

The Trek Store in Schererville has been tapping into people's desire to combine their fitness routine with socialization for several years, hosting a variety of group rides, including its Tuesday night pint ride to Pokro Brewing Co. in Griffith.

"Bikes and beer have gone hand in hand for years," says Daniela Gehrls, event coordinator for the Trek Store.

The store sponsors a variety of rides for all skill levels and activity goals from high-speed journeys to the weekly 12-mile pint night ride to Pokro.

"Most active people enjoy something cold and refreshing afterwards," Gehrls says.

Pairing cycling with a stop at a brewery lets participants know the ride is relaxed, and it helps build a riding community.

"It's kind of fun more than anything else," Gehrls says.

When the weekly rides first started, she says, they were just meant to be a causal-paced ride to a destination.



Photo by Running Vines Winery

Yoga and wine events at Running Vines winery in Chesterton give participants an opportunity to wind down after their exercise class with some of the winery's offerings.

"The fact the destination ended up being a brewery was more luck than anything," she says.

The first rides partnered with Crown Brewing in Crown Point. The brewery destination just stuck. The store also has partnered with Byway Brewing in Hammond. She says riders like to mix it up, changing their routes to different destinations to keep things fresh.

Like Caylor, Gehrls says the novelty of the events draw people out the first time, but the camaraderie of the weekly group get-together is what keeps them coming back, which is good for business. The ride takes about 30 minutes to the destination, a good enough amount of exercise for participants to feel like they deserve every carb they are about to intake upon their arrival.

It also helps connect the individual businesses to their customers and potentially bring in new clients.

Robyn Pokropinski, whose Pokro Brewing is the destination for Trek's pint night ride, says occasionally she sees some of the faces who show up on Tuesdays back in the restaurant and brewery on nonbike-ride nights.

The rides offer an opportunity to introduce the business to people who have not patronized the business before or might not have known about Pokro.

"It's a good partnership," she says.

Pokropinski said the business has taken steps to make the event more appealing to riders. A bike rack has been installed outside the front of the establishment to make it easier for participants to secure their bicycles. Pokro also offers a buffet for the pint night riders so everyone can eat and begin their return journey to the Trek Store, at the same time.

For the fun of it

Marty Semrau of Dyer and his friends say they enjoy the opportunity to support local business while riding together. Semrau and his wife, Becky, are among a group of riders who have been participating in the pint night rides, among others offered by Trek, for years. The couple also goes on breakfast rides and other destination rides that bring them to various locations throughout the region.

It is an opportunity to socialize with like-minded people who share a love of cycling, he says.

That group camaraderie brought riders out one recent Tuesday even though threats of severe thunderstorms kept the cyclists from actually riding. Participants put their bikes on their car racks and made their way to Pokro for the anticipated mid-ride beer and buffet break.

"It's the social aspect of the group," Semrau says.



Photo by Carrie Napoleon

New cyclists Andrew and Sara Vaclavik of Merrillville participate in the weekly pint rides by TrekStore in Schererville to get more active and enjoy the camaraderie of the group.

Semrau and fellow riders Sharon and Karl Koch and Walter Krantz, all of St. John, agree the evening pint ride is more about being social, getting out with like-minded people and having

fun doing an activity everyone in the group enjoys.

“I don’t even drink,” Sharon Koch says. “But everyone here likes riding bikes,” Karl Koch chimes in.

Marty Semrau says the casual rides create a great sense of camaraderie and has led to what he describes as “great, great friendships.”

Caylor and Gehrls said events that offer a fun twist to fitness and a social outlet for participants only will continue to grow as people become more fitness and health conscious.

“I think, in general, people are becoming more and more concerned with their health more now than 20 years ago and even 10 years ago,” Caylor says.

Mixing running and yoga with wine tasting puts a fun spin on exercising and creates a more social atmosphere for participants. The combination also promotes a healthy balance between exercise and imbibing.

“A glass of red wine is good for you, doctors are now saying. That’s what we are doing, promoting a healthy balance,” Caylor says, adding she is not advocating any medicinal benefits of alcohol just noting that many



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people enjoy both exercise and alcohol consumption in moderation.

Gehrle says about 25 to 30 people participate in the pint night rides each week, a number she hopes will continue to grow. The thought of an icy cold pint after a warm summer night ride might be just the enticement some people need to get off the couch and ride.

"The goal at the end of the day is to get people more active and kick down some of the doors people face as reasons why they wouldn't be out riding bikes," she says.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, just 51.7 percent of adults older than 18 get the recommended amount of aerobic physical activity while an even smaller percentage, 21.7 percent, meet the guidelines for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity.

Sara and Andrew Vaclavik of Merrillville are among those Americans who want to become more physically fit. The newlyweds bought

their first bikes earlier this year after Andrew Vaclavik says he wanted to find a way to be more active in the summer. After spending a little time getting acclimated to their new bikes, the couple decided it was time to try a group ride and signed up for the pint night ride.

"The goal at the end of the day is to get people more active and kick down some of the doors people face as reasons why they wouldn't be out riding bikes." —Daniela Gehrle

"We tried it the first time and fell in love," Andrew Vaclavik says.

Support from veteran riders and volunteers made the newcomers feel welcome and eager to return. It also has added a level of accountability. The group notices if they do not show up and offers words of encouragement throughout the ride. The Vaclaviks

have been regular participants since the ride series began for the season.

"It's great. It's almost like date night for us," he says.

Volunteers assist with the rides, helping to ensure rider safety and also making sure riders of varying skill levels do not need to keep up with the faster riders.

"It's about continuing to ride, and it being fun," Gehrle says. If participants are overworked their first ride, the likelihood of them returning diminishes.

Andrew Vaclavik says some people have an image of a cyclist as a slender, athletic person in shiny bicycle shorts. Cycling is something anyone can do.

"I'm clearly not like that," he says, adding that his inexperience has not stopped him from riding or lessened the support he receives from more seasoned fellow riders in the group. It is the support and sense of community that keep the couple coming back.

"It's more about riding and getting to know people," he says.

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Ready for Another Century

CPA firm Swartz, Retson and Co. serving the Region since 1919



Photo provided by Swartz, Retson and Co.

The partners of Swartz, Retson and Co. in Merrillville are: Back row from the left: Debra Van Prooyen, Michael Jones, Tammy Lynch and Gregory Ward. Seated from the left are Richard Zondor and Richard Young.

JERRY DAVICH

Gregory Ward unearthed an intriguing mystery about Swartz, Retson and Co., an accounting firm that prides itself on numbers, figures and accuracy.

Two years ago, the firm's youngest partner began researching its history to determine its true age. For decades, the oldest accounting firm in Northwest Indiana billed itself as in business since 1926. Ward, a professional CPA with a personal passion for history, found out otherwise.

"I've always wondered about it," says Ward, who's worked at the Merrillville firm since 2001.

First, he searched through old city directories in Gary, where the firm was founded. Then he sorted through dusty documents at the Indiana state public library, followed by treks to the Lake County recorder's office. There he exhumed massive books that haven't seen the light of day in more than a half century.

After months of detective work, Ward discovered the firm's original certificate of partnership, dated Nov. 14, 1919, with original signatures of its founders.

"To me, that was pretty cool," Ward recalls.

The firm was formed as a

partnership under the name Gary Audit Co., in the old Gary State Bank Building in downtown Gary, 504 Broadway. Its three original partners were Walter Goedecke, Charlie Silep and Wesley Ginder.

The firm did business there for 56 years, until June 1975, when it moved its office to 235 E. 86th Ave. in Merrillville.

"At the time, we were the first business on 86th Avenue," Ward says regarding what is now a busy commercial street housing NiSource's headquarters and the Chase Bank Centre.

In the late 1960s, the state of

Indiana informed the firm to remove the word “company” from its name because it was organized as a partnership. The firm then changed its name to include its partners’ names – Swartz, Retson, Lindholm and Kettas. When the firm later incorporated, its name was shortened to Swartz, Retson and Co., P.C.

“Our firm has been helping clients now for three generations,” Ward says.

Even more interesting is the length of careers of many of its 30 employees, including its six principals. For example, Michael Jones has been with the firm for more than 30 years. Debra Van Prooyen joined in 1993. Richard Young has been there since 1983. Tammy Lynch joined the firm in 1992. And Richard Zondor has more than 30 years of diversified public accounting experience.

“And we have another employee who’s been here since 1963,” Ward says, referring to a former partner whose father was a founding member. “He still comes into the office every day.”

Those long-lasting careers have paid huge dividends for Swartz, Retson and Co., whose clients sometimes rely on the firm’s experiential expertise.

“Some clients ask us for the history of their own firm,” says Ward, who has performed more than 300 business valuations and financial audits/reviews/compilations for privately held companies. “We take pride in this fact. Such experience makes everything else work here.”

The firm has helped new and established companies through various changing economies and business environments. Its employees specialize in several areas, including audits, reviews, tax planning and preparation, succession planning, business valuation, employee benefits and business consulting.

Clients come from every business sector—construction, manufacturing, medical, wholesale distribution and automotive industries, as well as nonprofit organizations. Many of them have been dealing with the same employees at Swartz, Retson

Ability and Reliability make a good team

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18	19	20	21	22	23	24				
25	26	27	28	29	30	31				

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An advertisement from Swartz, Retson and Co.’s early years when it operated as The Gary Audit Co. The company will celebrate it’s 100-year anniversary in 2019.

and Co. every day, and every decade, since 1919.

Ward’s colleague Tom Newman says plans are in the works to properly celebrate the firm’s 100-year anniversary in 2019, complete with a new logo and marketing hoopla.

“Thanks to Greg’s history lesson about Swartz, Retson and Co.,”

Newman says.

The partners have high hopes for the future.

“We understand that it may be challenging for people to get excited about accounting,” Ward jokes. “But we are proud of our history, and our future. We plan to be in business for another 100 years.”

Things to See and Do

An update on art and entertainment options across the Region

Northwest Indiana

JOHN CAIN

Warhol: Icon and Influence

Michigan City's Lubeznik Center for the Arts presents original works by Andy Warhol on loan from the Drew and Wendy Levenfeld collection, as well as the Brauer Museum of Art at Valparaiso University, through Oct. 13. More than 50 works spanning the late 1960s through mid-1980s are on display, including a substantial collection of black-and-white photographs, Polaroids and large color screen prints, among which are the artist's famous depictions of Campbell's soup cans, the Moon Walk and Annie Oakley. Much of Warhol's mundane, easily recognizable and everyday subject matter gave his work a democratic sensibility. Warhol employed strategies in his artwork that many contemporary artists use today. An exploration of these techniques is examined in categories such as celebrity, gender identity and popular culture by an invited group of artists whose work has been guided by Warhol's legacy. Participating artists include Christopher Cosnowski, Dominic Sansone, Robyn Day and CJ Hungerman. 219-874-4900 or www.lubeznikcenter.org.

Dukes of Dixieland

It's New Orleans in Indiana on Sept. 15 when the Dukes of Dixieland join the Northwest Indiana Symphony for the opening concert of its 2018-19 season. The Dukes is a Dixieland-style revival band that plays New Orleans music from Doctor John and Fats Domino, to Huey Smith and Louis Prima. Originally formed in 1948 by brothers Frank Assunto on trumpet, Fred Assunto on trombone and father Papa Jac Assunto on trombone and



Lora Fosberg, Lubeznik's director of exhibitions, discusses Warhol's "Moonwalk" screenprint diptych, 1987, on loan from the collection of Wendy and Drew Levenfeld.

Photo provided by the Lubeznik Center for the Arts.

banjo, the Dukes re-formed without the Asuntos in 1974, performing in the French Quarter before moving to a hall on Bourbon Street. Today their home base is the Steamboat Natchez. The Dukes of Dixieland have performed with orchestras throughout the U.S., including the Cincinnati, Cleveland, Chicago, National, New York and Boston Pops orchestras. They've even played in Carnegie Hall. In 2005, they traveled aboard the Steamboat Natchez up the Mississippi and Ohio rivers to Cincinnati, raising money for the Bush-Clinton Katrina Relief Fund, while many of the band members' homes still were destroyed. Prepare to party like it's Mardi Gras when the Northwest Indiana Symphony brings a little bit of the Big Easy to the Region. 219-836-0525 or www.nisorchestra.org.

75th annual South Shore Arts Salon Show

South Shore Arts presents the 75th anniversary edition of its annual Salon Show from Sept. 9 through Nov.

4. This regional exhibition is always an exceptional display of talent and creativity. A private preview brunch celebrating the exhibit's milestone will take place from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sept. 16 at the Center for Visual and Performing Arts, Munster. Admission to the brunch is \$75. A free public reception and awards ceremony will follow from 1 to 3 p.m. with more than \$10,000 in cash prizes announced at 1:30 p.m. The Salon Show is a tradition that has defined South Shore Arts since its inception in the late 1930s when 10 area artists launched an exhibition of visual art in the hat department of the Edward C. Minas Department Store in downtown Hammond. There was an interruption in the exhibit during the war years, but it resumed in 1944, becoming known as the Salon Show. Highest among the exhibit's prizes has been the Surovek Award of Excellence, a \$2,000 prize, established more than 25 years ago in memory of Helen V. Surovek. 219-836-1839 or www.southshoreartsonline.org.

Greater South Bend

JACK WALTON

Ringo Starr returns to the Morris

It's pretty amazing that we can still go to see a Beatle in 2018. Ringo Starr brings his All-Starr Band to the Morris Performing Arts Center in South Bend on Sept. 9. The always-charming drummer has a ton of fun with his celebrity bandmates in a revue of Beatle tunes, hits from Ringo's solo career, and good rollicking cover songs as well. The 2018 incarnation of the All-Starr Band includes Colin Hay from Men at Work, Steve Lukather from Toto and Gregg Rolie from Santana and Journey. Coming to the Morris on Sept. 12 is bluegrass superstar Alison Krauss. She has been a prolific recording artist, made vital contributions to the now-iconic "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" soundtrack, and has taken home an incredible 27 Grammy wins (on the strength of 42 nominations.) One of the biggest things to come from Seattle after Nirvana was Modest Mouse, who visit the Morris on Sept. 24. Modest Mouse has been around since 1992, and pulled off the rare feat of maintaining an equal popularity among fans and critics. For tickets or more information, call 574-235-9190 or visit www.morriscenter.org.

Arts series closing out summer

This year's events at the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County Performing Arts Series wind down with two of the biggest shows of the season. All the family-friendly events are free at the Chris Wilson Pavilion at Potawatomi Park in South Bend. The largest crowds of the series tend to show up for the annual performance by the South Bend Symphony Orchestra, playing Aug. 18 this year. The outdoor venue allows for the extra space required for the traditional "community play-along" number. This year, local amateur musicians can register to download, practice and rehearse a special arrangement of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," which they



Photo provided by the Community Foundation of St. Joseph County Performing Arts Series

Dennis Gamble plays trumpet with the Indiana University South Bend Concert Band at last year's Community Foundation Performing Arts Series at Chris Wilson Pavilion at Potawatomi Park in South Bend.

perform alongside the professional SBSO musicians at the concert. The rest of the SBSO program consists of chestnuts and warhorses from the classical canon. The series concludes with an evening showcasing the Indiana University South Bend. On Aug. 25, catch the South Bend Symphonic Choir as well as a chance to hear a piano performance by virtuoso Tanya Gabrielian. Last year, Gabrielian was named the new Martin Endowed Professor of Piano, replacing the legendary and beloved Alexander "Lexo" Toradze as the director of the prestigious international Piano Studio at IUSB. To learn more about the series, call 574-232-0041 or visit www.cfsjc.org.

Jazzy evenings at Merrimans'

The area's hippest jazz club is Merrimans' Playhouse at 1211 Mishawaka Ave. in South Bend. The venue regularly pulls in Chicago stalwarts and even national and international touring acts. Guitarist Goran Ivanovic brings his Balkan jazz to Merrimans' on Aug. 18. Also appearing in August: Javier Red, Aug. 24; and Juli & the Kellys, Aug. 29. A busy September features the Scott Routenberg Trio, Sept. 7; the Gregory Dudzienski Group, Sept. 13; saxophonist Caroline Davis, Sept.

22; and the Heartland Trio, Sept. 28. The brilliant young pianist Ben Rosenblum will perform with his trio Oct. 12. Merrimans' Playhouse also hosts a weekly jam session every Tuesday night. To learn more, call 574-329-3430 or visit www.merrimansplayhouse.com.

Shows at Notre Dame

The University of Notre Dame's DeBartolo Performing Arts Center is kicking off its 2018-19 Presenting Series with a showcase by Todd Rundgren, who has partnered with Notre Dame on a series of projects in recent years. On Sept. 7, he leads a show titled "Todd Rundgren's Play Like a Champion Concert: Students Play the '80s." Singing-acting double-threat Kristin Chenoweth, a pint-sized person with a larger-than-life personality, performs Sept. 21. Why is trumpet star Arturo Sandoval doing a Christmas concert Sept. 28? It's because his new Christmas album features the Notre Dame Children's Choir, and this concert is the release party. Finally, Aquila Theatre moves in for a two-night run of a theatrical adaptation of Mary Shelley's novel, "Frankenstein," Oct. 4-5. For tickets and other DPAC performances, call 574-631-2800 or visit www.performingarts.nd.edu.

SLYCE Leadership Program

Youths benefit from planning and participating in event

SOL ESTRADA AND ADRIANA CATTAN
SLYCE is a program that brings high school students together from around the Region and focuses on improving their leadership abilities.

The Southshore Leadership Youth for Community Engagement program consists of hearing from speakers who work in impactful fields within the Region. Speakers talk about their fields and why they are important. It also involves planning and hosting an event of our choosing that would impact the Region.

We learned about the Region's economy, educational system, environment and diversity.

Hearing the speakers helped us learn about our Region and what committee we might want to be on to plan our event. First, as a group, we decided that our event should focus on those with special needs within our communities. Then, we split into different committees such as finance, marketing, program and others. As a group, we were given responsibilities.

It took a lot of hard work and effort to get our event organized. Some of the hardest tasks were making small decisions that made a big impact. We were responsible for planning the food, tables, games, tickets and every small detail of the event. As a group, we had to work together, even at the last second.

Overall, SLYCE helped all of us hone our leadership abilities and come together to help those in our community.

For our event, the group decided on a program to celebrate those with special needs. This event, later



Andrean High School students organized Special Abilities United at Sunset Hill Farm in Valparaiso on June 9, an event to celebrate youths with special needs.

named "Special Abilities United," took place June 9 at Sunset Hill Farm in Valparaiso. It consisted of games and activities. All SLYCE members were responsible for tickets, games or concessions. We were able to interact with others and provide a pleasant experience for all who attended.

"Special Abilities United" was a success, especially for those who helped put it together. After months of coming together and planning, we were able to turn an idea into a reality. About 80 people attended the event. It was great seeing our hard work come to life. Being able to put on the event showed each of us what hard work could get done.

Our project goal for SLYCE was to help those with special needs and

give back by contributing to school funding. We chose the programs Young Adults Really Care (YARC) and the Special Education Learning Facility (SELF) in Valparaiso.

YARC is a club run by Andrean High School students. It is a program that continues to grow. In YARC, we celebrate holidays with those who have special abilities.

Halloween is the first party of the year; everyone dresses up in costumes. The students help decorate pumpkins and mummy wrap. We also take our guest students trick-or-treating around our school. It is an experience that is breathtaking to see because they get so excited.

The next party is Christmas, which is where we have Santa come, and they all get to meet him. The last party we have is Easter, and we hide Easter eggs around our school for our guest students to find. It is truly a good feeling when you see them so happy and excited.

SELF was the other program we chose to donate some of the money we raised. SELF is a school run by Porter County Education Services for those who need extra attention so they can be successful. Our SLYCE class thought this program was a good way to contribute to education at a school.

I can say, for all of us, it was an honor to be chosen to help with this project.

Sol Estrada and Adriana Cattan were juniors at Andrean High School in Merrillville when they took part in the SLYCE program during the 2017-18 school year. They will be entering their senior year this fall.

Winning Helps Boost Support for Football



Larry Avila

High school teams find victories lead to more fans, funds for programs

LARRY AVILA

In his first two years as athletic director for Michigan City High School, Craig Shaman remembers when Friday night varsity football games drew about 1,000 people.

That meant at least 3,000 seats were empty at the 4,000-person capacity Ames Field, which didn't help concession sales and ultimately the amount of money available to support athletic programs. This isn't the case any longer, Shaman said.

"Since we started winning, (varsity) games now consistently draw over 3,000 a game, and we even sell out games especially against LaPorte and playoff games," Shaman said. Winning has been the solution to boost attendance.

Michigan City hired a new varsity football coach, Phil Mason, for the 2016 season. In his first year, he guided the Wolves to an overall record of 7-4, a vast improvement from five wins total in Shaman's first two years as athletic director.

The Wolves went 9-3 during the 2017 season, which included a playoff loss to Kokomo High School in Class 5A state playoff semi-finals.

"It's an easy-to-understand story," Shaman said. "Attendance at football games really skyrocketed up once we started winning, and we're seeing everything else that goes along with winning. People support a winner."

Ed Gilliland, director of athletics at LaPorte High School, understands Shaman's perspective. Between 2007 and 2013, LaPorte only had one winning season but turned it around in 2014 in what was Bob Schellinger's final year as head coach.

Schellinger guided LaPorte to an

overall 8-5 record, which included a playoff run that ended in a 56-7 loss in the Class 5A state championship to the powerhouse Indianapolis Cathedral Fighting Irish.

"We're fortunate to have the resources to partner with our schools and help where we can." —Steve Kring

Gilliland recalled how LaPorte got behind the football team's success in 2014, which hasn't cooled since.

"For the title game, we took a huge crowd down to Indianapolis," he said. "It was incredible to make it there."

Momentum for LaPorte's football success was continued by Dave Sharpe who has led the team to post-season play in 2016 and 2017.

Gilliland said winning has helped fill the stands at Kiwanis Field on Friday nights. The stadium, which seats 5,000, has drawn up to 3,000 fans for home games in recent years, he said.

But LaPorte also in recent years has worked to create a more festive atmosphere during football games. Gilliland said a DJ plays music between plays and during other breaks.

LaPorte also has offered discount prices for tickets to encourage students to attend games. Game day tickets are \$6, a price set by the Duneland Athletic Conference, where both LaPorte and Michigan City are members.

"The students have responded well to the discount tickets and the music we play during the games," Gilliland said.

More people at the games also means more dollars from ticket sales, and more people buying food and drinks at the concession stands, he said.

However, high school athletics programs also rely on business sponsors.

Gilliland said LaPorte has an advantage as the only public high school in the city.

"We were always well supported by the business community even before our football team's recent success," he said. "When you're the only high school, you become the central focus for the community, and if you win, the community really comes out for us."

Steve Kring, Horizon Bank's regional president for LaPorte and Porter counties, sees winning high school athletic programs as the reward from hard work and community support.

Horizon Bank regularly supports many high school athletic and academic programs in markets it serves, regardless of the number of wins and losses a school might have.

"I don't think winning (football teams) have had any impact on Horizon contributing to high school athletic programs," Kring said. "We've been an associated partner with Michigan City for a long time, and we've seen them not only be successful on the football field but academically as a school system."

Kring said that Horizon believes it is important for community members, residents and businesses to support school systems because it ensures they have the resources needed to help students succeed.

"We recognize that money is tight for public schools, and we know their shortfalls and programs that need support at the end of the day," Kring said. "We're fortunate to have the resources to partner with our schools and help where we can."

Equal Ground to Opportunity



Dr. Vanessa Allen-McCloud

Courageous conversations can lead to change

DR. VANESSA ALLEN-McCLOUD

Sometimes we can feel that we are up against impossible odds. The challenges of racial and economic injustices, the difficulty many find moving forward on the path to equality and the resistance we see on a national level to policies leading to the “greater good” can leave us wondering about the future of our Region and our nation.

Here at the Urban League, we continue to focus on core issues that affect the Region’s communities. Access to high-quality education and jobs are at the top of the list, along with breaking down the barriers of exclusion through diversity and inclusion.

But what does all of this mean in reality? Some might question the value of these ideas, but when they are linked with establishing stable, peaceful communities, the new possibilities become clear.

Imagine our Region as a place where all people, regardless of race or income, are able to access education, jobs and housing, just for starters. Can we really imagine what this would look like? Instead of glaring inequalities that juxtapose gated communities, we would see diverse blocks of people living together in friendly spaces.

In our schools, our children would know each other by their first names, and would participate in academics, sports and clubs as equals, challenging each other to do his or her best, in the spirit of fellowship.

Imagine our Region as a place where communities work together to support each other, where police

departments function to serve and protect, where people are not intimidated by those in power, where people of color are not treated differently from those who have traditionally had the advantage of skin privilege.

“The man who views the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life.” —Muhammad Ali

Does this sound utopian? It always will be seen as such if we do not change our thinking and our policies. We believe that information and conversation are crucial elements in bringing about new understandings among employers and people in the workforce, community and educational leaders. We tackle the harder conversations about race, privilege, power and identity. We believe that silence is not an option, especially when so much is at stake.

A profound and relevant response to these challenges is to see new possibilities that can arise from diversity and inclusion practices.

For the past five years, the Urban League has hosted a “Diversity and Inclusion Symposium” that addresses the challenges our communities face. The purpose of the symposium is to find solutions to problems with police-community relations, and to engage citizens in proactive conversations about the important issues of the Region and our country.

In November 2016, about 200 Porter County stakeholders convened at Valparaiso University and participated in a “Town Hall Forum” that

provided a safe environment for these courageous conversations.

This year’s event will take place from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Oct. 5 at Valparaiso University. People from all over the Region will meet to discuss difficult subjects that will lead them to new and better understandings through workshops that encourage inclusive thinking and training opportunities. The Urban League’s role is to plant the seeds of change among stakeholders in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. It will provide knowledge and exposure that confront the realities of racism and privilege, and strategies to overcome these barriers.

Every year, and in every way, we re-dedicate ourselves to the goals of knocking down walls and opening doors to equality and prosperity by providing strategies to overcome historical barriers. As Urban League president and CEO, I am proud to say that ours is the only regionwide symposium that focuses on these issues within Northwest Indiana.

Please visit our website for more information: www.urbanleagueofnwi.org or call 219-887-9621 to register.

The compelling words of a man whose life was devoted to tearing down walls, so that others could grow and live life to its fullest, bear repeating. He cautions us to make intentional change in ourselves, so that we, as individuals, become who we need to be.

“The man who views the world at 50 the same as he did at 20 has wasted 30 years of his life.”—Muhammad Ali

Dr. Vanessa Allen-McCloud is president and CEO of the Urban League of Northwest Indiana in Gary.

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