Compendium:

NORTHEAST INDIANA WORKS

Board Newsletter, April 2025

Dear Board Members:

Career Initiative Unveiled: Northeast Indiana Works is one of four organizations leading an effort to promote a framework designed to increase regional student career exploration and employer engagement.

The other inaugural strategic partners: the Don Wood Foundation, Greater Fort Wayne Inc., and OrthoWorx.

The Career 360 framework focuses largely on how employers can help students explore careers, including through mentorships, job shadowing, business tours, and real-world challenges.

The framework was announced at a news conference March 18 at Junior Achievement of Northern Indiana.

Manufacturing day camps for middle-schoolers created and facilitated by Northeast Indiana Works were highlighted as an example of a Career 360 activity. Six camps have been held in the last three years and five are planned for 2025, beginning with one in Wells County on May 17 involving the counties served by the Area 18 CTE Cooperative.

Laura Macknick, president and CEO of the Don Wood Foundation, speaks at the Career 360 news conference.

"The hands-on camps for middle-schoolers that we help facilitate not only provide young people with a career option to consider, they encourage collaboration with multiple strategic partners that creates a synergy of purpose and support" said **Edmond O'Neal**, president and CEO of Northeast Indiana Works.

"We simply must work together to build talent pipelines that will ensure a robust, sustained regional economy and workforce," he said.

Said **John Urbahns**, president and CEO of Greater Fort Wayne Inc.: "By sharing best practices and strengthening partnerships with organizations like the Don Wood Foundation, Northeast Indiana Works and OrthoWorx, we can expand opportunities and ensure more learners gain the skills and experiences needed for success."

Northeast Indiana Works is also in discussions with the Don Wood Foundation regarding enhancing Ignite Advance Manufacturing, an initiative designed to encourage the pursuit of careers in the region's largest employing sector.

To connect with Career 360, contact **Patrick Buesching** at pbuesching@donwoodfoundation.org

Providing Expertise: **Kim Tempel**, senior director of business services/human resources at Northeast Indiana Works, was a panelist at a Northeast Indiana Human Resource Association (NIHRA) January event that addressed a variety of topics.

Kim Tempel, far left, participates in a panel discussion hosted by the Northeast Indiana Human Resource Association.

Tempel spoke about the role government affairs plays in shaping workforce development programs and occupations that are likely to grow the most in the next five years.

Other panelists: **Marilyn Hissong**, superintendent of East Allen County Schools; **Christopher Schrader**, president of Schrader and Associates; **Stephanie Crandall**, who was representing the city of Fort Wayne and has since taken a job at the Barnes & Thornburg law firm; and **Joe Cohen**, partner at Barrett McNagny.

Also in January, Tempel was part of a group presenting virtually to all Ivy Tech campuses about the value of participating in business, retention and expansion visits to employers.

Other presenters: **Brock Herr**, senior vice president of business development with the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC); **Linda Walczak**, vice president of business retention and expansion for IEDC; **Leighton Johnson**, Ivy Tech assistant vice president for employer connections; and **Joe McMichael**, vice chancellor of Ivy+ Career Link in the Fort Wayne region.

Area JAG Students Excel: Six northeast Indiana high school students earned honors in a state Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) event and some will compete April 24-26 at JAG's National Career Development Conference in Indianapolis.

The national conference is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their career readiness, connect with employers, and explore future opportunities.

Northeast Indiana students who finished in the top three at state were: **Brianna Nichols**, first place at state in cover design, DeKalb High School; **Maggie Onderko-White**, first place, employability skills, Manchester High School; **Katelyn Martynowicz**, third place, career preparation, Manchester High School; and **Lacey Dawson**, **Grace Hall** and **Aadyn Ousley**, third place, project-based learning, Manchester High School.

Martynowicz and Onderko-White will compete at the national event. Also competing at national will be **Hannah Shepherd**, financial literacy, Manchester High School; **Laura Ruiz**, prepared speaking, DeKalb High School; and knowledge bowl competitors **Ayla Lee** and **Peyton Gilbert** (Manchester) and **Brooke Davis**, **Claribel Pinedo**, **Isaac Tuttle**, **Jessica Hull**, **Mateo Tkacz**, **Sarah Williams** and **Veronicka Bauman** (DeKalb).

In northeast Indiana, JAG programs are overseen by Northeast Indiana Works and administered by Brightpoint. JAG students acquire vital job skills, get hands-on experience, and receive a year of post graduation support.

O'Neal Meets with Legislators: Northeast Indiana Works President and CEO **Edmond O'Neal** met with legislators and representatives of Gov. Mike Braun's administration in February during a dinner and Statehouse Day 2025 in Indianapolis.

Statehouse Day, coordinated by the Indiana Workforce Alliance (formerly the Indiana Workforce Board Alliance), was designed to let legislators and others know about the work being done by the state's workforce boards. Representatives of the 11 other workforce boards in Indiana also participated.

Awards were also given to leaders who have supported workforce development. U.S. Sen. **Jim Banks**, R-IN, was among the honorees.

In March, O'Neal attended a meeting at which Indiana Secretary of Commerce **David Adams** and Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) Executive Director **Brad Chambers** shared the vision for the future of the IEDC with regional economic and workforce development leaders. Discussions also focused on regional priorities, strategic practices, and business attraction and retention efforts.

(*The next board meeting will be from 9 to 10:30 a.m. April 11, 2025. It will be in person and virtual.)*

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