Compendium:

NORTHEAST INDIANA WORKS

Board Newsletter, January 2025

Dear Board Member:

Northeast Indiana Initiative Gets Statewide Attention: A Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) employer-visit initiative in northeast Indiana will be getting statewide attention through a video recently produced by the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC).

The video aims to encourage more employers, economic development organizations, workforce boards, and training partners to participate in such visits.

Participating in the video besides the IEDC were Northeast Indiana Works, Smith Brothers of Berne, Adams County Economic Development Corporation, and Purdue Fort Wayne. **Kim Tempel**, Northeast Indiana Works senior director of business services/ human resources, was among those featured in the video.

IEDC started the BR&E program in 2014 and Northeast Indiana Works has been a member of the team since its inception. The visits have been successful in helping businesses strengthen their operations in our region.

After the visits, the regional BR&E team stays in contact with the companies as they encounter challenges and opportunities.

“The BR&E visits are critical in helping companies strengthen their operations, tackle challenges, and seize opportunities, ultimately securing their future here in northeast Indiana,” said Tempel. “By fostering these strong relationships, we’re building a resilient regional economy that supports both business growth and workforce development. We look forward to the continued growth and success in the years to come.

“The BR&E program has helped build new partnerships and grow partnerships that we already have,” said Tempel.

The video was released at December’s Indiana Economic Development Association (IEDA) winter conference and is expected to be posted on the IEDC website.

State JAG Expansion Reached; Region Programs Now at 20: The Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD) successfully reached its Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) target growth goal by increasing the number of statewide middle and high school programs from 125 to 250 prior to 2025, as directed by Governor **Eric J. Holcomb**.

JAG Indiana now boasts the largest network of JAG programs in the United States.

In northeast Indiana, there are 20 programs at 16 schools. Another program is expected to be added soon. Regionally, JAG is overseen by Northeast Indiana Works and carried out by Brightpoint.

Holcomb set the expansion goal in September of 2023 to remove barriers to graduation some young Hoosiers face. JAG is a resiliency-building workforce program helping both middle and high school students learn in-demand employability skills and receive career exploration and coaching experiences. JAG Indiana has served 40,000 Hoosier youths to date.

"I'm incredibly proud of the JAG team for reaching this lofty goal and ensuring students across the state of Indiana can explore their potential and find their career path of choice," Holcomb said. "JAG develops leaders who go on to make excellent participants in the workforce, which in turn only betters Indiana, community by community."

Ten Years of Opportunity Knocks: Over the past decade, Northeast Indiana Works has been coordinating a free weekly news segment on WPTA-TV (Channel 21) called Opportunity Knocks.

The segment was first aired on the noon news Mondays and later on INsight. Recently, WPTA decided to end the segment. The last Opportunity Knocks was taped on December 11.

Opportunity Knocks has been an engaging way to keep employers, students, job seekers and employees aware of career and educational opportunities available in northeast Indiana. The program has been a useful tool in fulfilling a Northeast Indiana Works mission to build talent pipelines.

Northeast Indiana Works Communications Director **Rick Farrant** and Purdue University Fort Wayne Community Research Institute Director **Rachel Blakeman** sat down for the final Opportunity Knocks interview.

They presented workforce and economic trend predictions for the new year. Blakeman discussed the regional economy and how it may be more fragile than the numbers show. The prospects of automation, tariffs and deportations with new administrations entering Indianapolis and Washington may affect the number of available jobs, she said.

Farrant talked about the softer job market. The region has roughly 9,000 online job postings, which is less than what was available a year ago. He said it appears employers have adjusted and learned to get by with less in the post-Covid market. Additionally, he noted more is required of employees in an increasingly high-tech world. It is important for workers, he said, to be willing to learn and skill up in the coming years.

Indiana Workforce Alliance Rebrand: The Indiana Workforce Alliance, previously known as the Indiana Workforce Board Alliance, has rebranded to promote a collaborative vision.

The Indiana Workforce Alliance convenes and facilitates collaboration among the 12 Economic Growth Regions' Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs), including Northeast Indiana Works. LWDBs in Indiana bring together diverse perspectives, including education institutions, businesses, community organizations and job seekers to develop and implement effective workforce development plans that address specific needs of their local economies and communities. The alliance also welcomes other workforce ecosystem partners to join as associate members.

The goal of the alliance is to work together to build a skilled workforce for the 21st century economy.

The new alliance branding was unveiled at a two-day summit held in Carmel, Indiana in October in partnership with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and Ivy Tech. The summit was attended by Northeast Indiana Works President & CEO **Edmond O'Neal**. Topics at the summit included talent pipeline management, updates on state legislation and developing a diverse workforce.

The rebrand includes a new logo, enhanced website, reworked language and a new name.

Social Media, Hiring Strategies Highlight Employer Seminar: More than 100 employers attended an annual employer seminar conducted October 3 at Sweetwater Sound in Fort Wayne.

The seminar was presented in person and virtually by Northeast Indiana Works and WorkOne Northeast.

Among the topics: workplace culture, hiring strategies, efficient use of social media, talent development, trends in the economy, JAG. DWD Commissioner **Richard Paulk** also spoke about how DWD assists businesses and **Kristopher Subler**, senior project manager for the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, talked about the One Stop To Start initiative.

Employers were surveyed to determine the topics. Northeast Indiana Works' business services representatives led the event's planning.

"These seminars are great opportunities to provide helpful information for employers, allow for an exchange of ideas, and position Northeast Indiana Works and WorkOne Northeast as go-to organizations for workforce development matters," said **Edmond O'Neal**, president and CEO of Northeast Indiana Works.

Healthcare Begins with Me Attends Junior Achievement JobSpark: Northeast Indiana Works participated in Junior Achievement of Northern Indiana's JobSpark event November 12 and 13 at the Allen County War Memorial Coliseum in Fort Wayne. The two-day event, designed to expose young people to a variety of careers, drew 7,736 eighth and ninth graders from 51 schools.

"JA JobSpark is a transformative experience that empowers students to envision their future careers," said **Sue Jackson**, senior program manager at Junior Achievement. "By connecting young people with real-world professionals and hands-on learning, we're equipping them with the tools and inspiration they need to succeed in an ever-changing workforce."

Northeast Indiana Works touted healthcare careers during the event with its Healthcare Begins With Me awareness initiative, which through the support of a state grant has reached thousands of middle and high school students and generated nearly 10 million social media impressions.

Northeast Indiana Works in the Community: Northeast Indiana Works President & CEO **Edmond O'Neal** attended a Ford NGL Leadership Council meeting in Hampton, Virginia in October. O'Neal attended the meeting with Fort Wayne Community Schools.

On November 19, O'Neal spoke at the Schools of Success Dinner for Fort Wayne Community Schools. As a designated community partner, he represented Northeast Indiana Works and encouraged organizations to get involved with the Schools of Success initiative.

He also spoke before the Northeast Indiana Mayors and Commissioners Caucus on November 20.

O'Neal gave the caucus an overview of the region's economic outlook, as well as a personalized look at workforce trends within each of the 11 counties in the northeast Indiana service area.

On November 25, O'Neal spoke as a part of the Irwin Elementary School STEM Magnet Program Blastoff Speaker Series. He read to students and talked about the value of hard work.

Region 8 Education Service Center hosted a Work-Based Learning Forum on November 2. **Kim Tempel**, Northeast Indiana Works senior director of business services/human relations, presented at the forum regarding the Employer Training Grant.

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