

Welcome Back Home.

Let's Get Ready to Pedal! HCI proposal approved

In mid-May, the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs informed the CDC that the Hometown Collaboration Initiative (HCI) committee's capstone proposal, the Pulaski County Bike Route Network (along with a tourism strategic plan), had been approved. Once the State signature process has been completed, the CDC will receive \$10,000 to put toward implementing the project. These funds, along with the \$5,000 local match, will pay for route signage, traffic-counting services, and the design and printing of a map brochure.

Pulaski County is already home to the Panhandle Pathway/Winamac Parkway and Pulaski County Bike Route #1, which spans 14.1 miles between the Winamac Town Park and the Erie Trail - Monterey. Through HCI, nine or 10 new paths will be mapped and signed; adding hundreds of miles of paved share-the-road routes, increasing our attractiveness to cyclists; and creating opportunities for users of the state park and our campgrounds. The countywide network will connect all four towns, most unincorporated settlements, the river and trails, Bruce Lake, and numerous points of interest. Work should be substantially completed by early October.

Building the Industrial Pipeline

Early in 2015, a partnership led by the CDC and the Community Foundation of Pulaski County was awarded a grant of nearly \$85,000, leveraged by more than \$20,000 in local public and private funds, to establish a high-school technical-education program in industrial repair and maintenance — the Pulaski County RAM-Tech program —, intended to create a long-term solution to the dearth of qualified industrial maintenance workers locally and regionally.

Having overcome multiple setbacks, the RAM-Tech team has finally seen the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. A West Central Junior-Senior High School teacher will be enrolling in a Conexus training course this summer and in a course put on by Amatrol, the manufacturer of the RAM-Tech training modules, in 2017; a retired engineer will be attending an Amatrol course this summer and spending two-to-four semesters in an adjunct role at West Central, teaching and team-teaching courses as the pipeline is built. Equipment will be delivered later this summer.

Students who successfully complete the program will possess a wide-ranging skill set with classroom and externship experiences in fluid power, electricity, fabrication, and other important industrial maintenance fields.

DID YOU KNOW ...

that the Revolving Loan Fund has more than \$55,000 available to help to finance start-ups, expansions, and relocation projects?

Contact us to learn more!

CONGRATULATIONS TO ...

CDC member Darlene Mellon and her husband, Chuck, 2016 Halleck Award recipients, and Della Wall Tax Prep., Chamber Organization of the Year!

Bobby Rugg and her team on the opening of Rugged Adventures, Pulaski County's awesome new outdoor-adventure park!

The Town of Winamac on the decision to establish a park board!

The State of the County Economy, 2016

WHY PULASKI COUNTY?

THE WINAMAC INDUSTRIAL PARK, WINAMAC, AND PARTS OF OTHER TOWNS ALL HAVE THE FIBER-OPTIC CONNECTIVITY THAT YOU NEED.



The past year has been tough for our community. Following the warrant signed by the County Council, Pleasant View finally met its death just shy of a year ago. Whether this decision was good or bad isn't for me to say, but it created unfortunate division and controversy amongst friends and neighbors, and amongst elected officials. The end of 2015 closed more than 45 years of library service in Medaryville. Again, although I certainly recognize the quality-of-life benefits of having a library in the town, it's not my position to second-guess the decision; as a member of a library board, myself, I understand the need to balance providing services with fiscal responsibility. They did what they had to do, but it didn't come without frustration, controversy, and disappointment. On the bright side, the Library and Pulaski County Human Services are working out an arrangement whereby some library services will continue to be provided, and Human Services' west-side location will be in an upgraded facility. This is a positive step forward, for sure.

And, admittedly, I've landed in the pages of the newspaper a couple of times in recent months.

Economically, we've experienced a few letdowns, too. Pentair corporate shut down the rural Winamac plant, moving production to New York. Antares (later Direct Trailer), just a couple of years ago a shining new star in our manufacturing sky, burned out as 2015 came to a close. Another major employer, undergoing restructuring and diversification, is running below its optimum level.

Although our unemployment rate continues to drop and is lower than it was a year ago, no longer are we a leader in the state, instead trailing two-thirds of Indiana counties on this metric.

As we at the CDC continue to focus much of our energy on capacity building and improving quality of life, one of the greatest obstacles that we face comes in the form of friendly fire: not only do we have the highest income-tax rate of any county in the state, but it just went up again. This will not help to reverse our negative population trend. The fact is that concerns that acquisition by a Swedish company will lead to BraunAbility's leaving Winamac are misplaced, but if ever we were to lose them or another major employer, I'm quite afraid that it'd be because they are tired of not having enough people. It kinda reminds me of the 1970s Seattle billboard: "Will the last person leaving [Pulaski County] turn out the lights?"

But enough with the doom and gloom! There are bright spots, and I'd be remiss not to mention them.

Last spring, we assisted Galbreath in securing a small tax abatement and some State incentives to support a modest expansion. For now, even though more than half of their workforce lives out of the county, BraunAbility is not yet tired of not having enough people, and they continue marching forward with expansion from a few years ago and natural growth as key demographic bases enlarge. Winamac Coil Spring's Winamac plant is continuing along healthily — such a wonderful story for a building that has brought so much frustration to this community. I've spoken recently with two or three manufacturers contemplating expansion; it's always kinda cool to get to know about these plans before the general public ever does.

A lot of the successes of the past year, as I hinted earlier, have come on the capacity-building and broader community-development fronts.

Pulaski County is about to hit the small screen — again. A couple of years ago, we produced TV-show episodes profiling our community and cool places to visit, and local economic leaders. These shows still air on PBS, and I finally saw myself on Channel 56 just last month. Now, we'll be airing an amazing 30-second commercial promoting Pulaski County as a tourist destination on WBBM-TV

Continued on page 3.

The State of the County Economy, 2016

Continued from page 2.

out of Chicago. The team who built our fabulous County Website had this developed, and it's almost breathtaking. It'll run 38 times over the week leading up to the Academy of Country Music awards in early April. A longer version of the clip is already online, on our Tourism Website and elsewhere.

We've partnered with Purdue Extension – Pulaski County and an excellent steering committee to develop Leadership Pulaski County; our first cohort will start up, we hope, this fall, or early in 2017 at the latest.

Our monthly manufacturing-group luncheons continue, as do the Ivy Tech training programs through which our companies send employees to learn communication, leadership, and other soft skills to make them more valuable to their employers and likelier to move up the ladder. Out of this group has grown our brand-new Pulaski County Human Resources group, offering participants beyond the manufacturing sector the opportunity to network, to learn, and to collaborate.

At last year's summit, I spoke of the 80-plus-thousand-dollar grant that we received to develop a new industrial maintenance and repair program at West Central High School. We've been set back by one obstacle after another, but the State has been quite flexible with us, and it's turned out that this delay has given us the opportunity to work with another training provider to strengthen the proposed curriculum. Students will be able to take prerequisite courses this coming fall and spring, and by fall 2017, spring 2018 at the latest, we should have our first cohort on those brand-new training modules. The need for qualified workers in this field is tremendous, and we're investigating multiple avenues for filling this void.

CDC Project Coordinator Krysten Hinkle has been working her tail off to re-establish a farmers' market in Winamac, with plans to expand across the county in the future. As the Pulaski County coordinator for the Indiana Bicentennial, not only has she been involved in the torchbearer-selection

process, but she's the chair of our committee that will soon be diving into planning a wonderful weekend event, Torchfest, that will occur in early October, when the Bicentennial Torch makes its way from Cass County to Starke County.

After a year of meetings, cross-county tours, and a lot of brainstorming, our Hometown Collaboration Initiative committee reached two decisions at our December meeting: we're developing a countywide on-road bike-route network, dubbed "Cranes, Trains, and Pedalmobiles", and we're preparing a real tourism plan to guide our efforts in marketing this community and taking better advantage of all of the wonderful natural amenities that we're so lucky to possess.

There's always work to be done, but we're doing it. We have to. Here's the fundamental choice we have to make: Are we going to invest in our future or are we going to manage our decline? Do we want to take some chances and be great again or do we not take risks and see if we can lose slower than everybody else?

My answer: we keep working to build Mayberry 2.0.

[This report was originally delivered by Executive Director Nathan P. Origer at the 2016 Pulaski County Economic Development Summit on Tuesday, 1 March, at the Winamac Event Center.]



OCRA Executive Director Bill Konyha offers the keynote address at the 2016 Economic Development Summit.

DID YOU KNOW ...

that the Northwest Indiana Small Business Development Center, with a local representative in Knox, provides many free and low-cost services to entrepreneurs and small businesses?

Contact us to learn more!

Comprehensive compensation survey coming soon!

Later this summer, on behalf of and in conjunction with the Pulaski County Human Resources Group (You haven't heard about this group, but you're interested? Get a hold of us!), the CDC will be reaching out to Pulaski County businesses to gather input regarding and to gauge interest in a comprehensive, countywide, cross-sector wage-and-benefit survey, and then to request participation in the survey once it has gone live.

Confidential results will be made available to all participants to provide an updated guide to prevailing local wages, and the CDC will rely on the collected data to provide fresh compensation information to prospects considering starting up in or relocating to Pulaski County.

Stay tuned for more details!

Hash-tagging and Tweeting from the fire tower to the observation tower

You know what they say: "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." But this summer, that's exactly what's happening at the CDC. Fellow intern Karli Armstrong and I have undertaken the job kicking off a social media tourism-marketing campaign, including teaching Nathan and Krysten how to continue when we head back to school.

Throughout the summer, Karli and I will visit many of Pulaski County's wonderful attractions, document our adventures, and share the evidence with our followers. To keep up with us, search for Pulaski County Community Development on Facebook, SimplyPulaskiIN on Twitter and Instagram, and Simply Pulaski on SnapChat!

From floating down the Tippy to noshing at our favorite local drive-ins, diners, and dives, Karli and I will be sharing all of our Pulaski County summer fun and inviting you to do the same. When you like, retweet, or share our posts, you increase

the number of people who see the highlights of our county. But what's the fun in this all if we can't see what you're doing as well? Remember to mention us in your captions when you share what you're up to in Pulaski County; #simplypulaski says it all!

The purpose of this campaign, which follows up on and complements this year's increased television, online, and print marketing, is to raise awareness of the beautiful sights, exciting adventures, and relaxing get-away destinations that lay hidden in our small towns, along our river, and across our fields and forests. By promoting these attractions, we hope not only to provide a fun local summer to our community members, but also to bring in people from other locations to enjoy all that we have to offer.

Help us to show others what we're living and they could be loving, keeping it simple in Pulaski County.

— Jessica Wagner, summer intern

Pulaski County to be on fire celebrating Indiana Bicentennial

The Indiana Bicentennial Torch Relay, an initiative of the Indiana Office of Tourism Development, is one of the premier celebrations of Indiana's Bicentennial. Patterned after the Olympic Torch Relay, Indiana's version will cover 2,300 miles over a five-week period, averaging 72 miles per day. Beginning on 9 September in Corydon, Indiana's first state capital, the torch will travel through all 92 counties before concluding on 15 October with a celebration on the grounds of the Statehouse in Indianapolis.

The torch will make its way through Pulaski County on Friday, 7 October, carried by local residents selected for exceptional public service, professional excellence, acts of heroism, or volunteer service to their neighborhood, community, region, or state.

To celebrate the Indiana Bicentennial, our exceptional torchbearers, and the torch itself (designed by engineering faculty and students at Purdue University), we shall be celebrating TorchFest, a one-time, one-of-a-kind festival to showcase Pulaski County in all its glory, in downtown Winamac. For three full days, 7-9 October, Pulaski County will let down its collective hair and partake in canoe races, live entertainment, torch-themed food and drinks, historical reenactments, contests, and tournaments.

If you or your organization would like to organize or to sponsor an activity for this three-day event, please contact the CDC at 574-946-3869.

— Krysten Hinkle, Project Coordinator

CDC reorganizes, celebrates platinum anniversary, hears from OCRA Executive Director

At a brief meeting prior to the 2016 Economic Development Summit, the Community Development Commission elected its 2016-2017 officers. Three-year President Bill Champion has been succeeded by Pulaski Memorial Hospital Director of Business Development Gregg Malott, whose role as executive secretary has been filled by John Plowman, representing the Town of Winamac. Alliance Bank's Annie Scholz received the nod to serve as vice-president, County Commissioner Larry Brady continues as Membership Officer, and Mr. Champion rounds out the executive board as past president.

Also serving on the CDC are County Councilor Doug Roth, Darlene Mellon (Francesville), Suzanna Wilcoxon (Medaryville Town Council), Lawrence Loehmer (Monterey), Natalie Federer, Andrew Fritz, and Dave Zeltwanger. Three vacancies currently exist: one appointed seat, one general at-large position, and an at-large seat reserved for a non-exempt manufacturing employee. Three-year Chamber of Commerce representative Amy Cantu, whose term ended on 29 February, was thanked for her service.

Following the meeting, members and guests celebrated the organization's twentieth anniversary with a meal catered by One-Eyed Jack's, a sheet cake, a cash bar, and a champagne toast to 20 years of hardwork and the next two decades of making Pulaski County great again. Special guests included former CDC executive directors Lisa Malchow and Dan Dolezal, former CDC assistant director Megan Wegner, and numerous former members.

After Executive Director Nathan P. Origer's annual State of the County Economy address, Office of Community and Rural Affairs Executive Director Bill Konyha offered an engaging, entertaining, and sometimes troubling keynote address. Mr. Konyha spoke about his background and experiences in public service, especially in rural economic development; emphasized heavily the importance of community capacity building; and presented a number of benchmarks, some rather dismal, for measuring Pulaski County's overall community health. His presentation was highly informative, but also a wake-up call: so much work must continue to be done — and shall be by the CDC and partners.

PULASKI COUNTY, HOME TO ...

- Moss Creek and Pond View Golf Courses.
- Shadyhill Speedway.
- Acorn Oaks, Broken Arrow, Rising Sun, and Small Acres USA Horseman's Campgrounds.

PULASKI COUNTY:

IT'S THE SIMPLE THINGS.

CDC Implementing Adopt-a-River Program to Protect County's Greatest Natural Asset

Because the Tippecanoe River is an important facet of Pulaski County's ecology, economy, and culture, the Community Development Commission has recently launched a river-awareness campaign to promote maintaining the cleanliness of the water, to protect the mussels, and to maintain peace for wildlife and riverside residents. Interns have been working on etiquette guidelines for signs that will be placed along the river.

The Tippecanoe is a major draw for Pulaski County. With two liveries (Riverside Rentals and Tippy-Canoe Rentals) and the Tippecanoe River State Park, as well as other attractions, the river brings countless tourists to Pulaski County from various places. It is key that we both maintain the river for these visitors and help them to understand their responsibilities as good stewards when they enjoy our natural-resource amenities.

The Tippecanoe is home to six endangered mussel species: clubshell, fanshell, rayed bean, sheepnose, snuffbox, and rabbitsfoot. Many persons do not understand how important mussels are for the river, which is why the population has decreased. Mussels filter water (up to eight gallons per day) to keep the Tippecanoe clean and safe for both wildlife and human recreation. Due to this, high mussel count is also highly important for fishing. It is important for river visitors to be aware and to do their part to keep the river clean to save the mussels.

Continued on page 7.

State program helps employers to provide affordable employee healthcare insurance

The HIP Employer Benefit Link program, (HIP Link), is Indiana's new premium assistance program. HIP Link helps working, low-income Hoosiers afford the cost of their employer's health insurance plans. HIP Link provides each member with an account to help pay for premium costs and out-of-pocket medical expenses such as copayments for doctor visits and coinsurance.

Businesses may utilize HIP Link to protect their most valuable assets, their staff! HIP Link may help to attract and retain employees by offering them a more affordable way to have private health coverage. HIP Link may also help to better afford the group health plan which may help businesses meet plan participation requirements or lower the group premium rates.

So far, over two dozen Indiana businesses have been approved to offer HIP Link to their employees. These businesses are located all around the state, range in size from small to large group, and represent various industries from restaurants to healthcare. All employers are eligible to register with HIP Link so long as they offer a health plan that meets the program's benefits and affordability requirements. Employers may register with HIP Link free of cost by using the HIP Link online portal. Eligible employees may then enroll in HIP Link and their employer's insurance plan with no wait, as becoming newly eligible for HIP Link is considered a qualifying event.

To learn more about the benefits and requirements for your business to register with

HIP Link, please visit the HIP Link Employer information webpage available at <http://HIP.IN.gov/> and selecting "HIP Link" on the left sidebar. Please direct questions to Kayla.Hsu@FSSA.IN.gov or call 317-233-1549.

HIP Link Quick Facts

Why Participate?

The ability to enroll more employees in the group health plan could help to meet plan participation rates and to lower group premium rates.

The potential to expand employee base is improved with the ability to offer this benefit.

Participation helps to increase retention and to reduce turnover rates and associated costs.

Tax benefits for small employers using the Marketplace may be available.

There is no cost to employers for participation.

What Companies Are Eligible?

Employers that employ Indiana residents,

agree to contribute at least 50 percent of the premium cost,

have a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN), and

offer a health plan that meets the program's minimum benefits and affordability requirements.

Key Program Concepts

Personal Wellness & Responsibility (POWER)

Account: Each participant receives a cost-sharing limit of \$4,000 per benefit period. Account funds are used to cover a portion of employee premiums and supplemental medical expenses. Each month, the HIP Link member will receive an advanced pre-payment check that covers a portion of their monthly premium cost.

Member Contribution: Employees contribute 2 percent of their annual household income to participate in the program.



HIP
HEALTHY INDIANA PLANSM

HIP Link helps eligible Hoosiers afford their employer-sponsored health insurance plans.

For more information, visit HIP.IN.gov and click "HIP Link."

PULASKI COUNTY, HOME TO ...

- the 22-mile-long Panhandle Pathway and Winamac Parkway multi-modal trail.
- Tippecanoe River State Park (and the lovely Tippecanoe River).
- Jasper-Pulaski and Winamac Fish and Wildlife Areas.

PULASKI COUNTY:

WE LIVE IT. YOU'LL LOVE IT.

Adopt-a-River to make life better

Continued from page 5.

A critical aspect of this campaign is the actual “adoption” of sections of the Tippecanoe. The CDC, working when possible with donors, plans to install trash receptacles at each access point. The CDC hopes to have businesses or residents willing to monitor and to empty the garbage containers at public access spots regularly, as well as to clean up any trash near the trash bins.

Receptacles could also be placed on owner-approved private property along the river if requirements are met. The spot would have to have enough solid ground so that a bin could be placed with little fear of its being washed away, but still highly accessible. If interested in either adopting a public bin or having one on your property, please contact the CDC.

Ultimately the CDC’s goal is to inform residents and tourists of the importance of the Tippecanoe and the mussels that live there and to make the Tippy clean, safe, and peaceful for riverside residents and businesses, wildlife, and our many wonderful visitors. — Karli Armstrong, summer intern

THE PULASKI ONLINE JOB BANK

*IF YOU'RE AN EMPLOYER IN PULASKI COUNTY
LOOKING FOR QUALIFIED LOCAL WORKERS,
THEN [ADD A JOB LISTING](#), FREE OF CHARGE,
TO THE ONLINE [JOB BANK](#). CHECK IT OUT
IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A JOB IN PULASKI
COUNTY, TOO!*

WINAMAC INDUSTRIAL PARK:

37 ACRES, SHOVEL READY, READY FOR YOU



CONTACT PCED @ 574-946-3869, OR VISIT
[HTTP://DEVELOPMENT.PULASKIONLINE.ORG/](http://development.pulaskionline.org/)

Our Mission

Pulaski County Economic Development holds to a mission to promote and improve the quality of economic development throughout Pulaski County in pursuit of excellence through the following endeavors:

- *Supporting the expansion and continued investment of Pulaski County businesses.
- *Recruiting new business and industry into Pulaski County.
- *Promoting tourism and the increase of transient spending in Pulaski County.
- *Developing and supporting business services such as workforce development, infrastructure, planning, financial programs, technology initiatives and entrepreneurial programs.
- *Conducting charitable and educational activities.

**Pulaski County
Community Development Commission/
Economic Development
2015-2016 Leadership**

President: Gregg Malott, Pulaski Memorial Hospital
Vice-President: Annie Scholz, Alliance Bank
Secretary: John Plowman, Town of Winamac/
Link Environmental Equipment
Membership Officer: Larry Brady, Commissioner
Past President: Bill Champion, Fratco

Executive Director: Nathan P. Origer
nporiger@pulaskionline.org
Project Coordinator: Krysten L. Hinkle
cucasst@pulaskionline.org

***Like* us on Facebook:**

<http://www.facebook.com/PCCDC.ED>