

From the Mayor...

May 1, 2015

A few weeks ago I attended a local job fair. The event was the collaboration of a Kosciusko Leadership Academy white paper project and the Warsaw/Kosciusko County Chamber of Commerce. It was held at the Manahan Orthopedic Capital Center and was attended by several thousand local high school juniors and seniors. There were over fifty local organizations including employers and a broad variety of vocational opportunities and training programs. All the right people came together.

Our high school students want meaningful careers. At this critical time in their lives, they need to be exposed to the tremendous opportunity that exists right here in our community as they sort out their options.

Let's make no mistake about the importance of a four-year college degree. Our schools must continue to prepare those with talent and desire to excel in the college environment. Most succeed but often the outcome is an irrelevant degree, a very burdensome student loan debt, and nowhere to go.

To put it simply, the workforce requirements of this century have dramatically changed. Technical skill and digital information literacy are requisite for the best jobs. We have tremendous local opportunity to convert appropriate education and technical training into good paying sustainable jobs. **SUCCESS CAN BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT A FOUR-YEAR DEGREE RIGHT HERE IN OUR COMMUNITY!**

A skilled workforce that can meet the demands of industry remains a stiff challenge in our community and everywhere. We are very fortunate that our local industrial partners have collaborated with community and educational leaders to tailor training programs that are relevant. But... meeting those needs requires well-educated students who will choose specialized technical and vocational training with the goal of rewarding careers.

Our local high schools have embraced a wide variety of technical and vocational programs that expose our young minds to a broad range of career opportunities. Health care, basic and advanced manufacturing, information technology, fire services, and culinary arts are but a few of the offerings now available to our students.

Our high schools and Ivy Tech have collaborated to align each other's course offerings for continuance and relevance. An Ivy Tech education offers seamless progression and advancement of vocational skills that originate in our high schools. As a result, the technical education process is more efficient and streamlined. Classes are taken at the student's pace and apply towards an associate's degree that can be completed here in Warsaw. Credits are transferable and can apply to a four-year degree if ones goals change.

In addition, many local industries offer programs that provide on the job training. As an example, RR Donnelley offers several career track apprenticeships to choose from. Skills translate to jobs!

Grace College offers specific degrees and programs in orthopedic manufacturing and engineering. You can even get a traditional four-year degree in three years! You don't have to go far.

The job fair project, "*2015 GPA 2 Success*", was led by KLA cadets Cheryl Sheperd, Nicole Sherrill, Jennifer Stouder, Tom Till, and Kristin Whitacre). It succeeded at bringing all of the right people together and as a result, was awarded the 2015 Northerner Project Proud Award at the recent KLA Banquet.

The workforce demands of our economy are different than when our parent entered the job market. Our community educators and employers have set the table. Tremendous opportunity exists.