

From the Mayor...

August 4, 2017

Last week, OrthoWorx hosted over 150 young professionals and interns in the City Hall Plaza and our newly activated "Alley". "Alley fest" was a celebration of the successful conclusion of a group of talented interns who have spent the summer in Warsaw engaging our local industry, exploring their own career paths, and living and learning about our great community.

This spirited event with music, food, games and fellowship created a very positive image of our community to take with them as they headed back to college. We certainly hope the majority return for another summer opportunity or decide that Warsaw offers not only rewarding career choices but also a great place to live!

Why does our community activate plazas, alleys, and parks? Why did we develop a master plan to create bicycle paths, walking paths, and trailhead parks? Why do we encourage restaurants and watering holes to create social gathering opportunities both inside and out? Why are we collaborating on a mix of urban housing opportunities and neighborhood revitalization? Why did our Stellar application focus on Warsaw and Winona Lakes' common goal of livable, active communities?

The simple answer is to create quality of life enhancements for our residents and to attract and retain a skilled and professional workforce to our city.

While I don't profess to be an expert in population and labor market trends, attracting and maintaining a skilled workforce is a challenge shared by many of our Midwestern neighbors and others across this country. We are all competing for the same workforce.

Let's make it as simple as possible. In Kosciusko County, the unemployment rate of 2.4% (well below the national rate of 4.5%) tells us that the amount of qualified individuals available to work is at the lowest level in many years. Future projections also show a sustained increase in the demand for skilled workers as the retirement of baby-boomers continues to outpace those available to replenish the work force.

Kosciusko County is fortunate to have skilled and professional high paying job opportunities that can open the door to fulfillment of lifelong, rewarding career paths. We are one of only three counties in Indiana that exceeds the national average of per capita wages. The city of Warsaw has experienced growth of over 6.5% since the 2010 census, a trend of prosperity that very few rural communities in Indiana enjoy.

But all of our prosperity hinges on attracting and retaining a talented, skilled workforce. The best and the brightest choose welcoming communities that offer natural amenities, social opportunities, and quality of life advantages.

Technology and automation create an even greater demand for a technically skilled workforce. Today! Now! The good news is that many of those future technically skilled employees grow up right here in our community. Our local schools and IVY Tech offer quality technical education that can lead directly to a high paying career path right out of high school.

We know the importance of traditional college education is to train a professional workforce. But a highly skilled technical workforce is equally important to the met our local needs. Families must understand the tremendous opportunity that is available for these high-tech, non-college careers.

I know I drifted away from a discussion of quality of place improvements in our community into a discussion of the critical importance of technical vocational education... but it all fits in. We have good paying jobs. The skills and training for those jobs is available to every person in this city.

We also have an attractive community with something for everyone when work is over for the day.