

# The Chamber Scene

HUNTINGTON COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

40 E. Franklin Street • Huntington, Indiana 46750 • (260) 356-5300 • www.huntington-chamber.com • October 2021

## Learning Center holds ribbon cutting, September 21

The Huntington County Community Learning Center (LC), 2201 N. Jefferson Street, began as a vision of a group of Huntington County individuals concerned with continuing education. After years of planning, fundraising and construction, the original 29,603 square foot facility was dedicated September 15, 2016. The growth of educational opportunities at the LC has led to a 20,478 square foot expansion dedicated Tuesday, September 21, 2021.



The Learning Center's facilitators provide an atmosphere for career preparation, employment search, workplace certifications and college learning opportunities. The goal of the center is to improve the skills of high school students and adult learners to meet the workforce needs of local businesses and industries in Huntington County.

The Huntington County Community School Corporation held the ribbon cutting for the new addition which brings the total square footage of the LC to 49,784 square feet. The space houses a welding bay and classroom, an advanced manufacturing lab and classroom, industrial maintenance classroom and lab, criminal justice classroom and simulation room and remote learning lab. Precision machining space, added storage space, safety stations and one general education classroom are included in a 1,000 square foot area.

Within the expansion is a new 2,907 square foot welding bay, which previously occupied 900 square feet. It can accommodate 22 individuals at a time, an increase over the original 12 stations. The new industrial maintenance lab and classroom create space for future building trades and pre-apprenticeship programs.

Barton-Coe-Vilamaa, the architect of the original LC, was selected as the architect for the expansion. Hagerman, Inc. served as the construction manager with the final bid for



Shown in the front row, from left, are Dan Niebauer, instructor, Auto Technology, Huntington County Community Learning Center; Karen Fisher, architect, Barton-Coe-Vilamaa; Allen Karst, instructor, Ivy Tech Community College; Tiffaney Drummond, director, Huntington County Community Learning Center; Chad Daugherty, superintendent, Huntington County Community School Corporation; Brian Murray, instructor, Machine Trades, Huntington County Community Learning Center; Terry Stoffel, instructor, Criminal Justice, Huntington County Community Learning Center and Brad Smith, president, Hagerman Inc. Back row, from left, are Ryan Wall, Tim Allen, Matt Roth, Kevin Yarger, Board of Trustees, Huntington County Community School Corporation and Rief Gilg, principal, Huntington North High School.

construction at a total cost of \$4,156,620. A grant of \$202,512 was received on January 1, 2021 from the Don Wood Foundation toward the new advanced manufacturing lab. The money was utilized for the purchase of one computer numerical control (CNC) mill, one CNC lathe and six manual lathes.

The Learning Center building originally

began as the HCCSC vocational center, which was restructured at a cost of \$1.45 million, to accommodate the LC. Included in the expansion were two new skills development tenants, an expansion of the then certification-based class offerings for high school students and adults, the relocation to

(Story Continued to Page 2)

## Learning Center to hold After Hours and open house on October 21

A Chamber of Commerce After Hours and an open house will be held at the Huntington County Community Learning Center on Thursday, October 21. The After Hours will be held at the newly expanded facility located at 2201 North Jefferson Street from 4 to 6 p.m. The community is invited to attend.

The Learning Center expansion opened with a ribbon cutting on Tuesday, September 21. The number of students and classes offered have continued to grow since the original opening in 2016. Tours of the facility will be held and refreshments will be offered to those attending.

Please plan to attend and take a tour of the beautiful new facility. This is a come and go event. You can plan to stay for 15 minutes or the entire time.

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## Learning Center continued

(Story Continued From Page 1)  
the center of two off-site programs, additional office and classroom spaces. Automotive and precision machining classes were already offered at the vocational center for high school students. These classes continued on at the LC as were CNC and welding programs for adults. A certified nurses' aide program and emergency medical technician program for adults also became a part of the LC. The construction was carried out by Shawnee Construction and Engineering.

The current Learning Center's tenants include HCCSC, Ivy Tech Community College Northeast, WorkOne Northeast and Huntington University. Impact Institute and the Huntington County 4-H Robotics Team are also located there. Many community

partners regularly use the Community Conference Room for meetings and trainings.

Programs offered include automotive, certified nurse aide, criminal justice, emergency medical technician, precision machining and welding courses. With the exception of criminal justice, each course is offered for dual credit. Huntington North High School students also have access to internship opportunities. Adult basic education is offered through Impact Institute (formerly GED). Welding and industrial maintenance courses are offered by Ivy Tech.

For more information about the Learning Center, call (260) 356-2858 or visit [www.LC.hccsc.k12.in.us](http://www.LC.hccsc.k12.in.us).

## Indiana Chamber survey reveals new workforce challenges

Results of a survey conducted by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce reveal staffing challenges continue to grow and in some cases are worse than before the pandemic. In its 14th annual employer workforce survey, nearly three-fourths of Indiana employers say the supply of employees does not meet their needs.



The Chamber says that number is up from 50% last year at the height of the pandemic.

"One of the biggest takeaways from the survey is that we're back where we were in 2018 in terms of employers saying the talent supply isn't where it needs to be," said Jason Bearce, Indiana Chamber vice president of education and workforce development.

The 2021 Indiana Chamber survey was conducted in late summer and completed by 905 employers in various industries throughout the state. The results show 62% of employers say meeting their talent needs was among their biggest challenges, with 21% saying it was their top challenge. The Chamber says both numbers are at their highest point in the past three years.

Bearce says there are several reasons for lack of qualified employees. "A hesitancy by some to rejoin the workforce is no doubt one and job changes another," said Bearce.

However, he says the survey does have some silver linings as more than half intend to grow their workforce this year.

"A positive take on this finding is that it could signal an economic rebound or expansion on the horizon with more workers in demand as employers ramp up for growth," explained Bearce.

The Chamber added a new survey question to determine what outside factors most negatively impacted attracting and retaining workers. Insufficient childcare, housing and transportation were the top three items cited.

"It's become a serious problem across Indiana, and it's raised questions about the role employers are expected to play in meeting these needs for their employees," said Bearce. "At the end of the day, it's pretty clear that businesses that want to grow and attract top talent have to be part of the solution."



A Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting was held for Laggs Automotive, 1885 N. Jefferson Street. Shown in the front row, from left, are Mayor Richard Strick; Kody Slusher and Koleman Stephan, both from Laggs Automotive; Kari Stephan; Tamie Stephan, Andrew Stephan, Garin Stephan and Marissa Foraker of Laggs Automotive and Terry Miller, Terry Miller Realtor – Century 21 Bradley and Chamber Ambassador. Back row, from left, includes Paula Whiting, Lake City Bank and Chamber Ambassador; Charles Chapman, Huntington City Councilman, 1st District; Brittany Brown, Midwest America Federal Credit Union; Adrian Halverstadt, Hartburg Roth Garrott Halverstadt & Garrett LLP and Chamber board of directors; Steve Godfroy, Perfection Wheel and Chamber Ambassador and Tommy Wagner.

## Laggs Automotive opens with ribbon cutting

The Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting at Laggs Automotive on Wednesday, September 8. The new full-service automotive center is located on the former H.H. Niswander property located at 1885 N. Jefferson Street. The owners of the new business are the families of Andrew and Garin Stephan. Laggs Automotive also has a facility in Roanoke located at 4223 E. Station Road.

According to Andrew Stephan, “The new business is a full-service garage and car lot that can help with any car needs. We do everything from oil changes and brake pads to full transmission and engine repair and replacement. We also detail the interior and exterior of automobiles. We are here to help with all your automotive needs.”

You can reach Laggs Automotive by calling (260) 358-1300, Huntington, or Roanoke at (260) 673-9048. Laggs Automotive can be found on the web at [www.laggsautomotive.net](http://www.laggsautomotive.net) or Facebook here.



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Darlene and Brent Stanley were the recipients of the 2021 Distinguished Service Award at Huntington University's Annual Foundation Dinner. Shown presenting the award are Dr. Sherilyn Emberton, president, Huntington University and Adrian Halverstadt, president, Huntington University Foundation Board.

## Stanleys receive Distinguished Service Award from HU

The Huntington University Foundation annual dinner, Burgers, Boots and Blue Jeans took place September 16. During the event Brent and Darlene Stanley received the Distinguished Service Award for 2021 in the Huntington University Field-house.

Adrian Halverstadt, president of the Huntington University Foundation Board, welcomed those in attendance and introduced Sherilyn Emberton, president of Huntington University. Emberton spoke about the history of the university and the importance of service. A student panel led by David Dean talked about their time at the university, and the scholarships that have made it possible for them to attend there.

The Distinguished Service award, established in 2002, honors an individual or organization whose life or mission embodies the principles associated with the mission of the university. The Stanleys were honored for their commitment throughout Huntington County and to Huntington University. Their family operates seven convenience store locations, a coffee shop, two fast oil change centers and a laundromat in Huntington, Decatur, Berne, Peru and Bunker Hill. Over 100 people are employed in the communities they serve. They also serve Huntington County in a variety of volunteer capacities.

Darlene Stanley is currently the board chair of the Huntington County Chamber of Commerce.

The annual dinner is an opportunity to invest in area students as they pursue a Christian education at Huntington University.

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# Regional Partnership selects Stephane Frijia as new CEO



After a five-month national search, the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership has named Stephane Frijia its next president and chief executive officer. Frijia most recently served as senior vice president of strategy for the Greater Phoenix Economic Council. He succeeds the organization’s founding CEO, John Sampson, who stepped down at the end of March after 15 years.

A native Italian, Frijia has spent nearly the last 20 years in the Phoenix area. In his most recent role, the partnership says he led efforts to boost investment in new advanced industrial parks in the region, as well as the development of data science capabilities in support of domestic and international business attraction and marketing.

“As technology drives global access and opportunity without boundaries, leaders in economic development must have a proven record in data intelligence and international marketability,” said Dr. Sherilyn Emberton, chair of the partnership’s board of directors. “Stephane brings experience and a record of success in both. His background in building strategies that supported the diverse growth of the Greater Phoenix area will complement the incredible work already being done in Northeast Indiana.”

“Stephane has the background, experience and energy to elevate Northeast Indiana’s outward facing national sales and business development program,” said Ellen Cutter, member of the search committee and vice president of economic development for Greater Fort Wayne Inc. “Fort Wayne is the fastest growing metro area in the Great Lakes region, and the opportunity for Northeast Indiana to capitalize on the momentum, together, has never been stronger.”

# IEDC loosens requirements for Restart Program

The state is updating eligibility requirements for small businesses to receive federal pandemic relief funding. The Indiana Economic Development Corp. still has \$30 million in CARES Act funding to provide grants before the deadline at the end of the year.

The IEDC has approved \$55 million in funding to nearly 3,000 businesses thus far. Vice President Mark Wasky said the maximum amount a business can receive has been doubled to \$100,000, allowing some businesses that are still struggling, but previously reached the cap to apply for more funding.

Additionally, the IEDC has extended the time frame for which losses are covered under the program. Previously, businesses could only use funding to cover losses through May 1; that has been extended to October 31. Sole proprietors can now also seek reimbursement for revenue they would have received in a normal year.

You can learn more about the Small Business Restart Grant by clicking <https://backontrack.in.gov/2377.htm>

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**Cheryl McCoy**  
 Branch Manager

# Coffee Connections to gather again October 6

The popular Huntington County Coffee Connections gathering, hosted by the Huntington County Chamber of Commerce, is now scheduled. Be sure to mark your calendars for our next gathering on Wednesday, October 6 at the Habecker Dining Commons at Huntington University. The event begins at 7:30 a.m.



Those looking for creative ways to promote themselves, their business or the activities they are involved in, should give the Huntington County Coffee Connections a try. This gathering is very informal where attendees share their name, where they work and a little about themselves, their business or special projects they are working on.

Huntington County Coffee Connections gatherings will be held on the first Wednesday of each month from September through May. There will be no gathering during January.

The gathering begins at 7:30 a.m. with Huntington University providing the venue and coffee. Bring your business cards to share with those attending. Each month the Chamber will give away a \$25 gas card to one lucky winner. Each person attending is invited to give a 30 second commercial about the business or activity they are involved with. Plan to attend and visit with friends or make some new friends. Don't forget to ask others to come along with you.

Huntington County Coffee Connections is a great networking opportunity and is one of the best events we host. The gathering is free and no reservations are needed.



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## **Mark Your Calendars**

### **Harvest Festival**

Saturday, October 2, 3 to 7 p.m.  
Downtown Huntington

### **Renaissance in Roanoke**

Saturday, October 9, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Downtown Roanoke

### **Taste of Warren**

Saturday, October 9, 6 to 9 p.m.  
Golfo di Napoli, Warren

### **19th Annual Scarecrow Festival**

Friday, October 29, 6 to 8 p.m.  
Downtown Warren

### **Veterans Day Parade & Celebration**

Saturday, November 6, HNHS  
Celebration at Veterans Memorial and Memorial Park

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