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County-wide audit lists challenges to future workforce needs

Vermilion County faces 10 key challenges to a successful future, according to a report from a consulting firm.

Workforce Associates of Indianapolis, Ind., conducted a county-wide community audit of future workforce needs for the Vermilion County Workforce Investment Board (WIB).

The board works to improve the economic climate by combining representatives of area businesses, schools and state departments such as Employment Services.

Audit conclusions, presented at an Oct. 16 press conference, resulted in a list of 10 challenges for the county. They include:

1. Support the existing manufacturing base.
2. Align education, training and career preparation with the county's major economic clusters.
3. Increase and improve direct interaction between educators and the business community.
4. Reduce dropout rates and raise graduation rates in county high schools
5. Improve the educational performance of county students in grades kindergarten-12.
6. Enhance the quality of career and guidance counseling.
7. Upgrade the educational level of the adult population and the skills level of the incumbent workforce.
8. Promote and support county entrepreneurship.
9. Retard "brain drain" from the county and encourage a return of native sons and daughters.
10. Exploit the opportunities of regionalism, working with areas such as Champaign.

The need to improve education of not only students but working adults, made up three of the weaknesses seen by consultants Richard W. Judy and Jane M. Lom-

mel of Workforce Associates. Low adult and workforce educational attainment, elevated high school dropout rates and low graduation rates and low performance of high school students as measured by standardized tests were listed as weaknesses in the audit, along with excessive dependence on traditional manufacturing industries, a workforce with skills more appropriate to the old economy than the 21st century, sluggish population growth, a "brain drain" of young talent and older, experienced workers, a weak ability to attract newcomers, an aging workforce and little ethnic diversity.

In presenting an overview of the results, Vermilion County Board Chairman Todd Lee said findings "in no way point fingers at any one group." Improving on the weaknesses "will take a community," he said. "It's going to take a community of everybody rolling up their sleeves. Each of these weaknesses come with an opportunity," he said.

Dropout rates in county high schools range from 1.1 percent at Bismarck-Henning to 11.3 percent at Danville High School Hoopeston Area has the second-highest rate, at 8.1 percent. Rossville-Alvin had a rate of 3.4 percent. The state average for 2001-02 was 5.1 percent.

Figures were taken from Illinois State Board of Education statistics. The rate includes students in grades 9-12 whose names have been removed from district rolls for any reason other than death, extended illness, graduation, transfer to another school or expulsion.

Graduation rates range from 100 percent at Jamaica and Armstrong high schools to 68.2 percent at Danville High School. Hoopeston Area's was 79.6 and Rossville-Alvin's was 80.6. The state average was 83.2 percent.

The graduation rate includes the number of 2001-02 graduates divided by first-time ninth grade enrollment,

See NEEDS on other side



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No cover - Come in Costume

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Bowling Scores



Hoopeston Women's Bowling League

10/20/03

1. R&R Body Shop	21	3
2. Henning's	17	7
3. Adda Girls	15	9
4. Gillins Oil	14	10
5. Royal Bs	13	11
6. Weber's Drugs	12	12
7. Family Circus	11	13
8. BJ's Pump	11	13
9. Yaden-Rethelford	10	14
10. Unger's Jewelry	8	16
11. Off the Wall	8	16
12. Bye	4	20

High Team Handicap Game: BJ's Pump 1,096, Gillins Oil 1,055, Adda Girls/Royal Bs 1,048; **High Team Handicap Series:** Adda Girls 3,100, Weber's Drug 3,052, BJ's Pump 2990; **High Individual Scratch Game:** Angie Bell

Tuesday Night Classic League

10/21/03

1. Ross Electric	21	11
2. Production Tooling	19	13
3. Crop Production Service	16	16
4. Hiltz Portable Sanitation	16	16
5. Ferdinand Construction	15	17
6. Pla-Mor Lanes	15	17
7. Hoopeston Weather Service	14	18
8. Junction Café	12	20

High Individual Game: Todd Keith 277256; **High Individual Series:** Randy Hiltz 703; **High Team Game:** Ross Electric 685; **High Team Series:** Ross Electric 1,805.

Games over 210: Nick Gonzalez 213; Todd Keith 277, 216; Will Bruens 215; Doug Wagoner 225; Dave Hughes 221; Bob Bruens 214; Randy Hiltz 244, 254; Jeremy

233, Diana Edwards 213, Patti Lowe 204; **High Individual Scratch Series:** Angie Bell 568, Patti Lowe 545, Terri Bell 539.

Gaddis 212, 234, 221; Kenny McVicker 246; Mike Dean 218; **Series over 600:** Todd Keith 676, Doug Wagoner 606, Randy Hiltz 703, Jeremy Gaddis 667, Kenny McVicker 605.
Hall of Shame: Mike Bailey 98.

Classifieds

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Needs continued from other side

minus the number of students who transferred out, plus those students who transferred in.


Scores for students performing above average on the spring 2002 Prairie State Achievement Examination fluctuated among county schools. Oakwood High School had an average overall performance of 64.7, with Rossville-Alvin at 60.8. Hoopeston Area had the lowest percentage, with 48.

Hoopeston Area ranked second to last in the number of 11th graders taking the ACT test, with 81.2 percent. Rossville-Alvin was second highest with 97.1 percent.

As for adult education, Vermilion County ranks 69th among Illinois' 102 counties with 21 percent lacking a high school diploma or GED. That is compared to 18 percent nationally, according to the 2000 census and 19 percent statewide. As for those holding professional or bachelor's degrees, only 12 percent of county residents do, compared with 27 percent in Illinois and 25 percent in the nation.

The audit did not focus solely on the negatives affecting the county. It also included strengths, such as its location, surface transportation infrastructure, economic development leadership, workforce with strong manufacturing experience, community spirit, community college and access to nearby universities and institutes.

New Books at the Library



Fiction:

Breakout by Paul Fleischman (youth)

Executive Power by Vince Flynn


Separation of Power by Vince Flynn

Gettysburg: a Novel of the Civil War by Newt Gingrich

Foul Matter by Martha Grimes (mystery)

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time by Mark Haddon


Police News



No tickets or injuries were reported in an accident at 5:54 p.m. Monday at South Fifth St. and Rt. 9.

Police said John E. Hanson of Hoopeston, in a 1987 Chevrolet, was blinded by headlights from an oncoming vehicle and hit a 1998 Oldsmobile driven by Robert R. Wallace, also of Hoopeston.

Weather



Partly cloudy today and tonight. High 54, low 44. Tomorrow, mostly sunny. High 67, low 51.

For current weather conditions, call (217) 283-6221.