

Greencastle Entrepreneurs, Start Your Engines

An art gallery showcasing photography, painting, pottery and more. A care package service established as a fun way to help college students stay in touch with their families and boost the local economy. The common link? Greencastle's Project Ignition (GPI), an initiative launched last October to support small business and economic growth.

GPI began as a project of the Greater Greencastle Chamber of Commerce. Now its own entity, GPI offers resources such as accounting, web site development and networking to help entrepreneurs establish and expand their companies. In addition, it provides discounted rental and sales space to nearly 20 local artists at GC Galleria.

An emphasis on collaboration with higher education drives many of GPI's efforts.

"One thing that distinguishes our organization from some others in the community is that DePauw students are

among the leadership," states president and executive director Amy Doan. "It helps them develop a sense of ownership in being a part of the Greencastle community, which hopefully will help with our retention of these amazing students."

Recent DePauw graduate Bethany Harrod, assistant director of GPI and a co-founder of TigerAde Care Packages, asserts, "I can attest to that personally. When I was interested in taking my business ideas into the real world (after graduating in May), I was able to tap into what all of these businesses had to offer."

Products available through TigerAde include gift cards for restaurants, florists and other area companies.

Resources: Greencastle's Project Ignition at www.gcprojectignition.com

TigerAde Care Packages at www.tigeradecarepackages.com

Product Makers Bypass Retailers

At the end of a long workday, you arrive home and discover that you need laundry detergent. Too tired to drive to the store? Next time, maybe you won't have to. Many manufacturers are selling products directly to consumers online.

Advantages of the growing direct-to-consumer marketing trend for consumers include cost savings and convenience. For retailers, however, the approach increases competition.

Launched last summer, Alice.com features products such as hand soap, toothpaste, diapers, deodorant and paper towels from multiple manufacturers. It offers complimentary shipping (on orders of six items or more), automatic coupons and "re-order" alerts. In addition, shoppers can write product reviews and connect with other users. Each month, the web site draws an average of one million-plus unique visitors.

Earlier this year, Proctor & Gamble (the world's largest consumer products maker) created an e-store to serve as a "learning lab" to study online shopping habits. The overall goal was not to compete with retailers, but to share findings with (and ultimately benefit) those businesses already selling the company's products online.

Developments in this area will certainly prove interesting in the years to come.

Apprentices Building Careers at Regional Training Center

Bigger isn't always better, but when it comes to an expansive training facility in Greenwood that's enhancing educational opportunities for aspiring carpenters, millwrights and floor coverers, size is playing a major role.

"We have outgrown our 38th Street (Indianapolis) facility and have an awesome opportunity here, primarily with our size," declares Todd Pancake, director of education for the Indiana/Kentucky Regional Council of Carpenters. "This is one of nine training centers across Indiana and Kentucky, and it is our largest."

Apprentices who complete a four-year program (which blends on-the-job training with general education courses such as human relations, technical writing and personal finance) earn an associate of applied science degree from Ivy Tech Community College.

The nuts and bolts:

- The two-story training facility – which spans approximately 78,000 square feet – contains six classrooms, a 24-station computer lab and training equipment (e.g., a sand pit and a 10-ton overhead crane).
- Nearly 500 apprentices are taking part in the program.
- Participants gain practical experience in areas such as industrial and commercial scaffold building and commercial and heavy highway construction.
- Another building at the site houses the organization's administrative center and headquarters.

"We've got a lot of responsibility on our shoulders to provide training for these guys' and gals' careers, and now we have the tools to get it done. We're looking at producing the best," Pancake stresses.

Resource: Todd Pancake, Indiana/Kentucky Regional Council of Carpenters, at www.ikrcc.com



Aspiring millwrights sharpen rigging skills with hands-on training.

Dave, How Do You Really Feel?

When Andy Stern resigned earlier this year as president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Indianapolis businessman Dave Bego was undoubtedly one of the more interested observers.

In 2009, Bego released a book “The Devil at My Doorstep” with a title page description of “How I Survived a Three-Year War with Big Labor and Protected My Employees and Business.” Bego had built Executive Management Services, Inc. into a leader in the commercial cleaning industry, and Stern/SEIU wanted to gain clout by adding union members – no matter the methods or victims along the way.

You have to read Bego’s book for the full story of the ordeal for his business and family. But when we asked his thoughts about Stern’s resignation, Bego pointed us to this

blog posting (a few excerpts):

The SEIU seems incapable of getting out of its own way. It’s not really surprising since they have nothing to sell and, even if they did, wouldn’t know how to sell it!

The SEIU is utilizing the same “ends justify the means” tactics against rival union NUHW. Evidently, the SEIU hasn’t figured out that people naturally want free choice, and abhor intimidation, coercion and pressure, because it replaced Andy with his clone, Mary Kay Henry!

In the scheme of things, this is good since it hastens the demise of the crumbling corrupt SEIU. Its tunnel vision renders it incapable of survival.

Resource: Dave Bego, “The Devil at My Doorstep,” at <http://devilatmydoorstep.wordpress.com>

Homelessness Hits Home for College Students

When Monica Murphy heard about the “Homeless in the City” program, she knew it would provide an ideal opportunity to gain practical experience in the social work field. But that wasn’t the only thing that attracted her. She also wanted to make a difference.

Murphy, now a sophomore at Saint Mary’s College, was one of nine students chosen to participate in the weeklong initiative, which took place this past summer. A partnership between Indiana Campus Compact – a coalition of 42 higher education institutions throughout Indiana working together to advance civic and service learning – and Franklin College created the program.

Participants studied the causes of homelessness by attending presentations and visiting non-profit organizations that serve the homeless. In addition, male and female students spent four days and three nights at Indianapolis’ Wheeler Mission Lighthouse Center and Wheeler Mission Center for Women and Children, respectively. Activities included preparing meals, interacting with children, spending time with staff and sitting in on counseling sessions.

Murphy says the experience not only strengthened her leadership skills, but also provided a sense of personal fulfillment. Her favorite memories include reading to children and dining with residents.

“For me, that was the most powerful because that’s when I was able to talk with a lot of the women. I felt like they were welcoming me into their home,” she shares.

Rachel Rekowski, an AmeriCorps*VISTA member who led development of the program, observes, “I had the hope that students would become change-makers in their communities and become passionate about the homeless population. (At the end of the week), they viewed the homeless situation in a whole different way.”

Resource: Indiana Campus Compact at (317) 274-6500 or www.indianacampuscompact.org



Monica Murphy (first row, second from right) and Rachel Rekowski (second row, right) praise the Homeless in the City program for encouraging students to make an impact.

Re-energizing Abandoned Coal Mines ... With Water?

Numerous coal mines in Southwest Indiana may be vacant, but they’re not forgotten – and geothermal energy may revive them.

A Purdue University study is examining the potential to generate (and conserve) energy at locations where underground and surface mines overlap. When water is pumped between the two elevations, it creates a heat exchange, providing geothermal power to run the mines. The project examines sites in Terre Haute and neighboring Sullivan.

Terry West, a professor of earth and atmospheric sciences at Purdue, is leading the study and anticipates having results early next year. He points out that the heat exchange presents environmental benefits (such as the ability to store energy and cut electricity costs) as well as challenges.

“The water in the (underground) mine is typically mineralized and has a different chemistry than the water on the surface,” he explains. “We need to make sure they’re somewhat compatible or have a system where the underground water is never released into the atmosphere.

“Also, some underground mines have methane gas in them and you have to be careful ... but, that’s also an advantage because you might be able to tap that gas and use it for electricity, heating or other (purposes).”

Resource: Terry West, Purdue University, at www.purdue.edu

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