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HENRY MAKES EDUCATION-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LINK A FOCAL POINT IN JOB CREATION PUSH

Learning Network, Education Summit, Council: Three Lead Initiatives

Fort Wayne, Indiana – As part of his comprehensive approach to economic development, Mayoral candidate Tom Henry today underscored the crucial role of education to accelerate Fort Wayne’s job creation efforts. In a midmorning news conference at the Northeast Indiana Innovation Center, Henry talked about three elements of a collaborative framework he envisions to help strengthen this essential connection: a technology-driven Community Learning Network, an Education Summit to determine objectives and an ongoing “Learning to Earn” Council.

“We’ve got the talent, the work ethic, a great business climate, top-notch post-secondary schools and a deep heritage of innovation here in Fort Wayne,” stated Henry. “We’ve also got a high-speed broadband infrastructure that is second to none. Our challenge is to bring these exceptional economic building blocks together to make our community a job creation hothouse. As Mayor, I am committed to cultivating these fundamental education-economic links. My goal is to turn our ‘wired and inspired’ into opportunities that signal, ‘you’re hired.’”

Over the past two years, Fort Wayne has seen Verizon invest over \$70 million to bring the vast voice, data and video capabilities of its FiOS high-speed broadband technology to the city – the first community in the Midwest selected for this connectivity. In recent years, Comcast also has expended over \$50 million on its digital cable infrastructure.

Henry will work to forge an innovative local education-economic development bond that helps to exploit Fort Wayne’s technological advantages, untapped entrepreneurial capacity and its outstanding higher-education resources.

“I will work every day to ensure we take our community’s tremendous assets to the next level,” declared Henry. “Building a Fort Wayne full of good jobs and strong neighborhoods starts by being able to spot possibilities, make connections and foster opportunity. I will make these challenges my business as your Mayor.”

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To encourage these outcomes, Henry delineated three collaborative initiatives to build upon these institutional strengths, as follows:

- Community Learning Network. Henry will facilitate the formation of a brain-trust Community Learning Network that will bring together the expertise of our colleges and universities, high schools, Verizon, Comcast and the business community to leverage the full potential in Fort Wayne’s exceptional broadband infrastructure. The Network’s goal will be to explore new ways for our colleges and universities to create growth pipelines and advanced educational opportunities for area businesses, our workforce and local students.
- Education Summit. This employer-educator conference will help to identify and establish community needs and areas of opportunity in the important interface of the education and business sectors. The event will include officials of secondary and post-secondary schools, as well as business leaders and economic and workforce development professionals. The Summit also will set the stage for future dialogue.
- “Learning to Earn” Council. This regularly occurring roundtable of local education, business and economic development professionals would help perpetuate the discussions begun during the Education Summit. It also will foster the private-public partnerships that will move the community’s long-term education and economic development objectives forward, and keep this important topic at the top of the community agenda.

“We have outstanding colleges and universities in Fort Wayne,” noted Henry. “I have already talked with leaders at many of these institutions about creating a Community Learning Network to provide local employers and their employees with business-specific workshops and courses to help them succeed; and to offer college-level courses to local high school students to better prepare them for the next step in their academic careers. By building on the strengths of our institutions of higher learning and our high-tech infrastructure, we can help students, employees and employers maximize their own strengths.”

These three education-economic development initiatives highlight Henry’s commitment to several of his basic leadership principles: promoting private-public partnerships, providing responsive leadership, playing to our community’s strengths and getting the most value from every taxpayer dollar.

Tom Henry is the Democratic candidate for Mayor of Fort Wayne. He is a successful business owner, a five-term Fort Wayne City Councilman and a nonprofit leader with deep roots in the community.

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