

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW GRANT TO BENEFIT SOUTHEAST INDIANA
COUNTY INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN NEW REGIONAL INITIATIVE

Switzerland County, IN (Friday, January 11, 2008) –

Lilly Endowment, Inc. has awarded \$12 million for a regionally-focused initiative called Economic Opportunities 2015 (EcO15).

The EcO15 initiative will directly impact the counties of Bartholomew, Dearborn, Decatur, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Jennings, Ripley, Ohio and Switzerland. Heritage Fund, of Columbus, Indiana will work with the community foundations in the region to distribute grant funds into each county. The key objective of the initiative is to advance people in the region by at least one level in their training, education and/or job placement. In announcing these grants, Lilly Endowment President N. Clay Robbins said: “We are delighted that the educational programs to be supported by the grants will over time help thousands of residents in the region enhance their economic well-being and overall quality of life.”

Proceeds of the Lilly Endowment grants will be focused on three primary economic growth areas and coordinating services, which include:

- **Advanced Manufacturing:** As more than 28 percent of the region’s workforce (38,000 people) is dedicated to advanced manufacturing, a substantial portion of the grant will be dedicated to developing an advanced manufacturing network of excellence, incorporating the regional Dream It. Do It. initiative. This network will establish a comprehensive advanced manufacturing education and training program that will use regional advanced manufacturing labs positioned throughout Southeastern Indiana.
- **Health Care Services:** More than 10 percent of the region’s workforce (14,000 people) is employed in the health care services sector. Proceeds of the grant will be leveraged to create a regional network of stationary and mobile clinical simulation labs that can be used for accreditation and advanced degree certifications.
- **Hospitality/Tourism:** Revenue from the gaming industry has helped spur tourism efforts in the region and created a heavy demand for service employees. The grant will help create training and career pathway development for meaningful careers in the hospitality and tourism field.

To coordinate and align the regional learning system, the grant will provide funds to staff an EcO15 coordinator located in each of the 10 counties. Each coordinator will have an understanding of process and programs to better guide students and will act as a liaison between industry and educational institutions. The EcO15 Initiative will be guided by a 40-member regional advisory council. The council will be made up of representatives from each of the 10 counties and will include leaders from community foundations, education institutions, workforce partners, private industry employers, economic development organizations and government representatives.

Officials said that once the EcO15 Initiative has been implemented throughout the Southeastern region, it will serve as a model within the United States for how regions educate their citizens and leverage that talent to drive the productivity and competitiveness of their regional economies. “We are very excited to be a part of this grant.” said Pam Acton Executive Director of the Community Foundation of Switzerland County. “We look forward to working with the other nine counties on how best to coordinate the technology between the counties to allow for the most convenient ways to offer educational opportunities to the citizens of Switzerland County.”

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