



SWITZERLAND COUNTY  
economic development corporation



## **Switzerland County Awarded Funds to Promote Education**

For Immediate Release

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Efforts to encourage education among Switzerland County residents recently received a welcomed investment.

The EcO<sub>15</sub> initiative awarded Switzerland County \$600,000 over the next two years to be used to bolster science, technology, engineering, and math in the Switzerland County School Corporation. The funds will also help create an adult/community learning center. A portion of the funds will be directed to assisting Switzerland County citizens in obtaining necessary skills to ensure success in the workplace.

EcO<sub>15</sub> is focused on education and careers associated with Advanced Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Hospitality/Tourism for ten southeastern Indiana counties: Bartholomew, Dearborn, Decatur, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Jennings, Ohio, Ripley, and Switzerland. Advanced Manufacturing is the major economic cluster in the southeastern Indiana region, and is the major focus of the initiative. The goal of EcO<sub>15</sub> is to advance residents by at least one level in their education, training, or job placement, and to increase personal income through attainment of skills that lead to pay increases and job promotions.

The Lilly Endowment, Inc. granted EcO<sub>15</sub> funds to the Heritage Fund—The Community Foundation of Bartholomew County and to Bartholomew County's Community Education Coalition. These two organizations provide oversight and management support services for the ten southeastern Indiana counties in the EcO<sub>15</sub> initiative. \$6 million was dedicated to promoting advanced manufacturing education in each county. Local responsibility for EcO<sub>15</sub> rests with The Community Foundation of Switzerland County, Inc. (CFSCI), which has partnered with the Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC) to coordinate EcO<sub>15</sub> activities.



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A Switzerland County Eco<sub>15</sub> Advisory Council, comprised of representatives from the community foundation, economic development corporation, Switzerland County schools, and local industry, was formed to assist in determining the priority projects to undertake. Switzerland County Eco<sub>15</sub> Coordinator Mike Busch, working with the Advisory Council, drafted a proposal detailing the priority activities.

“There are three major initiatives we intend to undertake in Switzerland County,” Busch said. “The first is to furnish equipment and curriculum materials for manufacturing technology in the Switzerland County School Corporation. We also are in the planning stages of creating a community learning center, with classrooms, a computer lab, and a technology lab. Finally, we want to help individuals in Switzerland County understand the changes in today’s world of work by explaining skill requirements and educational opportunities to workers in Switzerland County.”

Conversations with area manufacturers revealed a shortage of qualified job applicants for available positions. While the current recession has severely affected the number of manufacturers adding employees, those applicants without technical training, certifications, or college degrees will find it even harder to obtain a good-paying job. Additionally, rapid advances in technology continue to force changes in manufacturing, requiring employees to possess a higher mix of skills.

Local citizens interested in helping to implement Eco<sub>15</sub> initiatives in Switzerland County are needed. To volunteer your time and expertise in improving the educational status of Switzerland County residents, please contact Mike Busch at 812-27-2437 or visit him at the SCEDC office at 317 Ferry Street in Vevay.