

Communities Planning for Future Success

Helping communities find success is the driving force behind the Winning Communities™ certification program, first featured in the November/December 2004 issue of *BizVoice*®.

Winning Communities, a consulting program for Indiana cities and counties, has grown in popularity over the past 18 months. At the time of the original *BizVoice*® story, Huntington had earned its certification and Charlestown was becoming involved with the program. Since then, consultant Jim Dittoe has added seven more counties. These include Hamilton, Green, Clay and Blackford (close to certification); Pulaski and Shelby (halfway through the certification process); and recently Rush County.

Asked to explain the recent growth, Dittoe says that the big difference is, "... because people see it's not just a plan, but that it really gets results."

These results are due to the process that Dittoe has communities embark upon to receive certification. A key part of the Winning Communities program is the procedure of self-examination. Dittoe has the communities look at their assets, challenges and opportunities available to them for the future. He also has participants look at new trends and technology to help them keep pace with the growing economy. Dittoe re-emphasizes that globalization is important for communities to keep in mind as the real competition is not just within the U.S. borders, but often overseas.

As in any self-evaluation effort, garnering citizen participation can be a challenge. Dittoe points out, however, that because of recent successes, residents are more willing to take part. He uses Blackford County as an example, with more than 200 citizens involved with the process. Dittoe adds that support for that program was shown by the city and county councils, mayors of Hartford City and Montpelier, the chamber of commerce, as well as the local school board and art council.

As part of this grassroots participation, Dittoe has managed to bring citizens of a community closer together, a key aspect of a "winning community." He recalls a meeting he had while in Blackford County. During a break, a man came up to him, tapped him on the shoulder and pointed out a rare occurrence. Dittoe looked over and saw the two mayors of rival cities sitting together talking, something that the man said "doesn't happen very much."

Helping Dittoe pioneer the path to success is the Community Bankers Association of Indiana, which actively informs its members about the potential benefits of the program. Dittoe is working with other associations to provide additional support for the Winning Communities program.

To view the November/December 2004 *BizVoice*® article on Winning Communities, go to the archives sections of www.bizvoicemagazine.com.



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Jim Dittoe brings citizens together as part of his planning process.

Seeking the Power of Broadband

Bringing the Internet to rural Indiana is a shared goal for many people throughout the state.

Broadband over power line (BPL), featured in the September/October 2004 issue of *BizVoice*®, is a developing technology intended to help meet that objective. It allows access to high-speed service via power lines and a modem that plugs into the wall socket. This easy-to-use Internet access has realized some progress in areas throughout the country and the world in the last few years.

Efforts may soon be picking up in Indiana. Cinergy and Current Communications, which formed a partnership in 2004, have been having success with pilot programs in neighboring states. Servco Service Concepts, a service company for Indiana rural electric cooperatives, is also active in this area.

"The governor's office and regulatory commission are very encouraging in coming up with



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