

Winning Communities author speaks at Rotary

by John Lentz
February 2010

James T. Dittoe, president and community coach with the Winning Communities organization in Indiana, spoke before the Laurinburg Rotary Club Tuesday on the need to take the initiative in maximizing a community's assets.

"On a community level, as well as a personal one, vision leads to action," Dittoe said. "We can talk or plan all we want, but it takes initiative and responsibility to succeed."

Author of "90 Days to a Winning Community", Dittoe quoted two of his "favorite philosophers": Albert Einstein and Yogi Berra.

"Berra said, 'If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else'", Dittoe said. "And Einstein said that one can't solve issues and problems on the same level of thinking as when the problems were created. That's true with communities as well, and the steps to success start with people."

Dittoe cited the city of Kokomo, Indiana, with 20 percent unemployment, as a place that utilized the ideas of "Winning Communities" to achieve success.

"After talking with a city councilman, the community put together a team and began local development," Dittoe said. "We pushed the action parts of the plan, asking them to come up with ideas and accomplishments. We focused on the positive things, and created an action plan, a vision plan, and a community website. The Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance was formed, and the group developed a variety of goals and initiatives to create avenues for economic development."

Dittoe was introduced by Laurinburg Mayor Matthew Block, who met the community coach several years before at an economic summit at UNC-Pembroke.

"He (Dittoe) focused on developing a community vision that included taking a step back and looking at where the community is and where it wants to go," Block said. "And from there, to develop an all inclusive plan of action to achieve those goals."

During his presentation, Dittoe asked the assembly who was the most important person on a football, baseball, and basketball team.

"In football, it's the center; in baseball, the pitcher; and in basketball, it's the referee," Dittoe said. "Why? Because they are the ones who put the ball in play. Nothing happens until they move, and that's what we're all challenged to do."

For information, visit www.winningcommunities.com.