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## **Community leaders challenged to build a 'Winning Community'**

**By FRANK PHILLIPS**

Times are difficult right now but times were also difficult when the men came home from World War II. That generation made America a better place and so can we, said Jim Dittoe, president of Winning Communities.

Dittoe was the featured speaker at the Montgomery County Health Summit 2010 on Tuesday at the Quality Inn.

The summit was funded by a grant from the Indiana State Department of Health and was attended by community leaders.

Dittoe, who calls himself a community coach, encouraged those present to lead Montgomery County into being a Certified Winning Community.

Becoming a winning community takes the decision of the people in the community to do so, Dittoe said.

He used the examples of Tremont, Ill., and Kokomo.

The people of Tremont learned to work together to improve their community in many ways. Dittoe cited two examples: The City turned a ditch down the center of the main street into a walkway and the school corporation built bike paths and walking paths.

Kokomo residents took two years to commit to following Dittoe's plan to become a winning community. But when the commitment was made, the residents developed a vision and a plan that worked for them.

Dittoe said organizations are only as strong as the people in them and everything in the community inter-related. For example, in Tremont, Ill., each organization found a way to contribute to the community's plan.

The first summit conducted last year and Tuesday's summit had roots in a community assessment conducted by Purdue University for the state department of health in February, 2008, said Jennifer Shook of the AHEAD Coalition.

The next step will be to form a leadership team. Contact Shook at 364-7870.