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**Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation receives
Gold Excellence award for Economic Opportunities through Education initiative**

Vevay, Ind. – Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation received the Excellence in Economic Development Gold Award for its ongoing workforce skills initiative. The award, presented by the International Economic Development Council, honors the best program in North America in the category of Human Capital for small communities.

“The Excellence in Economic Development Awards recognize Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation as being one the leading organizations in the industry for innovation, creativity and successful strategies,” said Paul Krutko, IEDC chair. “These awards are meant to honor the organizations and individuals who are dedicated to making a positive change in their communities.”

For some communities, local workforce data is a strong selling point to investing businesses. In others, however, data reveals critical issues that can offset other advantages a community offers to business prospects.

“In Switzerland County, we realized we could not effectively negotiate with prospects demanding a pipeline of skilled workers until *we had constructed that pipeline for them*,” said Jon Bond, president of Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation.

In 2008, as participants in a Lilly Endowment-funded regional initiative to raise the educational attainment and earnings of Southeast Indiana residents, the Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation looked at the workforce demands of regional employers, and compared the results to the available workforce data. “Those results made it clear that we had to do things differently,” said Bond.

Five years later, Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation’s EcO15 initiative assists residents seeking the necessary skills to enter, re-enter or re-position themselves in the workforce. Its approach focuses on people, not programs, and measures success one person at a time. The SCEDC works to eliminate barriers to success and to provide options that will meet individual needs of our residents seeking to improve their skills.

The Switzerland County Technology and Education Center is the cornerstone of the EcO15 program. Completed in 2012, the multi-use facility features classrooms and labs for adult educational opportunities. The EcO15 effort also created an advanced manufacturing lab at Switzerland County High School, and initiated a focus on STEM education. And the

community's residents now receive frequent, regular messages on the importance of upgrading their workplace skills to remain competitive in today's economy.

The IEDC's Krutko commended the organization's creative solutions and inventive ideas, saying, "The award represents an acknowledgement and appreciation for Switzerland Economic Development Corporation's dedication to continuous growth within itself, as well as improving the industry overall."

For more information about the Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation and its Eco15 initiative, please visit www.switzerlandusa.com.

About Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation

The Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC) was created to support the county's economic development strategy and to help position Switzerland County for aggressive growth initiatives. The non-profit corporation serves as a facilitator, coordinating local entities and elected bodies to further improve Switzerland County's business development capacity and quality of life.

About EcO15 Initiative

EcO15 (Economic Opportunities through Education by 2015) is creating a regional system of life-long learning by connecting the residents of 10 counties within rural Southeast Indiana to better economic opportunities through education by the year 2015 and beyond. EcO15 began with an initial investment of \$38 million in infrastructure and common support services with an overarching goal of helping each person in Southeast Indiana move up at least one level in their education, training or job placement within the region's three strongest economic clusters: advanced manufacturing, health care, and hospitality/tourism. Lilly Endowment Inc. provided the funding through a grant to the region, which was administered by the Heritage Fund—the Community Foundation of Bartholomew County and the Community Education Coalition of Columbus, IN. The region leveraged an additional \$15 million during the first phase of the initiative. www.eco15.org.