



SWITZERLAND COUNTY
economic development corporation



Switzerland County Breaks Ground on New Community Learning Center

For Immediate Release

Switzerland County officials have broken ground on a 24,000 square foot building that will provide residents with the county's first education and training facilities designed for adult learning.

The building will be the new home of the Switzerland County/Purdue Cooperative Extension Service and the Switzerland County Emergency Management Agency. Both organizations are currently located in a building in need of major repairs. A community room for the Switzerland County 4-H organization will offer a seating capacity of 280. In addition to 4-H programs, the community room will be available for private and commercial functions. "We will be able to do much more for the community in this new facility than we can in our current building," said Ginger Furnish, County Extension Coordinator.

Three classrooms designed for adult learners, along with a computer lab, an advanced manufacturing training lab, and a conference room will provide residents and employers with close-to-home opportunities for college degree courses, employer training programs, and computer training. A WorkOne Express satellite office will be operated in the facility by the Indiana Region 9 Workforce Board. A distance-education room will provide residents with a private area to access to online courses for those pursuing college degrees. The learning center will also be linked to other community learning centers in the region, including the Advanced Manufacturing Center of Excellence in Columbus that was dedicated on June 10, 2011.

"Access to training facilities is more important than ever for businesses and workers," said Jon Bond, President of the Switzerland County Economic Development Corporation, which administers the EcO15 program in Switzerland County. "This facility will give employers in our region the training facilities they need to keep their businesses competitive. It will also help our residents get the education and training they need to earn more and advance their careers."

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Discussions are underway with several potential post-secondary partners for on-going programming at the center. Breaking down historical obstacles to educational attainment in Switzerland County is a focal point of those discussions.

“Today, Switzerland County residents have to make a 50+ mile roundtrip for each class session to access our state’s colleges and university system,” said Mike Busch, the county’s EcO15 Coordinator. “This is just one of several challenges to continuing education in Switzerland County that we expect this facility to help solve.”

The building project resulted from a collaborative effort that began in 2008 when Switzerland County was included in the EcO15 project, a Lilly Endowment-funded initiative in ten southeast Indiana counties. EcO15, committed funding for the learning center’s design, furnishings and technology equipment. Switzerland County officials offered county-owned land adjacent to the 4-H Fairgrounds for a learning center that would include new space for the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service and Emergency Management offices. The Switzerland County Commissioners and Council met last December and unanimously voted to proceed with the project.

American StructurePoint of Indianapolis is the project’s architect. Keystone Construction and Development of Indianapolis is the general contractor for the project. Financing was provided by Regions Bank. The facility is expected to be complete in early 2012.



Architect’s rendering of the future Switzerland County Learning Center