

WHAT IS WESTERN IOWA ADVANTAGE?

Western Iowa Advantage is a collaborative effort of economic development officials in Adair, Audubon, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Guthrie, Ida and Sac Counties. The mission of this consortium is to work cooperatively in an effort to effectively market the many viable economic assets of this region. This effort will help build a stronger local, regional and statewide economy. The results of our work will manifest themselves in job creation in specific industry clusters already prevalent in the region — in particular, manufacturing, renewable energy and biosciences — as well as in other existing industries currently thriving here. Western Iowa Advantage is also committed to facilitating ongoing improvements in quality of life-oriented amenities, increased tourism and other areas that will enrich the livability of the region.

Western Iowa Advantage offers its knowledge and expertise as an advocate for its region and looks forward to partnering with those businesses currently working in the region, as well as those considering relocation and/or expansion in the area. Please utilize our services as you consider all that Western Iowa has to offer your business. We look forward to assisting you with everything from location searches, permits, financial/tax incentive programs, utilities, workforce demographics, job-training programs and more.

The region's target industries include Advanced Manufacturing, Agriculture and Bio-Services, Advanced Ag-Tech Manufacturing, Data Information Technology, and Value Added Food Processing. These industries will be expanded upon and discussed in the next five newsletters.



Ben Puck is the 2017 “Iowa Small Business Person of the Year”

The Small Business Administration named Ben Puck, founder and president of Puck Custom Enterprises in Manning, as the “Iowa Small Business Person of the Year.” Puck will go on to Washington D.C. during the week of April 30 - National Small Business Week - and is in the running for the National Small Business Person of the Year Award.

Puck started his business in 1979, during the 1980s Farm Crisis, with his brother, pumping and hauling manure which led to designing new equipment to improve the application of manure. Since starting his business, Ben Puck has received five equipment patents.

WIAD Partners toured Puck Custom Enterprises in December 2017 as part of their effort visiting business and industry leaders to identify how they can better work together in buyer-supplier relationships.



Jeremy Puck explains their custom machinery to WIAD Partners during their December 2017 tour.

Picture: Sarah Gomez

2017 Employer Educator Summit a Success!

The Employer Educator Summit is an annual event which brings educators, employers, workforce and economic development professionals and students together to analyze the area's employment needs and understand how a unified effort can help fill the gaps. Middle-skills are jobs focused in computer technology, nursing, high-skill manufacturing and other fields that don't necessarily require a four-year post-secondary degree, but instead may require some technical education or training. Nationwide, about 69 million people work in middle-skills jobs, representing approximately 48% of the United State's labor force. In Iowa, 50% of the jobs require workers with at least a middle-skill, and that is where WIAD's gap is.

Brenda Clarke Hamilton was the keynote speaker and provided an outside perspective on leadership, communication, team-building, change management, and offering one's personal best to both life and career.

New to this year's summit was the awarding of the Workforce Warrior awards. These awards promote collaborative efforts between local educators and businesses. Recipients were recognized for going above and beyond to work together. This year's school winners were: East Sac County High School for their School to Career Program, Carroll High School for their Employer/Educator Connection, and IKM-Manning for their STEM BEST FIRE Program. This year's business winners were: Crawford County Hospital for their RN Preceptorships, Eventide Lutheran Home for their Job Corps, WITCC & Denison Schools Partnership, and New Hope Village for their Rolling in the Fun, partnership with DMACC. Each of the award recipients received a small stipend for their efforts.



*Above: Carroll Community Schools and IKM-Manning Community Schools, recognized as the 2017 Workforce Warrior Educators
Below: New Hope Village, recognized for their collaboration efforts with the 2017 Workforce Warrior Award*



What is **LOIS**?

Location One Information System, or LOIS, is a searchable economic development database with detailed information on economic development sites and available buildings. LOIS is the oldest, and largest, economic development building, site, and community database system in the country. LOIS allows site selectors and business developers to search for sites and buildings based on size, location, square footage, building type, and features. Sites and buildings can be searched locally, regionally, or statewide. LOIS is a consistent search tool used by economic developers across the United States. LOIS provides a great opportunity for all communities, no matter their size, to market their sites and buildings on an equal playing field with larger cities and metro areas. WIAD partners update this for all available properties in the region. Information includes utilities, transportation, and other basic community info.

Save the Date: WIAD Annual Dinner

This year's WIAD Annual Dinner is planned to be held in Holstein on April 10. Keep your eyes peeled for more information!

It's easier here!

City Data For Decision Makers Reports Now Available

The Iowa State University and Outreach Indicators Portal team recently released a *City Data for Decision Makers* report for all 945 of Iowa's Cities. This tool is designed to be useful at both the local and regional decision-making levels. The reports show population trends, demographics, and socioeconomic indicators such as income, poverty, employment, housing characteristics, and health insurance coverage. The reports are generated using American Community Survey data from 2012-2016. City reports can be viewed [HERE](#).

The portal also provides access to Data for Decision Makers reports by county, Iowa Senate District, Iowa House district, and ISU Extension and Outreach region, along with reports of youth and 4-H program data. Youth information includes district enrollment, projections, race and ethnicity, free and reduced-price school lunch, and English language learners. These reports are available [HERE](#).

For more information about the Indicators Portal, contact Bailey Hanson at bahanson@iastate.edu.

Save the Date: Destination Development Summit, April 25 & 26

On April 25 & 26 at the Manning Hausbarn Heritage Park Conference Center, Roger Brooks and team will help chart the future of your community for generations. Bring as many people as possible because going back as a united force will create lasting change and long-term success.

Over the past 35 years, Roger Brooks and team have assisted more than 1,500 communities and travel organizations around the world. As one of the most recognized and frequently quoted experts in the travel industry, his passion is to make a difference in people's lives by helping their communities become better places for people to live, work and visit.

For more or registration information contact Jane Berger at jane@visitwesterniowa.com. The summit flyer can be found [HERE](#) and the registration form can be found [HERE](#).

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