

# Pilot program in area gets \$200,000 grant

BY BOB BRALEY

AUBURN — Eight businesses and four cities are participating in a pilot program that has received a two-year, \$200,000 grant from the Indiana Department of Workforce Development.

Among the participants are four businesses and three cities from the four northeast corner counties.

The pilot program is designed to promote Lifelong Learning Accounts, or LiLAs.

"LiLAs can help Indiana upgrade our work force and provide people with the means to improve their lives and advance their careers through education and training," said Patty Weddle, president and chief executive officer of the Northeast Indiana Workforce Investment Board (NEIWIB), which received the award. "For our economic development, there is no better investment than an educated work force."

LiLAs are matched educational advancement accounts funded by contributions from the employee

and employer and matched up to \$1,000 through public and foundation support in the demonstration.

Funds from the accounts can be used for career-related educational activities such as GED preparation, language classes and certificate and degree courses.

The initiative in northeast Indiana is focusing on the manufacturing and public sectors. It is made possible by the workforce department, NEIWIB, Cole Foundation, Lincoln Financial Group Foundation, Noble County Community Foundation and Indiana Northeast Development.

Participating manufacturers from the four northeast corner counties include Hickory Hollow Inc. in Noble County; LA West in LaGrange County; Vestil Manufacturing in Steuben County; and Western Consolidated Technologies in Noble and Steuben counties.

Other manufacturers participating include Lime City Manufacturing from Huntington; National Plastics and Time Services, both

from Allen County; and Stumps Inc. from Whitley County.

Public-sector employers taking part include the cities of Angola, Auburn, Kendallville and Fort Wayne.

The first meeting of the LiLA Advisory Board was held Oct. 16 at the World War II Museum in Auburn. Plaques were presented to participating manufacturers.

The Council for Adult & Experiential Learning (CAEL) is directing the national LiLA initiative, which kicked off in Chicago last year. The restaurant and food service industry were targeted there. Northeast Indiana is the second of three pilot sites.

The third demonstration will involve the allied health sector in San Francisco.

Sherrie Hoy was recently hired by CAEL to serve as local project manager for the northeast Indiana demonstration. She is a former employment and training consultant for JobWorks, Fort Wayne.

The area project has met its employer sponsorship goal for the



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Representatives of manufacturers taking part in the Lifelong Learning Account (LiLA) program were presented plaques at the first meeting of the LiLA Advisory Council Oct. 16 at the World War II Museum in Auburn. Plaques were presented to, from left: Phil Clemens, National Plastics, Fort Wayne; Patricia Mich, Western Consolidated

Technologies, Fremont and Ligonier; Phil Sensibaugh, HHI Custom Pelleting, Albion; Kathy Rogers, Time Services, Fort Wayne; Robin Tuttle, LA West, LaGrange; Stephanie Young, Vestil Manufacturing, Angola; Katie Burns, Stumps Inc., South Whitley; and Jan Boggs, Lime City Manufacturing, Huntington.

manufacturing sector and over 90 percent of available LiLAs are sponsored by public sector employers so far, said Lincoln Schrock, director of Indiana Northeast Development.

"This strong employer response shows the high value placed on employee education and training by local employers," Schrock said.

CAEL is working to advance

national policy in support of LiLAs. "We want to see LiLAs become a part of standard compensation packages, just like 401(k)s," said Pamela Tate, president and CEO of CAEL.