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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE MAY 23, 2012:**

**STARKE COUNTY “WOWS” INNOVATORS**

**Starke County, Indiana** – Every two years The Society of Innovators, an organization affiliated with Ivy Tech Northwest, sponsors an event called "Pride and Pedestal" which was created to demonstrate the amazing innovations that exist in Northwest Indiana across all walks of life.

One of the ten projects highlighted at the “Pride and Pedestal” event on April 19th in Hammond, Indiana, was from Starke County. The recognition focused on the Starke County team that shaped the strategy to expand rail access in Starke County. Known as the Starke County Lead Track, this innovative project extended rail through the Knox Industrial Park, and it has become a model for other Indiana communities.

The cooperative effort between the Starke County Economic Development Foundation (SCEDF), the City of Knox, the County of Starke, Knox Civic Development Corporation and Territorial Engineering, vividly illustrates the value of the team concept in economic development.

Rail systems can be compared to our public highway system. Just as you connect your driveway to a side road that then connects you to a major highway, a lead track is a side road that businesses connect to with rail spurs to get to the larger U.S. rail network.

The concept to build a one-mile lead track to the Knox Industrial Park was partially financed by the United States Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA), with additional monetary support coming from the entire Starke County team. The Starke County Lead Track has been recognized by the EDA in an Upjohn Institute report as a national award winning project. In the eight years of existence, the project has grown from its original 1 mile to 3 miles of track and has generated 30 million dollars in new investment and 300 new

jobs. A covered cross-dock facility and a ground level loading facility were built to allow industries not located in the park or on the rail to have the advantage of rail as well.

This nationally lauded lead track is the only lead rail track and cross-dock facility on the Norfolk Southern rail system and the only such project in the state of Indiana.

The Lead Track project was presented at the "Pride and Pedestal" event by the Executive Director of the SCEDF, Charles Weaver, who accepted the recognition on behalf of the Starke County team. Weaver indicated that he was proud to present Starke County's unique story and make Northwest Indiana aware of the innovation that exists here to help bring business and industry to Starke County. He presented that story, complete with train whistles and conductor calls, all aimed at "wowing" those in attendance.

### **About SCEDF**

The Starke County Economic Development Foundation is a not-for-profit local economic development organization (LEDO) providing economic development opportunities on behalf of Starke County, Indiana, the City of Knox, and the Towns of North Judson and Hamlet through the development of industrial parks, rail spurs, greenfield sites, shovel-ready sites, infrastructure, and workforce development. For more information regarding Starke County Economic Development Foundation, visit [www.scedf.biz](http://www.scedf.biz).

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