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**SECOND MEMBER OF STARKE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION BOARD SELECTED AS A
“NORTHWEST INDIANA MOST INFLUENTIAL WOMAN”**

North Judson, Indiana – Starke County Economic Development Foundation (SCEDF) Board Member Wendy Hoppe has just been named the recipient of a Northwest Indiana Most Influential Woman Award, presented on May 31, 2012 at the Radisson Hotel in Merrillville, Indiana. This was the second year for such awards, with Wendy being named as the Most Influential Woman in the category of Construction. The nomination was prepared by Diane Thalmann, Vice President of the SCEDF Board on behalf of SCEDF. Diane Thalmann was the inaugural winner in the 2011 category of Most Influential Woman in Economic Development. SCEDF President William J. Sonnemaker said, “Wendy Hoppe and Diane Thalmann both personify the values and commitment of each and every member of the SCEDF Board and we are thrilled that over the first two years of these awards, both Wendy and Diane have been recognized for their accomplishments.”

Wendy Hoppe is currently serving her third year on the North Judson Town Council, and was elected by her fellow members to the position of Town Council President for 2012. Her commitment to her home town and to Starke County is evident with the long hours she dedicates to this job, which at the current time is estimated to be at least 15-20 hours per week in attending meetings and directing the efforts of the Town. Wendy has been described as a person who firmly believes that “if I can do it, you can do it too,” a motto that she lives by every day in all facets of her life and she has adopted that as her motto in her role on the Town Council.

Wendy is also serving her first term on the Starke County Economic Development Foundation (SCEDF) Board of Directors and has never missed a meeting in her 17 months as a Board Member. She participates in Board meetings, offers her thoughts and opinions, and represents her area of the County well. Her interest in helping jobs become available to Starke County residents is evident as she

continually works to support new business attraction efforts, and works with SCEDF in following up on leads and possible new businesses.

Wendy was the first licensed female plumbing contractor in Indiana. She has held her plumbing license for over 25 years. Wendy was taught her trade from one of the local “old school” plumbers, and to this day she takes pride in the high quality craftsmanship that she was able to learn. She is well known at the State level and is sometimes the subject of referrals when other females inquire about the possibility of obtaining a plumbing license.

Wendy has also been in the hardware business for the past 40 years, and five years ago she took over her family’s hardware business, Hoppe Hardware, Inc., located in North Judson, IN. Prior to that, Wendy was a sales representative in the hardware business for over 25 years, covering parts of Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. It was not unusual for her to drive a thousand miles per day in that job, and then doing some plumbing at nights and on weekends to help those in need.

Wendy has assisted other people in obtaining their plumbing license, be they male or female, and she has also taught the employees of her hardware store the basics they need to instruct customers on how to do basic plumbing tasks. Her attitude on that subject is to give enough knowledge to customers that they are prepared to do a job themselves, but if needed, Wendy can go in later and correct any issues that might have been created.

Wendy has worked with the Starke County vocational educators to encourage young adults to consider a career in plumbing. Wendy is serious about mentoring aspiring plumbers, particularly young females who are considering plumbing as a career. Wendy has taken on the training role where she encourages apprentices to strive for the same high quality workmanship that she was taught. While no female plumber has moved on to obtain a plumbing license, Wendy has encouraged females to work towards that goal, and has also assisted some males in that endeavor.

Wendy’s next goal is to hold classes for females in the community to learn the basics of plumbing so that they might feel comfortable in performing some of the more routine tasks that they might face.

Wendy is in her 8th year on the Starke/Pulaski Habitat for Humanity board of directors. She works tirelessly to help improve the living conditions of residents in these counties. It is estimated that in addition to the time she spends as Board Member, Wendy spends about 40-60 hours per home that is built by Habitat in doing hands-on tasks like the required plumbing.

Wendy is a humble and “quiet” leader who uses her actions rather than words to initiate change and contribute to her community. Above and beyond her Habitat board role, Wendy will tell you that no job is too small for her to work on.

Many times Wendy’s clients are unable to pay, for example, to have a broken pipe or a malfunctioning toilet repaired, so she is often willing to take a home baked pie or loaf of bread in exchange for her work. She tries to instill this same sense of social responsibility on the young plumbers she mentors.

Wendy's belief that good deeds will come back to you has earned her the respect of clients, associates and community leaders alike. She demonstrates leadership by her willingness to roll up her sleeves and get involved where she sees a need.

People like Wendy are too often overlooked for their contribution to their communities, yet they are truly the "silent leaders" who many times are the ones that make the biggest difference.



Donna Henry, North Judson Clerk-Treasurer; Charles Weaver, Executive Director, Starke County Economic Development Foundation (SCEDF); Ron Gifford, SCEDF Special Projects, Wendy Hoppe, SCEDF Director; Diane Thalmann, SCEDF Vice President; James Wagner, SCEDF Secretary; William Sonnemaker, SCEDF President



Wendy Hoppe, Northwest Indiana Most Influential Woman in Construction, North Judson Town Council President, and SCEDF Director receiving her award.

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.

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