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**Starke County Economic Development Foundation**

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**STARKE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION**

**HONORS NANCY J. DEMBOWSKI**

The Starke County Economic Development Foundation played host to a "Prospectus and Achievements Night" on December 5, 2012, which event included the honoring of three companies who opened operations in Starke County during the past year (Kemin Industries, Inc., Chester, Inc., Ag Services Division, and Selected Furniture, LLC) and two companies who announced plans to expand operations in the county (American Oak Preserving Company, Inc., and Knox Fertilizer, Inc.). In addition, Charles W. Weaver, Executive Director, gave a report on the economic development highlights of 2012 and what might be expected in 2013 for Starke County. His report also detailed what is necessary to be done in the County for the Foundation's efforts to be successful.

The night culminated with the awarding of the Robert E. Hamilton Award, named in honor of the now deceased banker widely believed to be the leading force for the creation of the Foundation. This Award was established by action of the Foundation's Board of Directors and first announced at the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of SCEDF and was awarded for the first time last November to Jack Lynch and Mathew Swanson. It is awarded to a person who has contributed a great amount of service in the field of economic development as well as the community as a whole.

This year's recipient of the award was retiring State Representative Nancy J. Dembowski. Nancy Dembowski has established a record of public service that is second to none. After working at WKVI Radio in Knoxville for 25 years, Nancy made her entry into elected public service. Over the following 26 years, Nancy served as an elected official in several positions, including the Starke County Council for 7 years, Mayor of the City of Knoxville for 11 years, State Senator for 2 years, and State Representative for 6 years, choosing not to run again in the most recent election. She not only served the citizens of Starke County and the City of Knoxville admirably during that time, but her terms in office were terms of accomplishments that have stood the test of time already. While a County Councilperson and while running for Mayor for her first term, Nancy made the motion to enact the County Economic Development Tax, which has been instrumental in bringing jobs to Starke County, as well as helping fund needed economic development activities as well. In making that vote, Nancy commented that while it might not help her win her race for Mayor, it was the right thing to do for the County.

While Mayor, Nancy was instrumental in seeing to the construction of a community center which was just recently renamed by the City of Knoxville as the "Nancy J. Dembowski Community Center" as a tribute to her leadership on that project. Its use over the years to host many events of every kind has proven to be a wise and visionary decision. Nancy served admirably in the Indiana Legislature as well, always spending time with her constituents wherever they might be located and however they might be helped. She topped off her final year in office as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention this past summer.

In addition to her record as an elected official, Nancy has also been instrumental in serving with a number of different organizations, and continues to this date to do that. When she sees a need, she is one of the first to volunteer her time and efforts to make her community a better place. Among the groups she has served on are Starke United, Starke County Junior Achievement, and the Chamber of Commerce. Nancy has also served on the Knoxville High School Improvement Plan Committee, the Harvest Festival Committee, and the Starke County WorkOne Advisory Board. She also founded the Candy Cane Committee, and served as a member of the Starke County Coalition Against Domestic Abuse, where she helped plan for the building of the Phoenix House.

The founders of the Foundation saw fit to extend Nancy an invitation to be a member of that Board way back in 1986, one year after the formal birth of the Foundation. Nancy has remained as a member of that Board continuously and now holds the record for the most years served as a Board member. She has served as

Vice President of the Foundation as well as numerous committees, and even though she was busy in the legislature for many of those years, she faithfully filled her time on the board as an active member. She has been instrumental on more than one occasion in helping guide needed economic development legislation through that process, and has always kept the Foundation well-advised of legislation that might affect economic development efforts.

### **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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