

STARKE COUNTY

Economic Development Foundation

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EMBARGOED UNTIL NOON CDT, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2014

STARKE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION TO HONOR MARVIN P. PETERS

WITH ITS ROBERT E. HAMILTON AWARD



Starke County, IN – The Starke County Economic Development Foundation will host its Fourth annual “Prospectus and Achievements Event” on October 2, 2014 at the Knox Middle School beginning at 11:10 am CDT. This event is open to the public. The event will culminate 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 25th Anniversary of the founding of SCEDF. 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 is Marvin P. Peters, a long-time resident and businessperson in North Judson. During his lifetime in Starke County, Marv has been a shining example of what hard work and dedication to task can achieve. He is widely respected for his common sense approach to matters and as a result, he has been in demand to serve on several boards and commissions that have benefitted his community, not only in North Judson, but also the greater Starke County community as well.

Marv was born in August of 1934 at the hospital in LaPorte, but he and his family were at that time living in Hanna. The family moved to North Judson in 1939 and Marv has been there ever since. His father was involved most of his working life in the gas business and worked at one time at Kellerman's Hardware. His mother was a stay-at-home mother. Marv started grade school in 1940, and graduated from North Judson High School in the class of 1952. Upon graduation, Marv took a home study course in auto body work and began working at Freeman Chevrolet at the same time. Marv says that when he had some questions about what he was learning, he called upon the auto body person at Freeman's to explain it to him, or better yet, to show him how it was done.

Marv also worked a period of time at Thermo Products in 1954 before he took a position at Allis Chalmers in LaPorte making boxes and ended up being a floor expeditor for the assembly line. One very positive result of his working at Allis Chalmers is that he worked with a person who introduced Marv to his sister, Ellen, who has now been Marv's life partner and wife for the past 58 years since their marriage on July 14, 1956.

While he enjoyed that line of work at Allis Chalmers, the uneven work schedule and the fact that he had started a small business in his garage doing auto body work led Marv to make some very important life decisions. He quit work there in 1965 and built his auto body shop in North Judson later that same year, and opened it for business in 1966. He continued in that business until his "retirement" in 1999. During a portion of that time, he also operated a car rental business that proved helpful to his customers. In many cases, he ended up selling some of those cars as well. During this period of time he had the opportunity to work on many vehicles and developed a reputation for being honest and fair; two qualities that Marv has exhibited throughout his life in all that he has accomplished.

Marv has been a dedicated and hard-working member of St. Peter Lutheran Church in North Judson, holding many important positions in that time period. He served as a member of the Finance Committee for 8 years, and was treasurer of the church during the time period when the new church was constructed, and personally signed more checks than he cares to remember just with that construction project. He also served as chairman of the Investment Committee during the church construction, making sure that the gifts from the congregation were stretched as far as possible so as to cover the costs of construction. Marv was the sponsor of the young people's group for several years, and has also been the person to both open and close the popular "Sounds of Praise" held every Sunday morning for more than the past 20 years. He also served for several years as a member of the visiting committee, among his many duties with the church.

In addition to his obligations with his church, Marv has also found the time to serve on some public bodies. He served a four-year term as President of the North Judson Town Council from 1979-1983. He notes that since he was of the “wrong party” to get elected in North Judson, he feels especially proud of that accomplishment. His reputation once again was instrumental in his being elected to public office, as the voters of North Judson were comfortable in voting for him, regardless of “R” or “D” politics. Marv currently serves as a member of the Starke County Alcoholic Beverage Board and for at least 10 years has been a member of the North Judson Board of Zoning Appeals where he is currently serving as President.

Primarily because of his reputation and stature in the North Judson community at the time, Marv was asked to become one of the initial members of the Board of the Starke County Development Foundation back in 1985. As Marv relates the story, he received a telephone call one day from Mat Swanson, then President of American State Bank in North Judson. Mat asked if he could stop by and talk with him, which Marv thought to be ominous, since at the time he did bank there. Marv went to the bank almost immediately to meet with Mat. Upon arrival, Mat invited Marv to go upstairs, which really got the worry-juices flowing. After some small talk, Mat invited Marv to take one of the positions on the initial board of the just-formed organization. When asked why, Mat told him that this was going to be an important group as they were trying to create jobs and economic opportunities in the County and the membership of the board needed to include representatives from throughout the county. As a respected businessperson in North Judson, Mat felt that Marv could be a valuable member of that initial board and would well-represent the residents of that area of the county. Apparently, Mat had that one right, and was also persuasive to the point that Marv accepted the challenge and joined several others at the commencement of the organization’s life. During his tenure, which ran from 1985 until 1989, Marv remembers several meetings both in North Judson and in Knox and particularly remembers helping work on the initial building owned by the Foundation that was in terrible shape at the time. That building today houses the Kruz manufacturing plant in Knox, and was the first success story to come out of the new Foundation. In reflecting upon the Foundation’s accomplishments both while on the Board and afterwards, Marv believes that the Knox Industrial Park with its railroad access and ability to acquire manufacturers who have hired several residents of North Judson has been one of best activities of the Foundation.

Now about that “retirement” mentioned earlier. While retiring from the regular auto body business in 1999, Marv has continued to work out of that shop doing something he loves to do, and something he can do on his own schedule and time. Marv now painstakingly takes out dents and polishes stainless steel parts on antique cars as old as 1916 up to vehicles from the late 1970’s. He began this task with a small ad in the Hudson Car Club magazine, which has led to a lot of word-of-mouth recommendations to others spread out across the country who routinely send him their parts that he makes look like new again. He has specialized in Corvettes during part of that time. So, a career that formally began almost 50 years ago continues today in one form or another.

As stated earlier, Marv and Ellen Peters have been married for 58 years. They have two children, Kathy, married to Phil Brown who resides in North Judson, and Karla, married to Sonny Wyland, who resides in Plymouth. Marv and Ellen also are the very proud grandparents of Jared and Josh Brown, both

graduates of Purdue University, who have returned to Starke County to work on the family farm with their parents. Josh has followed in his grandfather's footsteps as he is currently serving his first year term on the North Judson Town Council.

For his many contributions to North Judson, his church, and to all of Starke County, Marvin P. Peters is this year's well-deserved recipient of the Robert E. Hamilton Award, and joins a select list of previous honorees, which includes Mat Swanson, Jack Lynch, Nancy Dembowski, and Van Janovic.

ABOUT SCEDF

The Starke County 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 Development Foundation, visit www.starkecounty.com.

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