

Workforce chief touts merits of skills training

By WYATT STAYNER
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JASPER — Indiana Workforce Development Commissioner Steve Braun has a plan to fill Dubois County's open jobs, and it starts with what he calls employer-driven demand.

On Friday, the Jasper native delivered that message to a group of about 50 educators, politicians and business professionals at Vincennes University Jasper Campus.

"We need to work with employers to find out what they think are the real skill sets that are relevant to filling those occupations," Braun said. "Once we have that demand, once we have that skill set perspective, then we can take a look at how we align our education and training around that."

Braun said the state is working to improve its jobs list to better reflect the top openings. Instead of updating the list every two years, Braun wants to release the list quarterly, which would not only make the list more accurate, but also help his department better project what

the future jobs landscape looks like. There are 3.2 million people working in Indiana today, but Braun said retirements of baby boomers will lead to nearly 400,000 job openings over the next decade with another 600,000 job openings popping up in the same time period because of other factors. Braun spoke about the need to utilize community colleges such as VUJC and more vocational programs in high schools so that young people can enter the workforce sooner and with less student loan debt.

"Not everybody needs a four-year degree," Braun said. "There are a lot of great jobs that are available right after high school. We can start training in high school for those good jobs and creating that talent pipeline appropriately."

One of Dubois County's biggest job openings is truck driving and Braun, whose brother, Mike, owns Jasper-based Meyer Distributing, has spoken about truck driving as a job that could include high

See **CHIEF**
on the back page

Respect on the menu for school's lunch crowd

■ JASPER HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS REWARD STUDENTS WHO 'DO WHAT THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO DO AND NEVER GET RECOGNIZED'

By LEANN BURKE
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JASPER — Riding in the back seat of a police car has become a good thing at Jasper High School.

Once a month, two students are selected to go out to lunch with school resource officer Jason Knies as a reward for showing good character and leadership in school. The program, called Law and Let's Order, is the newest of three awards programs set up by assistant principal Glen Buechlein as a way to interact with students

who don't usually wind up in the office.

"You would have these great kids that come for four years, do what they're supposed to do and never get recognized," Buechlein said.

Buechlein started his programming almost by accident shortly after arriving at JHS for the 2012-2013 school year. He'd collected some wristbands from his weightlifting gym that said "Strong(er)" and gave them to a handful of student leaders he knew. Pretty soon, other students wanted them.

"You would have students come in here and ask, 'What do you have to do to get one of those?'" said Deb Schum, JHS officer manager.

The two decided to make the

See **RESPECT**
on the back page

APTITUDE FOR ALTITUDE



ALISHA JUCEVIC/THE HERALD

Workers from Cochran Exteriors of Indianapolis replaced shingles and copper valleys on the roof of Dubois County Courthouse in Jasper on Saturday morning. The process was planned to last all day Saturday and Sunday.

Monday

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Weather

TONIGHT



Mostly cloudy

Low: 56°

TUESDAY



Partly sunny, nice and warm

High: 81°

Five-day forecast, maps and more information on Page 2.

Inside

- Advice 14
- Classifieds 18-20
- Comics 22
- Entertainment 21
- Local and state 3-6
- Nation and world 15-16
- People 7-12
- Sports 23-27
- Viewpoint 17

Headlines

Philharmonic Club

Regardless of how many members the club has, the members' passion remains the same: music. **Page 3.**

Rain rescues

Hundreds were rescued from

fast-moving floodwaters Sunday in South Carolina as days of driving rain hit a dangerous crescendo. **Page 15.**

Soccer sectionals

Several local soccer teams will see new surroundings in this week's sectionals. **Page 23.**



ARIANA VAN DEN AKKER/THE HERALD

Greater Jasper resource officer Jason Knies, right, drove Jasper High School junior Claire Schotanus and sophomore Noah Heim, not pictured, to lunch at Los Bravos on Friday as part of a new program at the school called "Law and Let's Order." Teachers nominate students who have been good citizens for the monthly lunch.

Respect

(Concluded from Page One)

bands a reward for going above and beyond in the classroom, as interpreted by teachers. Any teacher can suggest a student for the reward, and the student is called to the office without knowing why. Although the students find out they were called down for the Above and Beyond program, they never find out who suggested them.

Buechlein quickly ran out of Strong(er) bands and ordered about a thousand more, only the new bands say "Ad astra per aspera," a Latin phrase that means "through hard work to the stars." He's almost out of those, too. For the 2015-2016 school year, he's ordered T-shirts that say "Above and Beyond" on the back.

"It serves two purposes," Buechlein said. "It shows those kids that they are noticed and gives them a pat on the back, and it lets us see some kids in the office we wouldn't normally see."

Above and Beyond students are automatically entered in the drawing for Law and Let's Order.

"We trialed (Law and Let's Order) last year, and it went over well," said Knies. "The kids seem to like it."

Buechlein figures the students like Law and Let's Order because they get to hang out with Knies.

"The kids love (Knies)," Buechlein said. "They like and respect him."

The first two students to win

Law and Let's Order this year were junior Claire Schotanus and sophomore Noah Heim. They had lunch at Los Bravos on Friday. Schotanus had no idea she'd won when she was called to the office to hear the news.

"I came in and Mr. Buechlein, a lady and the officer were sitting there," Schotanus said. "I was just like, 'What?' They were like, 'Oh no, this is a good thing.'"

Through a program called Caring Cats, students can also be nominated for a shopping spree at Carson's clothing store in Jasper. To get into that drawing, students must show improvement academically or socially; any student can qualify. The idea behind the program is to build connections throughout the school and boost students' confidence.

"You might have a varsity athlete and a freshman that hugs the wall when they walk down the hall," Buechlein said. "The hope is now they're walking down the hall and say, 'Hey, how are you doing?'"

Carson's agreed to offer discounted prices to Caring Cats, and in three years the program has spent about \$8,800 on 60 students.

"We had one (senior) boy who wanted a suit," Schum said. "He was graduating and knew he'd have college and job interviews, so he got a suit."

The Caring Cats program goes beyond rewarding students for good work; it also helps students in need of immediate help or support. Earlier this year, a Jasper High School family's home caught fire, and the school raised money through the Caring Cats program to help with the purchase of new

clothes. The program has also helped seniors purchase graduation gowns and other students purchase school supplies or lunch during difficult times. Once, the program helped a student repair his vehicle so he could continue working to help support his family.

"In providing this service, our goal is for students to be able to worry about the big picture — that is, getting an education and graduating," Buechlein said. "The general public often is not aware of the baggage some students bring to school. Our program helps students feel better about themselves while also enabling students to realize that people around here do notice them and sincerely care about them."

The funding for all the programs comes from fundraising or volunteering. The first year, teachers volunteered to sell food at during an auction at the Hutson John Deere dealership in Ireland. In the three years since, teachers and the community have donated roughly \$12,000 to the programs.

Although the ideas come from Buechlein, he'll never take credit. He says it's a team effort among everyone in the office, the school board and the community. The ideas come from something he's read or seen done elsewhere.

"I don't think any of it is original," Buechlein said. "I steal it, I think."

At the end of the day, Buechlein notes, the programs — and education in general — are all about forming relationships.

"Hopefully you can build some positive ones," he said.

Chief

(Concluded from Page One)

school training and that would lead to a fairly lucrative career without a college diploma. To get there, Braun will need the help of state educators and guidance counselors to let students know that they have more options than just traditional higher education. Indiana



Braun

graduates about 25,000 students every year who enter the workforce and another 45,000 from four-year

colleges, but Braun noted that half of the students who attain a bachelor's degree leave the state after graduating. He thinks that better informing Hoosier students of hot job pathways earlier could help those numbers.

"How do those skills and competencies roll up into certificates and degrees and how do we make sure that there's a continuum across K-12 and into community colleges and into our higher education to make sure that we're teaching the right skills at the right time in the right way?" Braun asked.

Dubois County could be in line to be one of the biggest beneficiaries of Braun's plan. The county has the state's lowest unemployment rate at 3.3 percent but also has to fill hundreds of jobs that have been

promised by local companies with tax abatement stipulations. Braun said part of the solution to solving the county's hiring struggles could come from working with WorkOne, an office of Indiana's workforce development system, to promote Dubois County's jobs in other counties that have high unemployment. Dubois Strong President Ed Cole spoke about that strategy to The Herald last week, saying that the county had already implemented this plan with a closed company in Evansville and plans to do the same with a factory in Randolph County. Braun said that some people might call such an approach poaching, but he noted that the bottom line is to find jobs for Hoosiers.

"These people want to be employed," Braun said.

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