



A New Beginning

One Region, Quality of Life council merge

Two civic organizations devoted to improving life in Northwest Indiana announced Saturday they have merged. The Quality of Life Council, founded 20 years ago by leaders of the region's institutions of higher learning, and the One Region: One Vision initiative, launched five years ago by The Times Media Co., have become One Region: One Vision for Northwest Indiana's Quality of Life.

J. Guadalupe Valtierra, chancellor of Ivy Tech Community College, and Bill Masterson Jr., publisher of The Times, will serve as co-chairmen of the newly formed group. "There are many great and necessary initiatives that have evolved from these two movements, and having the opportunity to join efforts is a bold statement to the growing ideal of regionalism that will continue to propel us forward," Valtierra said. The action oriented group will continue 13 programs developed by the One Region initiative. These range from a regional healthcare council to a mayors' roundtable to revitalization of the region's urban core.

The quarterly discussion of issues impacting Northwest Indiana held by the Quality of Life Council will continue under the guidance of a program committee. "As a board member of the Quality of Life Council and founder of the One Region: One Vision movement, I have had the opportunity to see how a combined effort could be a powerful

force to move the region forward in a positive manner," Masterson said. "I am very excited about the collaborative effort and ready to get to work." Leigh Morris, chairman of the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority, and a member of the organizing committee, said the goal of the new group is "to build alliances, set direction, press for action and forge inroads binding communities together to assure Northwest Indiana has a healthy environment, thriving economy and social equity to achieve an unequaled quality of life." The organization will be governed by a 15 member executive committee. Those who served on boards of the former groups will also make up an advisory council.

Officers include Masterson, Valtierra, Barb Young, secretary; David Bochnowski, treasurer; Morris, research committee chairman and Kris Krouse, program committee chairman. Other executive committee members are Mike Finissi, Mark Maassel, Danita Johnson Hughes, Lou Martinez, Mayor John Costas, Mayor Karen Freeman Wilson, Bill Joiner, Barbara Eason Watkins and Bill Nangle. Valparaiso University President Mark Heckler presided over the nearly year long discussions leading to the merger. Valtierra, speaking on behalf of the area's higher education leaders, summed up the resultant merger, saying, "This is an exciting time for Northwest Indiana; our future holds bright promise and unbridled potential."

MEET THE CHAIRMEN



BILL MASTERSON JR., publisher of The Times Media Co.



J GUADALUPE, VALTIERRA, chancellor of Ivy Tech Community College

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J.G. VALTIERRA

Action Initiatives - May 2012

G.R.I.P.: The Gary Region Investment Project identifies and pursues opportunities for urban revitalization. It involves the Metropolitan Planning Council of Chicago, NIRPC, HUD, cities of Gary, East Chicago and Hammond. The program sponsors an "Urban Exchange," bringing representatives of successful urban programs from across the U.S. to address NWI's urban leaders. (Joanna Trotter, Peter Skosey, Linda Kay, coordinators)

NORTHWEST INDIANA HEALTHCARE COUNCIL: Leaders in the region's healthcare field - hospital CEOs, doctors, nurses, insurance providers, home health care and others - gather to discuss issues of the industry and to coordinate programs serving Northwest Indiana. (Denise Dillard, chairperson)

MAYORS' ROUNDTABLE: Bi-monthly meeting of the 12 mayors from Northwest Indiana. Casual discussion over dinner is held highlighting issues vital to local communities. (Mayors John Costas, Tom McDermott Jr., co-chairmen)

COMMITTEE OF 16: Representatives of 16 towns in Lake and Porter counties meet to discuss common issues. (Michael Griffin, chairman)

NORTHWEST INDIANA COMMITTEE FOR BETTER GOVERNMENT: Supporting the Shared Ethics Commission, the committee pursues reasonable but effective change to improve local government. Three changes to Indiana law pushed by the committee and enacted in 2012 will favorably impact the operation of local government. (Dennis Rittenmeyer, chairman)

NORTHWEST INDIANA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COALITION: Executives of 17 Northwest Indiana chambers of commerce meeting monthly to coordinate activities of interest throughout the region, to pursue economic development and share opportunities to benefit local business. (Chuck Hughes, facilitator)

READY: Structured organization of leaders from various sectors of the Northwest Indiana educational community to promote an improved assessment process for high school students, focus on providing youth with better interventions to keep them in school, more career pathway opportunities, college course work while in high school and improved data interpretation and use by teachers. (Linda Woloshansky, Mark Maassel, Peggy Buffington facilitators)

MESSAGE UNITED: Representatives of Northwest Indiana's religious community support One Region goals and initiatives by delivering a positive message to region congregations. Their goal: Use the pulpit to carry a message of unity and joined purpose. (Bishop Dale Melczek, Pastor Steve Munsey, facilitators)

THE FORUM: A public gathering held quarterly during which local issues are discussed by those involved. ((Kris Krouse, Danita Johnson Hughes, facilitators))

GROW NWI: Coordinating and supporting organizations sponsoring community gardens in Lake, Porter, LaPorte counties. (Ryan Richardson, coordinator)

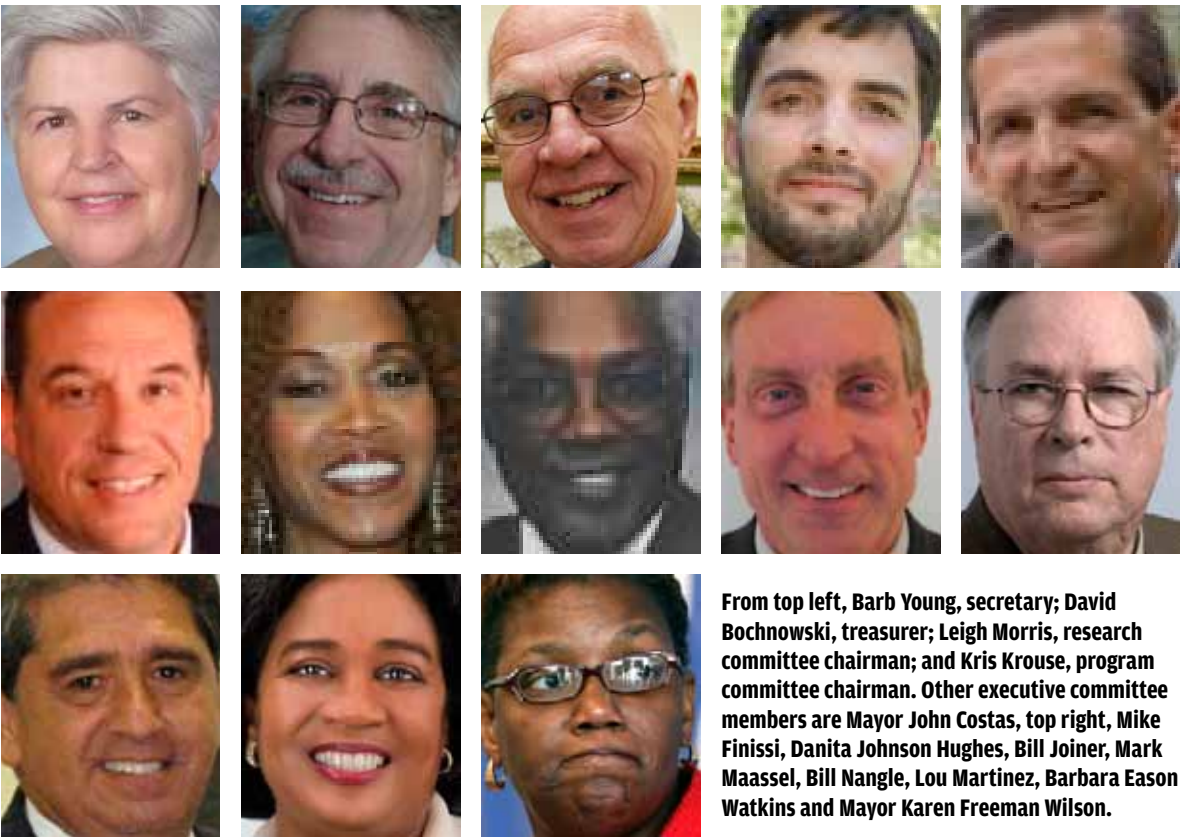
GREEN VISION PROJECT: Working in conjunction with the Lake County Juvenile Court, teens are sentenced to a work detail in an urban community. The work detail is supervised by members of a local church. The assigned workers focus on cleaning parks and the entrances and exits to the community designated for cleaning. (Mary Cossey, Linda Key, Honorable Mary Beth Bonaventura, Justin Breen, coordinators)

NORTHWEST INDIANA ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL: In a formative stage, the council will bring together those with varying relationships to the environment - business and industry, waste districts, government, academics and others. (Kay Nelson,t)

SUCCESS BY SIX: A program in three Northwest Indiana counties preparing preschool children for the education system. Provides traits for success. (United Way in Lake, Porter, LaPorte counties)

DARE TO DREAM: Forging connections between 7 Northwest Indiana counties through community conversations. (O'Merrial Butchee, Ivy Tech Community College)

MEET THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



From top left, Barb Young, secretary; David Bochnowski, treasurer; Leigh Morris, research committee chairman; and Kris Krouse, program committee chairman. Other executive committee members are Mayor John Costas, top right, Mike Finissi, Danita Johnson Hughes, Bill Joiner, Mark Maassel, Bill Nangle, Lou Martinez, Barbara Eason Watkins and Mayor Karen Freeman Wilson.