



***Vermilion Advantage Allies with the Illinois Business RoundTable,
Birth2Work Stakeholder Empowerment Team, and Area Youth
to Focus on the Workforce of the Future***

The Two-Day Workforce Development Lyceum June 27 - 28, 2008

Will Take Place at the Danville Area Community College, Bremer Conference Center

Just Added! Television Writer/Producer Dee LaDuke to Lead Half-Day Seminar "Telling Your Story"

DANVILLE, IL (24 June 2008) – **Vermilion Advantage**, a private, non-profit, membership-based organization, focused on leading economic development and workforce development initiatives in Vermilion County, will host member leaders and area representatives in an unprecedented workforce development conference. The event will be led by **Elane V. Scott** of **Birth2Work**, a non-profit organization focused on igniting community leadership around the development of capable people for the future workforce, and **Rick Stephens**, Chairman of the **Illinois Business Roundtable**. Scott and Stephens will lead Vermillion County stakeholders—representing business, government, education, media, health, and non-profit sectors of the county—through a systems-based approach to addressing sustainable workforce and economic development issues. The aim of this first conference, called a Lyceum, is to facilitate the participating stakeholders in creating a common vision for Vermilion County for the future and aligning existing resources in order to move Vermilion County toward a sustainable, successful economic future for its people. The **County Lyceum** will be held on **Friday, June 27** from **1pm - 9pm** and **Saturday, June 28** from **9:00 AM - 12 noon** at **DACC, 2000 E. Main Street**. **Media are invited to participate in the Lyceum, in total or in part, in order to garner first-hand experience of the six-step, engaged stakeholder approach Vermilion County leaders will embark on.**

This first County Lyceum will be facilitated over two days. On Friday, June 27 Elane Scott and Rick Stephens will introduce individuals, cross-sector teams (representing all broad economic sectors of the county), and county-based teams, to the leadership skills, strategies, and processes required to

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prepare people for sustainable, meaningful lifelong workforce opportunities, and how to build the county infrastructure to support this growth in a relentlessly changing world.

This workshop will differ from typical participative meetings in several basic ways: A) Members of every economic sector from the whole county will participate; B) There will be more diversity and less hierarchy than is usual in a working meeting; and C) There will be opportunities for each person to be heard and to learn more about an integrated process for moving forward that differs from starting another new program, as a way to tackle complex issues that have made county economic growth and development difficult. The mixed group of stakeholder leaders will use a large scale system's process to uncover common language, shared values, vision, and eventually, roles and responsibilities among themselves. Each sector team will then move to determine what action steps it will need to take as a group that are relevant to the shared future vision and associated measures of success of the county as a whole.

On Saturday, June 28, just added to the Lyceum schedule, noted television producer, writer (*Designing Women, Girlfriends*), and author ([Gardner's Guide to Writing and Producing Television, Making Great Television: Four Essential Ingredients](#)) **Dee LaDuke** will lead participants in a creative follow up to the events of day one. Utilizing the agreed upon values and integrated vision of the Stakeholders from Day One as a guide, on Day Two, entitled "**Telling Your Story**," Dee will employ the principles of writing for episodic television to walk stakeholders through the process of literally plotting their future personal, community, and county story lines. In a unique twist to the endless debate on the questions "Does TV reflect life?" Or "does life reflect TV", participants will use story planning strategies, popular with TV show writers, to encourage Stakeholders to share big ideas, give thought-provoking perspectives and, maybe, even seemingly impossible actions that could be associated with their own imaginary roles in the area's future society. Who's the protagonist? Antagonist? Audience? Who are the future newcomers to the area? Who will the future stakeholders be? What interests will they represent? How will these networks of people evolve in two years? Five years? The opportunity for participants to map their futures in this way offers an incomparable opportunity to apply uninhibited, broad future planning on their actions today.

As a precursor to the Lyceum, ten stakeholder-identified youths from Danville High School, Schlarman, Oakwood and Bismarck already came together for Vermilion County's first ever **Youth Stakeholder**

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Workshop. On Friday, June 20, students gathered at the Vermilion Advantage offices for the five hour special event lead by Kim Kuchenbrod, Workforce Development Specialist for Vermilion Advantage, in order to deepen their understanding of their roles as Stakeholders in the future of Vermilion County. Kuchenbrod introduced the Vermilion Valley Pride project, a continuing community effort spearheaded by Vermilion Advantage this year to build an economically sustainable rural community armed with the knowledge, skill base, and quality of life demanded by businesses and individuals in the rapidly changing global economy. Youth Stakeholders viewed the PBS Frontline program “The Merchants of Cool” (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/>) and cooperated in group activities inspired by Erin Gruwell, the celebrated teacher whose real-life success in breaking down social stereotypes and promoting diversity was featured in the 2007 film “Freedom Writers.” Students collaborated on ideas for future youth forums, student exchanges (county students with city students), and community service projects, all as part of this conference. Both Birth2Work and Vermilion Advantage leaders agree that as stakeholders with the longest potential futures in Vermilion County, the perspective of the youth in the planning of Vermilion County’s future is integral. All students are invited to participate in both days of the upcoming Lyceum.

Workforce development is a national concern and one that has been at the forefront of leader’s minds in Vermilion County for over ten years. However, despite a multitude of initiatives and countless programs put in place in an attempt to stem the tide of foreseeable workforce uncertainty, the consensus among leaders is that not enough progress has been made to meet the needs and expectations of the county as a whole. In a complex, global society driven by change, no one group or institution can be solely held accountable to build an entire county’s future. Every citizen has a share of the responsibility.

The Illinois Business Roundtable, in recognition and support of the strong Business Clusters and Education partnerships already in place in Vermilion County, is sponsoring this Lyceum, nurturing the opportunity for Vermilion County to serve as an example for others facing similar issues nationwide.

Invitees include Vermilion Advantage board members—stakeholder leaders from the six primary sectors of the community: business, education, government, health care, media, and community/non-profit based organizations. Invitees have also received a copy of Birth2Work’s book, [The System: Igniting the Soul of Commerce](#), by Rick Stephens and Elane V. Scott, a business novel about a community faced with a crisis of continued economic decline, and what the community leaders had to

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learn about the typically overlooked influences that deeply influence human development and readiness before they could come together and change the course of the future of their community. The Birth2Work six – step process is the basis for this kind of large-scale, integrated social change.

Vermilion Advantage is a private, non-profit, membership-based organization focused on leading economic development and workforce development initiatives that create economic stability through diversification, increased quality of life and sustainability. In a continuing effort to build an economically sustainable rural community armed with the knowledge, skill base and quality of life demanded by businesses and individuals in the rapidly changing global economy, in 2008 Vermilion Advantage spearheaded “Vermilion Valley Pride.” VVP is a community-wide, stakeholder-driven process aimed at creating a shared community value and focus on creating and sustaining a world-class primary, secondary and lifelong-learning environment within all of Vermilion County.

Birth2Work is a non-profit organization focused on igniting community leadership around the development of capable people for the future workforce. Birth2Work provides innovative tools that empower community stakeholder leaders to reach beyond economic development typically reliant on the hope of single programs, to a more streamlined, system’s driven approach where scarce resources once divided among similar programs are leveraged together for greater impact in building a community’s future. Through publications such as Birth2Work’s [The System: Igniting the Soul of Commerce](#), the Birth2Work white paper, Ensuring the Workforce Skills of the Future, an internationally syndicated internet radio show, Birth2Work Radio (simulcast weekly at 2pm Tuesdays on the VoiceAmerica.com/Business and Women’s Channels), national speaking events, and a wide-reaching website (www.birth2work.org) which includes educational media, information sharing, and links to relevant sites and conferences, Birth2Work is a leader in future development and in-service training for communities that want to increase the quality and supply of their workforce for the future. Too many of our nation's young people are being poorly prepared for success in tomorrow's workforce. Thousands of programs, policies, and initiatives have failed to generate a scalable and sustainable way forward. Birth2Work facilitates community stakeholder leaders to integrate their actions to develop capable people who are creative, complex, critical thinkers committed to responsible citizenship.

Elane V. Scott is Executive Director and Chief Connectivity Officer of Birth2Work. She draws from more than 25 years as an education and workforce consultant for Fortune 500 companies, small

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businesses, social services, educational institutions, parent organizations & civic groups. Her lifework has been dedicated to cultivating business, education, and community models in which innovative and technically engaged people are born and can thrive. Companies and communities hire Elane and Birth2Work for leadership in the design of custom programs; integrating business, family, community, educational and technological resources with sophisticated human decision-making processes to enable them to make better decisions about how to allocate resources and prepare for future workforce requirements. A key element of Elane's success is her ability to recognize the processes that drive individuals with diverse backgrounds to align their thinking toward the achievement of common goals.

Rick Stephens is Chairman of the Illinois Business Round Table (IBRT). The IBRT is a voluntary association of 63 chief executive officers of Illinois leading businesses formed in 1989 to study, make recommendations and take action on critical public policy issues facing Illinois. The Roundtable is nonprofit and nonpartisan. Their work is solely supported by dues and contributions from their corporate members. The Roundtable applies the knowledge, creativity and leadership resources of its members to the complex problems affecting both the current and future economic, educational and social vitality of Illinois. On a national level Rick serves on the Secretary of Education's Commission on the Future of Higher Education in America, the President's Advisory Council for Tribal Colleges and Universities, the National Science Research Council, the National Math and Science Teacher Initiative for NASLGUC, and is a popular national speaker for organizations working to align and integrate community stakeholder leaders. He is co-author with Elane Scott of *The System: Igniting the Soul of Commerce*.

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