



## **MEDIA BRIEFING RELEASE**

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**Contact:**

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**REORGANIZATION AIMS TO INTENSIFY FOCUS**

Effective January 1, 2008 the staff roster and responsibilities have changed with the advent of the new year. "Vermilion County has come to rely upon Vermilion Advantage to be the 'go to' resource for many areas of change and growth. The only way we can be effective is to have strong 'bench strength', said President & CEO Vicki Haugen." The new line-up entails the follows:

Haugen to remain **President & CEO** with a much greater focus on new/program development, marketing and planning.

New to the team, **Todd Lee – Director of Business Development and Government Relations.**

Todd's main areas of focus will be new business development, local industrial development and expanded efforts with regional governmental units including Inter-governmental Planning Council, Mayor's Council, Labor-Management Council and the regional East Central Illinois Economic Development District.

**Tracy Wahlfeldt, Director of Business and Community Services.** Tracy is charged with building the Think Vermilion County First retail initiative, Young Professionals and Leadership Tomorrow in addition to having responsibilities for working with local business. She will also maintain primary responsibility for maintaining the on-line county sites and facilities inventory and transition to strengthen Personnel and Safety Councils

**Glenda Kietzmann, Director of Marketing and Membership Services.** Since Members are the organizations life-blood, Glenda's new role will have a total focus on member development and member relations.

**Machelle Dykes, Operations Manager.** In addition to her role as the primary liaison to the Board and Executive Committee, Machelle will oversee all the mechanics of the organizations programmatic needs and serve as the day-to-day contact for a new marketing initiative to be announced. She also has sole responsibility for our website maintenance.

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Judy Cox, **Office Manager**. While Members are our financial life-blood, data is our greatest resource. Judy assumes oversight responsibility for all data collection and marketing material materials. She also serves as the administrative support to all staff directors.

Kim Kuchenbrod's role as **Workforce Development Specialist** will expand into a new marketing/workforce development initiative. Jo Doggett, **Finance Manager**, will assume more grant management responsibilities.

"The re-organization has also taken into account the need for cross-training in several areas," said Haugen. "Cross training is critical to any organization for efficiency and sustainability, but it is particularly important and difficult for small organizations. We now have a very specific plan for achieving this. We are all about garnering economic improvement for our community at large. We continue to look for change that will enhance our odds at achieving this for the members who support us. It is the best ROI we can provide."

#### **WORKFORCE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: THE NEXT CHAPTERS**

January 1 also marked the beginning of a new county-wide campaign tagged "VERMILION VALLEY PRIDE." As we looked at our focus on (1) new and expanded career opportunities and (2) being a destination for living as much as a destination for employment, the priorities of community pride and lifelong learning continued to surface. Vermilion County has gone through dramatic economic changes over the last 15+ years. Our economic base in the county and state has changed due to global influences and that change only continues to escalate with no end in sight. Continuing education is a prerequisite not a luxury. Together, the results of these two establish a public quality of life statement by which young professionals and business site-seekers alike judge us and determine if we are the type of progressive environment in which they want to invest.

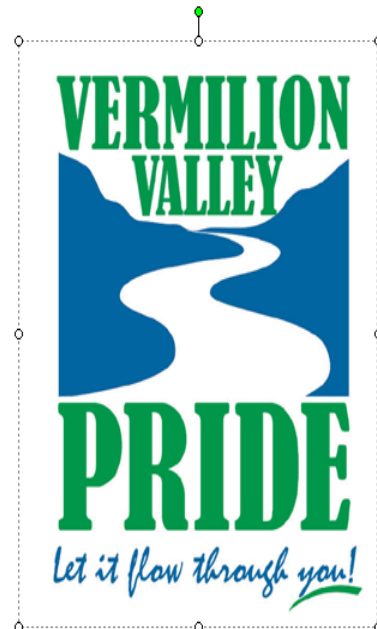
The PRIDE campaign is not just another marketing gimmick. It is a roll-up the sleeves, grassroots effort to create systematic change within the fabric of Vermilion County to drive us into the future. The five pillars of the campaign are:

- Pride in Self
- Pride in Family
- Pride in Neighborhood
- Pride in Community
- Pride in Work

Six Stakeholder groups for the initial formation include:

- Business
- Education
- Government
- Media
- Healthcare
- Community-based organizations

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### **CHAMBER DOLLAR \$ SUPPORT EXCEEDS ALL EXPECTATIONS**

The purchase of area Chamber Dollars during 2007 more than doubled over the preceding year. As of the end of December, we sold **\$258,991!** This compares to the 2006 year-end total of \$127,827. While holiday purchases were brisk, the real growth of the program has been the support of local business and industry purchasing Chamber Dollars year round as attendance, safety and other employment rewards. "We're disappointed that we don't have more county businesses choosing to participate in this program. The only requirement is that participants must be Vermilion Advantage members. A base membership is \$250 a year. That's an investment of a mere \$.68 a day. Employees that work at these industries live throughout Vermilion County and would willing spend these dollars in their home communities, if the opportunities were there. "It's a gift of choice and that choice expends dollars made in Vermilion County back into Vermilion County. It's a win for everyone," said Haugen.

### **PROJECT ACTIVITY**

Despite national speculation of an impending recession, local expansion activity is brisk right now. Vermilion Advantage is working with 12 local industries right now actively looking to make investment and expand employment. New activity is moderate right now with most projects focusing on retail, energy or office development.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**January 16, 2008 from 11:00 to 2:00** we will co-sponsor an **International Banking Seminar** with Old National Bank at the ONB Community Room. The agenda will focus on:

International Banking Payment Options

International Banking Systems (with a focus on Canada)

Roles of Government Offices – Homeland Security and US Dept. of Commerce

Q&A session with a panel of companies doing international business

Registration is required and can be done by calling our office at 442-6201 or going on line and registering on our website at <http://www.vermilionadvantage.com/news/releases.html>

**January 23, 2008** – APPI will be here to do three workshops regarding electric deregulation options. 7:30 AM, noon and 3:00 PM. These workshops will be held at the Vermilion Advantage offices, first floor conference room. Registration is required and can be accomplished in the same format as discussed above.

Planning is also underway for our annual February **Elected Officials Workshop**. This day focuses on how Vermilion Advantage works with business and education for recruitment and workforce development and features businesses with case studies on how projects occurred and what impacted them. More information will be released soon regarding the date, time and location.

It is also time to distribute our Annual Job Projections Survey and Annual Wage and Benefit Survey to our core employers.

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**CSI SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE THROUGH VERMILION ADVANTAGE'S WORKFORCE CLUSTER SYSTEM**

CSI Scholarship applications are now being accepted by Vermilion Advantage's Workforce Cluster System. Students considering a career in accounting, computer networking engineering, engineering, manufacturing technology, pharmacy, or physical therapy can pick up an application at the Vermilion Advantage's office located at 28 W. North Street, Danville, IL or download an application from [www.442jobs.com](http://www.442jobs.com). **Deadline for submission is April 1, 2008.**

Candidates must be graduating Vermilion County high school seniors or DACC students preparing for a career in one of the career fields identified above. Candidates must intend to pursue a bachelor's degree on a full-time basis. Paid internships are guaranteed for the student each of the summers starting after the completion of the freshmen year. Paid internships during holiday breaks will be made available when possible. Post-graduation employment in Vermilion County with Cluster members will be required. Scholarship recipients will be eligible for two consecutive years of support, based on a minimum annual scholastic Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) of 2.8 on a 4.0 scale. **Only applications that are fully completed will be considered.** A completed application includes all required information on the application form, copies of current grade transcripts, three letters of reference, and a typed personal essay.

For more information contact Vicki Haugen or Kim Kuchenbrod, Vermilion Advantage, 28 W. North Street, Danville, IL 61812, 442.6201

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