



Published: May 18, 2009 10:52 pm

Greater Kokomo to set future vision

Leaders, residents to develop committees today for becoming a 'winning community'

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The Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance, Community Foundation of Howard County and several other groups have a vision.

At 8 a.m. today, Jim Dittoe is explaining how to take that vision and build the Kokomo area into a "winning community."

Dittoe is speaking at Indiana University Kokomo's Kresge Auditorium.

Dittoe owns Winning Communities Inc. It is an Indiana-based community-planning and consulting firm, started in 1994.

His firm's purpose is to help communities and organizations "envision the future and develop goals and action plans for achievement."

"Planning means nothing if you aren't getting anything done," said Dittoe, who has more than 30 years of experience in community and economic development throughout Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.

"What we need now is an action plan to get things done with measurable results. Community planning is only effective if things get done."

When Dittoe says, "get it done," he means now. Well, at least in 90 days.

Dittoe is the author of "90 Days to a Winning Community – A guide to developing your vision and action plan."

The book details how to facilitate community and economic development issues by bringing interested citizens and stakeholders together and developing positive and productive communication channels.

"It's been my experience that first, you establish a team attitude for what you want to accomplish," said Dittoe, who in his March 2009 proposal to the Community Foundation and GKEDA indicated his fee for his services are \$5,000 a month for April, May and June, plus expenses.

Dittoe's costs will be covered by the Community Foundation and GKEDA.

In his proposal, Dittoe highlighted there will be two teams involved in the community-planning process for Greater Kokomo.

The Leadership Team will direct and coordinate the activities, and the Community Team will be composed of community members to provide opinions and set goals for the community.

Furthermore, Winning Communities has a 13-phase process. It begins with the formation of the Community Team by the Leadership Team, and ends with the establishment of a Winning Communities Committee to communicate and coordinate the new Greater Kokomo Vision and Action Plan.

"Winning Communities can help Kokomo succeed," said Dittoe. "What I've learned about Kokomo is that it has been a community on the ropes for many years. But they have dedicated leadership from the public and private sector that take this seriously and have been a pleasure to work with. This is a long-term plan, and everyone is involved. Everything is interconnected. Economic development is community development and community development is economic development."

To become a winning community, Jeb Conrad, president and CEO of the Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance, said committees will set "specific objectives that can be achieved. It's great to have ideas on what you hope to accomplish, but you have to have the drive to accomplish that to have an impact on a winning community."

"Mr. Dittoe will run the day-to-day activities, and we will focus on the strategic process of getting things accomplished. We are looking for new people, new blood, who want to sign up and deliver so at the end of the day, we can get things done and move forward."

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