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RESPONDING to our communities' needs

Greater Livingston County Economic Development Council Partners with Heartland Community College

Adam Dontz, chief executive officer for the Greater Livingston County Economic Development Council (GLCEDC), works to enrich Livingston County's current and future businesses. For Livingston County manufacturers and its workforce, that's something to celebrate.

"Local employers are the quickest path to job creation," Dontz said. "To that end, we're charged with seeking, understanding and acting on the unique business needs of this community as quickly, efficiently and effectively as possible. It's been a lot of work, but it's worth it to see these kinds of results," he said.

The outcomes include a collaborative partnership between Livingston County employers, Heartland Community College and the Illinois Workforce Investment Board. With these important players at the table, the business community identified a workforce-specific curriculum that HCC developed and offered as a condensed, six-week training program, Fundamentals of Modern Manufacturing.

Graduates of the 2013 class were able to meet the immediate needs of the partner employers, which included nearly 3,000 manufacturing jobs in Livingston County. Each graduate was employed by a local manufacturer within six weeks of completing the program. A second class graduated from the Fundamentals of Modern Manufacturing training program in April 2014, furthering the economic vitality and partnerships established through the initiative.

"Our business partners and the Customized Training team from Heartland Community College are extremely pleased with the outcome," Dontz said. "But no one is more pleased than the



program graduates and their employers. All twelve individuals now have great starts to rewarding careers in manufacturing and local companies have skilled employees trained to meet their unique job requirements. The program is really an example of collaboration done right."

"In addition to attracting new businesses to the area, the GLCEDC is making it easier for current manufacturers to continue operating in Livingston County," Dontz asserted. "There is a vast manufacturing network in this area and a major goal of the GLCEDC is to encourage its continued growth and stability."



HCC Partnership Helping Central Illinois Cultivate Local Food Options

Since 2011, Heartland Community College has been working with the community-based Edible Economy Project to create a more sustainable local food system in Central Illinois. In 2012, the College received a USDA Rural Development-Rural Business Enterprise grant to support the initiative. The grant funds technical assistance to develop on-farm food hubs so small farmers in Central Illinois can expand their markets for specialty crops and products.

In response to the growing demand for locally sourced food, these hubs will allow small farmers to aggregate, market and distribute their products to large buyers like schools, universities, hospitals and private businesses. These hubs will also promote the growth and vitality of small farms and rural enterprise.

The grant is being administered through Heartland Community College's Green Institute, whose Green Economy Initiative is focused on community-based food systems as a driver of economic development.