

Young professionals help lead the way to THE FUTURE

By GENE STOWE
Tribune
Correspondent



michiana
FORTY
under
40

This special project is designed to recognize forty individuals under age 40 who have carved a niche for themselves through their professional contributions in the workplace, dedication to community service and volunteerism.

With a newly identified crop of 40 young professionals illuminating the present, the future looks bright for Michiana.

The third Forty Under 40 collection showcases young people who are models of success in both their business and personal

lives, with good reputations and significant civic engagement.

Officials from St. Joseph and Elkhart chambers of commerce, presenting sponsor WorkOne and the Young Professionals Network, choose the honorees from nominations by individuals and companies, whether Chamber members or not.

“The benefit to the community is to bring recognition to these people who have made significant impact in their communities both professionally and personally,” says Tania Bengtsson, chair of the YPN Advisory Council.

“There’s a civic engagement responsibility that goes along with the criteria. You



want to showcase the people that are tomorrow’s leaders. You want to show them as the leaders they are and people who can inspire others to do great things.

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Economic Analysis/Michael Hicks
“One ironclad rule of any public policy is unintended consequences.”

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Future

"It shows a progressive, forward-thinking mentality that is here."

Paul Laskowski, executive vice president of the Chamber of Commerce of St. Joseph County, says the recognition helps foster involvement from young professionals in the community, a key Chamber goal.

"If you want people to stay here and move here, one of the ways to do that is to recognize them for what they already have done," he says.

"We think that's going to go a long way to the original goal of recruiting and retaining young professionals here. It's directly related to what we're trying to achieve."

That's why the Chamber started the YPN a few years ago.

"When the Chamber

created its strategic plan in September of 2004, it had four core components to it," Laskowski says.

"One of the components was the need to be a catalyst to help businesses recognize and advance women, minorities and young professionals.

"We saw a need to attract and retain people in that demographic. That has really helped the overall mission of the Chamber."

Bengtsson, director of marketing for Gibson Insurance, recalls the early days of forming the YPN.

"Four or so years ago, the Chamber asked a bunch of the board members to bring together the young professionals in their firms for a focus group," she says. "There was a series of focus groups that brought young professionals together to talk about what's missing, what do you need?"

The answer was that the professionals felt they



Bengtsson

needed an opportunity for networking where they could "develop, connect, empower," now bywords on the group's Web site, www.ypnconnect.com.

"Out of that was born YPN with a mission to develop and connect young professionals in the community," she says. "Today's young professionals are tomorrow's leaders of our work force."

Tomorrow, like today, will be dramatically dif-



Laskowski

ferent from yesterday. Business networking has always involved both company connections and social interactions, but in the past the network was often less formal, less broadly inclusive and more focused on maintaining the status quo.

"Your work force is so much more diverse than ever before," Bengtsson says. "This is in response to all of that."

The advisory council in-

cludes 10 to 12 young professionals who lead work teams. Membership is limited to people from ages 21 to 39.

"Since our inception, we've worked hard to establish a solid foundation for the organization," Bengtsson says. "With our past chairperson, Catherine Raven — a 2009 Forty Under 40 recipient — we did just that."

"Now we are turning our focus more to engagement and getting more YPs a seat at the table. We're doing this by proactively engaging the NFPs and local governments with the goal of effecting positive change in our community."

This year, the YPN took a more significant role in the Forty Under 40 project as founders of the promotion at Bethel College handed off the responsibility.

"It was begun by Bethel College," Bengtsson says.

"They saw a benefit to recognizing Forty Under 40 in our region because it gave them some name recognition and some identification with that age group. They've got some very forward-thinking people."

Bethel leaders brought newspapers and chambers of commerce from St. Joseph and Elkhart counties to organize the promotion.

The group has become a model for other communities.

"Our momentum and great success with YPN in our area has gotten attention from other YP organizations around the country," Bengtsson says. "We are routinely contacted to share the secret of our success."

"And when we are asked, it's easy to point out the level of dedication of our advisory council and work teams and the strong support of the Chamber."

Law blocks pensions to active government workers

MUNSTER, Ind. (AP) — A new state law will close a loophole that government employees and teachers used to temporarily retire and then return to their jobs — and salaries — after they started collecting pensions.

The law going into effect this summer will halt public pensions to working public employees who've taken advantage of the loophole.

"The new law simply reflects what already exists at the federal level," said Jeffrey Hutson, a spokesman for the state's Public Employee Retirement Fund. "You cannot do this and have either a handshake or a written agreement with your employer."

The law does not affect public servants who legitimately retire and later are called back to work, Hutson said.

Neither Hutson nor Molly Deuberry, a spokeswoman for the Indiana Teachers Retirement Fund, could place a number on the number of public school employees or state, county and municipal government who have returned to work after quickie retirements.

"We know people retire, then go back to be re-employed," Deuberry said. "We don't know how many, because the schools don't have to report it to us."

The Times of Munster reported in March that school officials in four Lake County school systems said more than a dozen teachers and administrators either had taken 30-day retirements or had shown interest in doing so.

Hutson said the matter gained attention last year after the state shortened to

30 days from 90 days the amount of time public employees could be separated from their jobs before collecting pensions.

Hutson said federal law

requires PERF members to have "a bona fide separation of service" before collecting their pensions.

"If there is abuse of the bona fide separation rule, a

tax-qualified plan like ours runs the risk that it will be disqualified by the IRS. It would also put the employ-

ees in a difficult position," he said.

Information from: **The Times**, www.thetimesonline.com

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Jory Fitzgerald Kelly AGE 37

Education/Training: B.A. Loyola University in communication and psychology; Illinois State Certification in Education

Company: Director of marketing and development, Family & Children's Center

Community involvement: Member of South Bend Rotary, mentor for local college students, political campaign volunteer, served on a variety of committees and boards of local education, civic and art organizations

Goals: My primary goal is to increase the availability and quality of resources available to children, especially those from disadvantaged cir-



cumstances, with the goal of building a healthier, more prosperous community.

About me: Children are always the only future the human race has. "Teach them well." This simple

truth has guided my career from my first days as a high school language arts teacher working with children from economically disadvantaged circumstances to my current position securing resources for programs at Family & Children's Center.

I love the outdoors and enjoy windsurfing on Lake Michigan. I am the mother of three strong and beautiful daughters, Breanna, Maeve and Jayne. My husband, daughters, and parents provide me with daily support and inspiration to do what I can to help raise awareness and resources for children and families who might otherwise not have a voice in our community.

Janet G. Horvath AGE 31

Education/Training: Bachelor of Business Administration, Saint Mary's College (graduated summa cum laude); JD, Indiana University Maurer School of Law

Company where employed: Partner, Jones Obenchain, LLPJ

Community involvement: Member of the Junior League of South Bend; board member of the Diaper Bank of Michiana; board member of Fischoff National Chamber Music Association; board member of the Scholarship Foundation of St. Joseph County; member and current president of the Saint Mary's College South Bend Alumnae Club. National, state and local bar associations.

Goals: Ever since I was 4 or 5 years old, I've



wanted to be a lawyer. Once I began my career, I worked toward becoming a partner at my firm. I am at the point in my life where my goals for the immediate future are more personal as my husband and I look to start a family.

About me: I am often asked by friends how I find the time for everything. I believe the answer is that I am living by the examples of my parents and extended family. Growing up on my family's dairy farm, a strong work ethic was instilled in me from an early age – I never saw my parents or grandparents not busy doing something. Although I never met my paternal great-grandparents, they've had the biggest influence on my life. Both sets of my dad's grandparents immigrated to the United States in the early 1900s. Because of their determination to make a better life, I have had the opportunity to pursue my dream of becoming an attorney.

Charles Houin AGE 32

Education/Training: Bremen High School, graduated in 1996; Ancilla College, 1995 - 1997; Purdue University, graduated in 2000

Company: Partnership with Marvin Houin Farms. Job title is vice president of soybean production.

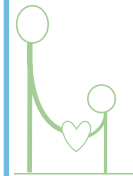
Community involvement: Bremen Conservation Club, five years; Toastmasters International, one year; Farm Bureau Inc., eight years

Goals: My work and per-



sonal goal is to produce a profitable crop year in and year out regardless of the environmental conditions.

About me: Coming from a multi-generation farm, the people that have influenced my life the most are my family. They have given me the background and the experience that I need to be successful in the farming business. With their experience, I have been able to navigate around some significant obstacles.



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Russ Matthys AGE 36

Education/Training: Graduated from St. Joseph High School in 1990; Bachelor of Science in Business from Indiana University; CPA; CCIFP – Certified Construction Industry Financial Professional

Company: Tax partner, Crowe Horwath LLP

Community involvement: Member of St. Anthony de Padua Parish; assistant wrestling coach for the IC-CL Wrestling Program; member, Crowe Horwath Community Involvement Task Force Committee; board member of Junior Achievement of Michiana and CampFire USA River Bend Council Inc.

Goals: My professional goals are centered around the firm's Core Purpose of Building Value with Values®. My personal contribution includes continuing to develop a deep understand-



ing of the issues that my clients face so that I may better serve them; contributing to Crowe's growth so that our employees will have an opportunity to increase their impact within the organization; continuing to recruit and develop top-notch talent. Utilize my professional and personal

skill to support initiatives that make our community strong and vibrant for future generations

About me: I was born and raised in South Bend and have had the good fortune of having several people who have influenced my life. My parents have been, and continue to be, tremendous role models. My wife, Peggy, and three children are the love of my life. Most of my time outside of work is spent with them or attending one of the kids' activities. A favorite prayer which I adopted several years ago as a philosophy to live by: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference." I try to approach each obstacle with that in mind.

Stephanie Leniski AGE 35

Education/Training: Bachelor of Arts in Economics, 1997, Saint Mary's College, with a double major in business administration with concentrations in accounting and international business. Master's in Business Administration from Bethel College in 2006. Graduated from the Elkhart Chamber Leadership Academy in 2004.

Company: Vice president and office manager of the Beardsley Branch, Lake City Bank

Community involvement: Member of the board of directors of the Elkhart Chamber of Commerce; chair of the Elkhart Chamber Business Recognition Council; member of the Elkhart Chamber Leadership Council; member/treasurer of the board



of directors of CARES (Communities Actively Relating to Elkhart Schools). CARES is a partner with Elkhart Community Schools and is an official volunteer arm of the schools. CARES mentor and member of the

Book Team.

Goals: Become more actively involved in the mentoring program at the high school level. My ultimate goal in life is to inspire my sons, Brendan, 7, and Brock, 3.

About me: Through the majority of our marriage, soccer has been a huge part of our lives. I have spent many hours watching my husband's teams play and now I have the enjoyment of watching my own kids play. One of my biggest influences in life has been my younger brother. His life story is one that everyone should be inspired by. He is legally blind but has not let that get in the way of accomplishing his goals. He is currently a law student at Notre Dame.

Catherine Raven AGE 38

Education/Training: Indiana University, Bachelor of Science in Business with majors in accounting and management; Notre Dame Certificate in Executive Management

Company: Manager of general accounting at Crowe Horwath LLP

Community involvement: Passionate about contributing to and participating in Young Professionals Network (YPN) and BASS Club focused on networking for those ages 21 to 39 and encouraging them to make a difference in our community. Served as 2007 & 2008 chair of YPN Advisory Council, 2008 Chamber of Commerce board member,



2008 Michiana Forty-Under-40 Executive Committee, 2009 YWCA Tribute to Women Honoree Nominating Committee, and co-chair of 2009 College Foot-

ball Hall of Fame Enshrinement Festival Block Party

Goals: Lots of personal travel ... It will take lots of career goal-setting and accomplishment to make paying for all that travel possible.

About me: My motivation to work hard and accomplish career goals is to achieve the means to play hard and explore personal dreams. The most important man in my life, my dad, instilled the value of education, hard work, and responsibility in my sister and me. The best times of life are spent with family and friends ... the most important people in your life.

Congratulates RUSS MATTHYS and CATHY RAVEN for their accomplishments and their participation in the 2009 Class of Forty Under 40

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Lake City Bank congratulates Stephanie Leniski...

...as a recipient for the Michiana Forty Under 40. Stephanie knows the meaning of hard work and perseverance. We applaud her accomplishments and service to the Elkhart community.

*Stephanie Leniski | VP and Office Manager
Elkhart Beardsley | 574-262-8627*

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