

# Daily Chronicle

## Heidemann provides sales tips as DCEDC recognizes achievements

Created: Tuesday, October 29, 2013 5:30 a.m. CDT

DeKalb County Economic Development Corp. held its 26th annual dinner Oct. 22 in the Duke Ellington Ballroom at Northern Illinois University.

The event was attended by more than 250 business and community members with the support of 12 exhibitors and 21 event sponsors.

Keynote speaker Lyle Heidemann provided advice to attendees on increasing sales derived from his seven decades in wholesale and retail businesses. Heidemann stressed thinking beyond increasing sales to core customers by identifying new customer segments that can generate significant growth. He recommended “creating a strategy to generate totally new, or change very minor customers into growth engines while continuing to service and grow your current core customers.”

Generating significant volume from new or underserved markets requires leadership commitment to aggressive goals and vision for achieving these goals. Heidemann provided examples from his own experience. At his family’s farm, they went beyond the sales of eggs to grocery stores, to provide home delivery directly to consumers.

While leading Sears Home Appliances, he increased market share from 30 percent to 40 percent by increasing sales of national brands within the Sears stores and developing a high-end Kenmore house brand to compete with national brands.

As president of True Value, Heidemann transformed the organization from a wholesale to a retail culture by making stores more female-friendly, developing initiatives to attract younger consumers and adding product categories with increased purchase frequency. To encourage cooperative store owners to implement new store formats, the company provided incentives for owners, including construction and inventory financing, design teams and market location assistance.

During the annual State of the County Address, several business development projects and partnerships that strengthen the local economy were described. Triumph Truss & Steel of Huntley formed a joint venture with Rehkemper & Son Building Components of St. Rose to establish a new truss plant in Kirkland. They purchased a vacant building in the Bull Run Industrial Park on Route 72 for this purpose.

DeKalb Forge and Nehring Electric Works of DeKalb and The Suter Co. of Sycamore are undertaking expansions. DEVNET is expanding to a newly purchased building in the Sycamore Prairie Business Park and ENCAP is expanding to a remodeled building on Wagner Court in

DeKalb. DCEDC and Kishwaukee College have assisted CST Storage in DeKalb with employee training to support their growth.

With industries expanding or locating in DeKalb County and prospects clamoring for workers, DCEDC partnered with the Greater Rochelle Economic Development Corp., Kishwaukee College, area manufacturers and school districts to form the DeKalb Ogle County Workforce Development Consortium. The collaborative group has begun a program to demonstrate to students how careers in industry can be financially rewarding and fulfilling, teach them the required skills and provide them with work place experience.

Several companies indicated just how productive partnerships with Northern Illinois University and Kishwaukee College have been to their businesses. These partnerships included recruiting talented interns and full-time employees, and collaborating with the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology on product development

- Paul Borek is executive director of the DeKalb County Economic Development Corp.