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NEWS RELEASE

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HENRY COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP (HCEDP) HOSTS ANNUAL MVP MEETING FOR LOCAL MAYORS, VILLAGE PRESIDENTS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STAFF

CAMBRIDGE, Ill. (May 15, 2010) - Members of the Henry County Economic Development Partnership (HCEDP) met with local mayors, village presidents and economic development directors from Henry County on Wednesday, May 12, at the Community Center in Geneseo. Over 30 people from around the county attended the MVP annual meeting. Sponsors for the evening included Wyffels Hybrids, Turpin's of Geneseo, Springfield Armory USA and Hammond-Henry Hospital.

"I am pleased with the representation from our towns and villages in the county," stated Tim Wells, HCEDP chairman. The annual MVP meeting allows for an opportunity to network among this group and to discuss common issues these offices must deal with on a daily basis. The HCEDP slogan "Together We Are Henry County" repeated itself throughout the evening as speakers presented and shared valuable information about different sectors of the county.

Last month, members met at Werner Restoration in Colona, to review the new HCEDP website and to learn how to maneuver within the site. Each community has the capability of maintaining a link on the new website. This will allow members to list vacant commercial properties for sale or lease in the new database and is "free" to partnership members.

Mary Grant from Grant Consulting in Cambridge, spoke about the many benefits of the Location One Information System (LOIS) web-based tool that markets available sites and buildings within the county. According to Grant, landing a site selection prospect is about not being eliminated. The site selection process typically starts with over 300 communities, is narrowed to approximately 20 and then is ultimately reduced to three finalists. “The LOIS database provides communities with a prominent presence on the Web and is used by site selectors or developers, realtors, CEO’s and other investors. It can generate PDF forms, fact sheets and community profiles,” added Grant. She is serving as a volunteer to assist communities with training on using the LOIS database system.

So far, two communities have taken advantage of the Location One system. Andover recently listed a small acreage parcel and it sold several weeks later. Other communities are being advised of its power to draw investors and attract potential business owners within the county.

The group also received an update from Chuck Stewart, director of Partners in Job Training and Placement about the Workforce Development Summer Youth Program. He spoke at length about the current unemployment rate and the many services that are available to those currently seeking employment. “We can be a resource to people losing their jobs and we can let them know it’s not that hopeless and we can help them in many ways,” said Stewart.

Members of group also had an opportunity to hear details of the recent Legislative trip to Springfield and the outcome of that visit. Each year members travel to Springfield to rally for Henry County and to meet with selected officials to voice their concerns on behalf of the county. It offers an opportunity to address issues of certain communities so that they may continue to move forward with economic progress.

Next on the agenda was Rick Dobbels from the Henry County Fair board. He brought the group up to date with improvements and circulated the new 2010 fair schedule. He noted

that the original carnival is back this year and it should be a great time for all participating in events. Several members made recommendations on future fundraising for the fair since no state funding is being received at this time. The Village of Cambridge has been assisting with the replacement of old water lines that the 150 year old fair location, but many more updates are needed to maintain the original property.

Tom Newman gave an overview of the VISTA Volunteer vacancy and members are still hopeful that a candidate will be hired soon to fill the position. The group has been trying to hire a new grad or retired individual from within the county. Appropriate candidates will require some training before starting the position. The candidate hired would need to commit to the position for one full year and would receive an annual stipend and reimbursement for travel expenses.

Joe Swan, coordinator for the Henry County Emergency Services & Disaster Agency, spoke about the need for board members and other county officials to receive NIMS training in accordance with state and federal requirements. Certain courses are required by different offices held within the county. This is required under the Federal Management Emergency Agency (FEMA), which is an agency of the United States Department of Homeland Security. Anyone seeking clarification on the FEMA requirements or to learn more about training are asked to contact Swan at their convenience.

The remainder of the evening allowed for an open forum discussion for mayors and village presidents. They were able to utilize the time to talk openly about issues that impact their daily routine and functions.

For more information on attending a HCEDP meeting or to learn about other opportunities, please contact Tim Wells at 309.937.3400.