

JUNE 2026



# LEGACY LEDGER

## WORKFORCE BEYOND THE JOB BOARD

*Building communities where talent chooses to stay and grow*

## RV MANUFACTURING IN TRANSITION

*What industry trends mean for regional business and economic stability*

## POLITICS, POLICY, & REPRESENTATION

*How Indiana's primary could shape future decision-making and regional influence*

## REIMAGINING INVESTMENT

*From surgery center to innovation hub, LaGrange County is transforming a vacant building into a space designed to power childcare, entrepreneurship, workforce growth, and the future of our community. Read more on page 6.*



**Fostering Community Connection. Driving Business Success.**

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*The LaGrange County Chamber exists to champion local businesses, strengthen leadership, and build generational prosperity across our communities. Whether you're a business owner, community leader, entrepreneur, or resident, there's a place for you here.*

*Legacy Ledger is a member publication and is distributed free of charge to businesses and residents in LaGrange County and surrounding areas. A PDF version of this publication is available at [www.lagrangechamber.org](http://www.lagrangechamber.org).*

# CELEBRATING MORGAN'S NEXT CHAPTER!

As the school year comes to a close, we want to take a moment to celebrate someone who has become such an important part of the Chamber team, our high school intern, Morgan!

Over the past year, Morgan has brought enthusiasm, creativity, professionalism, and a willingness to help wherever needed. From assisting at events to supporting day-to-day Chamber operations, she has made a meaningful impact behind the scenes and has been a joy to work with.

As Morgan graduates from high school and prepares for her next adventure, we are incredibly proud of all she has accomplished and excited to see what the future holds for her. While we'll miss seeing her around the office, we know this is only the beginning of many great things ahead.

Please join us in congratulating Morgan on her graduation and wishing her the very best in this exciting new chapter!



## WHY GET INVOLVED?

Strong communities don't happen by accident. They are built by people willing to invest, collaborate, and lead.

The Chamber brings together businesses, nonprofits, educators, and residents to shape the future of LaGrange County.

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# WORKFORCE IS MORE THAN HIRING

Workforce development is no longer just about filling jobs - it is about building communities where talent wants to stay, grow, and invest in the future.

For years, workforce conversations have centered around one primary challenge: finding employees. While hiring remains a major concern for businesses across LaGrange County and beyond, the workforce conversation is becoming much broader — and much more connected to the overall strength of a community.

Today's workforce challenges are not simply about labor shortages. They are about talent attraction, retention, housing availability, childcare access, leadership pipelines, and quality of life. Increasingly, communities that succeed economically are the ones that understand workforce development as an ecosystem rather than a single initiative.

According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, workforce participation nationally remains below pre-pandemic levels, while many industries continue facing long-term labor shortages due to retirements, declining birth rates, and shifting workforce expectations. At the same time, younger generations are placing greater emphasis on workplace culture, community connection, and opportunities for growth when choosing where to live and work.

For employers, this means compensation alone is no longer the sole differentiator. Businesses are asking bigger questions: How do we retain young professionals? How do we develop future leaders? How do we remain competitive in attracting talent?

The answers often extend beyond the walls of an individual business.

A strong workforce ecosystem depends on



collaboration between employers, schools, local government, nonprofits, and community leaders. Career exposure programs, internships, mentorship opportunities, leadership development, housing initiatives, and placemaking efforts all contribute to building a sustainable workforce pipeline.

In LaGrange County, many of these efforts are already taking shape. Local employers are investing in employee development, schools are expanding career-connected learning opportunities, and organizations are creating spaces for young professionals and emerging leaders to engage locally.

Workforce development is no longer simply an HR issue, it is a long-term economic competitiveness issue. The communities that will thrive in the future are the ones that intentionally invest not only in jobs, but in people.

# RV MANUFACTURING: A STEADY MARKET WITH STRONG REGIONAL IMPACT

The recreational vehicle (RV) industry remains one of the most significant manufacturing engines in the Midwest, with Indiana producing roughly 88% of all RVs in the United States and Canada. This concentration makes the broader RV sector not just a national market, but a regional economic driver that directly influences thousands of manufacturing and supplier jobs across Indiana and surrounding communities.

After the extreme volatility of the pandemic boom and correction, the industry is now stabilizing. According to the RV Industry Association, wholesale RV shipments finished 2025 at approximately 342,220 units, a 2.5% increase over the prior year, signaling modest but steady recovery in demand after several years of fluctuation.

That stability matters for manufacturers. Towable RVs, the backbone of the industry, continue to lead production, with steady consumer interest driven by affordability compared to other travel and housing options. At the same time, motorhome shipments are showing selective growth, reflecting stronger demand in higher-end segments even as consumers remain price conscious.

For manufacturers and suppliers, the real story is less about rapid expansion and more about normalization.



Dealer inventories are stabilizing, production has adjusted from pandemic-era highs, and companies are increasingly focused on efficiency, workforce retention, and product innovation rather than volume growth.

At the same time, the RV industry is experiencing a generational shift. Younger buyers are entering the market in greater numbers, drawn to flexible travel, remote work lifestyles, and experiences over traditional ownership models. This is slowly reshaping product design, marketing, and long-term manufacturing strategy.

For communities tied to RV production, the takeaway is clear: this is a mature but evolving industry, not in decline, but in transition. The communities and manufacturers that adapt to workforce needs, supply chain efficiency, and changing consumer expectations will be the ones positioned for long-term growth.



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# REIMAGINING INVESTMENT

FROM SURGERY CENTER TO INNOVATION CENTER, LAGRANGE COUNTY IS BUILDING MORE THAN A RENOVATED SPACE — IT'S BUILDING A FUTURE

The sound of hammers echoed through the former surgery center as sunlight pushed through unfinished framing and fresh-cut lumber filled the air. Dust floated through the building that, not long ago, represented a different chapter of healthcare in LaGrange County. Today, it represents something else entirely: possibility.

Inside the future LaGrange County Innovation Center, exposed drywall and construction crews still fill the halls. But beneath the noise is a vision local leaders believe could reshape the future of LaGrange County for generations to come.

When completed, the Innovation Center will house expanded childcare services through The GO Foundation, coworking and startup space, workforce training, educational programming, and collaborative community space — all under one roof.

## A Building Reimagined

Rather than allowing the former surgery center to sit vacant, community leaders saw an opportunity to transform it into something new. "There is something powerful about taking a building that once served community health needs and transforming it into a center that supports the long-term health of the community in a different way," said Sherri Johnston.



For Johnston, the project became real on May 29, 2025 — the day funding paperwork was finalized and the purchase officially moved forward. Just before was one of the project's defining moments: the county's Major Moves funding presentation. "There was a lot riding on that presentation," Johnston recalled. "Without that funding, the project likely would not have happened." The request: \$2.2 million. The outcome: approval.

"There was this roller coaster feeling," said Jeannie Owsley, GO Foundation CEO. "We knew what this project could mean for the community, but until the decision was made, you just didn't know."

The Innovation Center has since secured additional support through READI 2.0, NIPSCO, local foundations, and regional partnerships — a collaborative funding strategy leaders say reflects the community-wide belief in the project.

## More Than Childcare

At the center of the Innovation Center's mission is one of LaGrange County's most pressing workforce challenges: childcare. The county has long faced shortages in accessible, high-quality childcare — an issue that directly impacts workforce participation and economic growth.



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"The Innovation Center became more than a solution to a childcare shortage," Owsley said. "It grew into a model for community innovation that recognizes early childhood education as essential infrastructure." The new GO Explore Childcare & Preschool facility is expected to expand capacity to approximately 80 children, while future plans include micro-facilities that could bring childcare access to additional communities across the county.

But leaders say the project's impact stretches far beyond childcare itself. "This project supports workforce participation, economic development, and quality of life all at once," Owsley said.

**Building Rural Innovation**

The Innovation Center is also designed to support entrepreneurs, remote workers, startups, students, nonprofits, and community organizations through coworking space, business incubation, educational programming, and workforce partnerships. For Johnston, the project challenges assumptions about what rural communities can accomplish. "This isn't just an EDC building," she said. "It's a shared community resource."

That spirit of collaboration may be the project's defining characteristic. From grant applications to state presentations, community partners consistently sat side-by-side, presenting a united vision for LaGrange County's future. Economic development. Education. Childcare. Workforce development. Entrepreneurship. Not competing priorities. Connected ones.

**What Comes Next**

Construction is expected to be completed and move-in-ready by October 23, 2026. The GO Foundation will strategically allow for thorough furniture installation, operational setup, and staff onboarding ahead of a targeted January 2027 opening.

By then, the sounds inside the building will be very different. Instead of hammers and saws, there will be children learning, entrepreneurs building businesses, workforce training sessions, and community conversations shaping the future of LaGrange County.

And perhaps that is the real transformation taking place inside these walls. Not just the renovation of a building. But the reinvention of what community investment can look like in rural America.

“  
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REINVENTION  
OF WHAT  
COMMUNITY  
INVESTMENT  
CAN LOOK LIKE  
IN RURAL  
AMERICA.**  
”



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# Beyond The Front Door

## What's your business really known for?

Our largest project is the People's Exchange, an advertising paper catering to the Amish population in Northern Indiana and Southern Michigan for the last 35 years. 18,500 copies get picked up by interested readers every two weeks!

## What's something behind the scenes that people would never expect?

We have a full-time proofreader who reviews all ads at no additional cost, including those submitted by others. We also offer free ad design for our publications and can serve as an agency to place ads in other outlets. All completed design work becomes the customer's property upon payment—unlike many competitors, we do not retain ownership of client artwork.

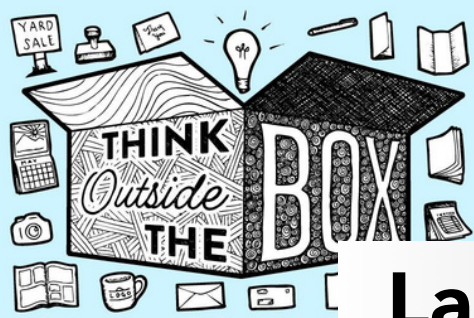
## What's a tradition or quirk unique to your business?

Monthly company luncheon where we shut everything down for an hour, and an annual camp out.

## What's the inside scoop locals may not know?

Many know us for one segment of what we do, but we actually offer a full range of creative and marketing services including publications, full-service printing and mailing, design work, promotional products, photography (including 360° and in-house set staging), web design, placemat sales, and brochure distribution. Our team of four full-time designers supports all of this work, along with a growing suite of tools like an upcoming self-service Kodak photo kiosk.

# Biz Spotlight



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# INDIANA'S PRIMARY AND THE REDISTRICTING RIPPLE EFFECT

Indiana's recent state Senate primaries delivered a clear signal about the current direction of Republican politics and the growing influence of national issues on state-level elections. In one of the most closely watched primary cycles in the country, five of seven GOP incumbents who opposed a Trump-backed mid-decade congressional redistricting effort were defeated by challengers aligned with that agenda, reshaping the composition of the Indiana Senate heading into the general election cycle.

While primary elections typically focus on local representation, this cycle was driven heavily by a national policy fight over congressional maps. The push for redistricting, aimed at strengthening partisan advantage in the U.S. House, became a defining issue in several Indiana races, with significant outside spending and national political attention influencing outcomes.

The results underscore a broader reality: state legislative elections are increasingly shaped by national strategy, not just local priorities. As Indiana and other states consider how congressional districts are drawn following the census, these decisions carry long-term implications for federal representation, infrastructure funding, and policy priorities affecting local economies.



For businesses and community leaders, the takeaway is not partisan, it is practical. Redistricting shapes regional representation and how strongly rural communities are heard in decision-making. That, in turn, influences regulatory environments, funding streams, and long-term economic competitiveness.

As the general election approaches, the intersection of state politics and national strategy will only intensify. Staying engaged in these conversations is not optional for communities focused on growth, it is essential to ensuring local interests remain represented in an increasingly nationalized political landscape.

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## Mark Your Calendars

### JUNE

- 09 Young Professionals Lunch & Connect
- 18 Member Luncheon

### JULY

- 09 Member Luncheon
- 22 Woman2Woman Roundtable
- 28 Table for 10

### AUGUST

- 06 Chamber Golf Classic
- 13 Member Luncheon
- 28 Coffee with the County



**SCAN HERE**  
for full calendar of events  
and registration links

## CONNECTHER SPARKS CONNECTION

The Chamber's recent ConnectHER Conference brought together women from across LaGrange County for a day of connection, encouragement, and growth. Professionals from a variety of industries gathered to build relationships, share experiences, and gain practical insight both personally and professionally.

More than just a networking event, the ConnectHER created space for authentic conversation and meaningful community. Attendees left inspired by the stories, perspectives, and support shared throughout the event.

ConnectHER continues to reflect the Chamber's commitment to empowering professionals, strengthening leadership, and creating opportunities for collaboration across our county. Thank you to everyone who attended, supported, and helped make this event such a success.

## DIAMOND



## PLATINUM



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# DID YOU KNOW



Member Benefit of the Month

## CHAMBERCARE

The Chamber is excited to introduce ChamberCare, a new member benefit designed to help businesses access affordable, high-quality healthcare options for their teams. ChamberCare provides employers with a competitive health plan solution focused on value, flexibility, and personalized support, especially for small businesses navigating rising healthcare costs.

ChamberCare offerings include:

- Major medical coverage for businesses with 2–50 employees
- CVS Caremark pharmacy benefits
- Delta Dental dental and vision coverage
- Access to an Indiana-based SIHO employer services team for local support

This new benefit reflects the Chamber’s continued commitment to providing members with practical resources that strengthen their businesses and support their employees. To learn more about ChamberCare and how it may benefit your business, scan the QR code below or contact the Chamber office at 260-463-2443.

### CHAMBERCARE



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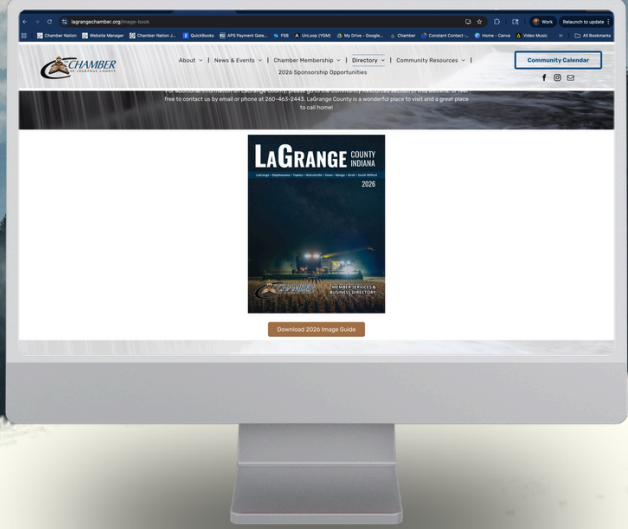
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