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Local prospects for top jobs

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Local officials say there are opportunities available for Huntington County residents looking to get into what the state deems the top 50 jobs now and in the near future.

The Indiana Department of Workforce Development has released an updated report this week listing what it considers the top 50 jobs in 2022 based on demand projections and salary averages. A release from the DWD stated that several weighted measures were used in determining what makes a "hot" job including current work-

force turnover, long-term growth of the job to 2022 and salary.

According to the release the current version of its "Hot 50" jobs report features the most new jobs added to the list since the department has been compiling its information in 2006.

The release also mentioned all of the jobs on the list require at least a high school or equivalent diploma and nearly 90 percent of the jobs require either a postsecondary degree or a certification.

The majority of the jobs in the "Hot 50" are in science, technology, engi-

neering and mathematics (STEM) fields and nearly half are in the manufacturing or health care fields.

The report has a selection of what it calls "hot right now" jobs, which have current and future demand. Jobs with current need include nurses, mechanical and industrial engineers, sales representatives and law enforcement officers.

Huntington County Economic Development Executive Director Mark Wickersham said that after looking at the list he thought there were opportunities in the county to pursue many of the jobs in

the "Hot 50" list.

Wickersham mentioned that Huntington University's nursing program provides continued education for those looking to enter health care positions including the current "top job" of registered nurse.

"At the local level we are positioned very nicely to assist young people and adult learners who are interested in pursuing...the nursing field," he said.

Wickersham also said that when the Huntington County Community Learning Center is complete its focus on manufacturing jobs, some of which are found in the Hot 50,

will also allow the center to help county residents get into those careers

"I believe Huntington County is positioning itself to have relative opportunities in each of the fields at the local level," Wickersham said. "The support systems are in place for people who really are interested in those educational systems."

One of the things that Wickersham made a point to show was missing from the list was unskilled labor.

"The top 50 list is reinforcing the fact that people

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who want to get ahead need to have marketable skill sets," Wickersham said.

The learning center has received a big push from both the Huntington County Chamber of Commerce and the Huntington County Community School Corporation for bridging the skills gap. Chamber executive director Steve Kimmel said that currently the \$1.3

million project is roughly about \$200,000 from the goal, adding that those involved with the center hope the building will be open by the fall.

Kimmel said that regardless of what the "Hot 50" jobs are, in working to create the center he has focused on looking at the needs within the county and not merely state statistics. He said the center will start off with several different classes including general manufacturing and a program

beneficial for those going for a career as a licensed practical nurse, which ranks sixth on the list.

Kimmel explained that the center's focus would be a better fit for Huntington County.

"Instead of us sitting back and saying, 'these are the classes we're going to offer,' we're talking to the industries saying 'you tell us what classes you need and we will change our curriculum to match what you need,'" Kimmel said.