



FLORENCE COUNTY
Economic Development Commission

Helping Business Grow

Wendy Gehlhoff – Director

P.O. Box 88, Florence, WI 54121

2015 Economic Development Successes

by Wendy Gehlhoff, Florence County Economic Development Director

Economic Development covers a broad range of projects every year aimed at helping retain, expand and attract businesses that provide the products, services, jobs and local taxes that we need to sustain and grow our community. FCED also tackles numerous community development and tourism activities to improve our quality of life and attract visitors to spend their money in Florence County. Go to www.ExploreFlorenceCounty.com for resources. Here are a few highlights from 2015 projects:

Business Growth: 4 TIF District projects finished this year creating 21 new jobs and over \$1 million of new tax assessment. Two of the projects will hit full assessment next year estimated at \$1.9 million new value. Our largest sawmill, Florence Hardwoods, added a second shift which provided another 15 new jobs to our economy. *The new Family Dollar store opened in late August:*



Entrepreneur Growth and Workforce Development: FCED wrote a DWD grant in partnership with our school to purchase equipment for a new Fab Lab at Florence High School. We are the 2nd high school in the state of Wisconsin to install a cutting edge Fabrication Laboratory that teaches the Engineering Design Process problem solving method and “How to Make Anything” curriculum. The Lab includes 2 Afinia H800 3D printers, a Roland Mini mill, Vinyl Cutter, Epilog Laser Engraver, Plasma Cam and CNC Router. Design software includes SolidWorks, Adobe Illustrator, and Aspire. Items can be made from wood, metal, vinyl, acrylic and polymers. The school staff and administration spent countless hours getting this new program ready for the 2015/16 school year. Without dedicated staff willing to go the extra mile, this new community asset would not be here today.

The Fab Lab program teaches students some of the skills needed to feed the growing demand for good paying, mid-level technology jobs that many of our regional employers are struggling to fill. Please thank our industry partner companies: Florence Hardwoods, Pride Sports, G&G Lumber, Xcell Graphix, Systems Control, Verso Corp. and Boss Plow.

The lab will be open to the public every Wednesday from 4pm to 7pm starting on December 2nd but closed through the holidays. There is a fee of \$25 for Florence County residents. To learn more visit www.sites.myflorence.org/fablab where you can fill out a registration form,

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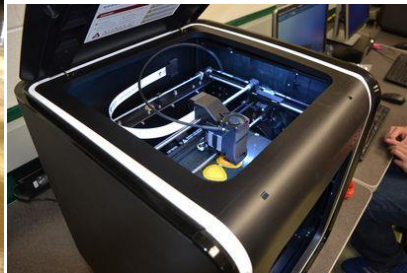
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understand the rules of use and begin viewing the tutorials, along with reading about the engineering and design process that guides product development. This is an opportunity for our local entrepreneurs to develop unique new products that, if they can be sold at a profit level, can provide income to the inventor and grow businesses in our County. Economic Development (715-528-3294) has business planning resources and loan programs to help entrepreneurs start a new business. Pictures from 11/2/15 Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting:



*Representative Rob Swarigen and FHS Student Jaden Streu holding an item made on the Plasma Cutter
A variety of products fabricated in the lab were on display at the Grand Opening
The 3-D Printer at work printing a guitar pick*

Visitor Attraction: A new off leash 1 acre Dog Park and RV Dump Station were completed at the visitor center to get more US 2 travelers to stop in our town. Please thank our project partners Florence Utilities, FHS TORPEDOs students, Florence Highway Dept., Forestry & Parks and Statewide Fencing for finding used fencing to keep the project cost within our budget.



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