Let’s Build What’s Next, Hendricks County!

WestNext is Hendricks County’s collaborative approach to connecting students, schools, employers, and community partners to create stronger career-connected learning opportunities for students and a stronger talent pipeline for our community.

Work-Based Learning (WBL) is an important part of that work, giving students opportunities to explore careers, build real-world skills, and learn directly from local professionals through experiences like career exploration, job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships, and other hands-on opportunities.
Whether you can host an intern, welcome students for a tour, share your career in a classroom, provide a job shadow, or simply start a conversation, there is a place for you in WestNext.

See the spotlight below to learn how Hendricks County partners are helping students discover what’s possible.

Ready to take the next step?
Visit https://hendrickscollegenetwork.org/westnext/
or scan the QR code to learn more!

WORK BASED LEARNING SPOTLIGHT

Luke Thompson, Avon High School Graduate



For Luke Thompson, a recent graduate of Avon High School, Work-Based Learning has been more than just an internship, it’s been a launchpad into the professional world.
Luke spends the first part of each school day interning with the Avon Chamber of Commerce, where no two days look the same. From managing social media posts and writing captions, to attending community events like Coffee & Conversation and After Hours networking sessions, Luke plays an active role in supporting the Chamber’s work and engaging with local businesses.

“I get to start my day this way,” Luke shared. “Every day is different. I’m always somewhere new, meeting new people.”

Through his role, Luke has gained hands-on experience in communications and event support, but what stands out most to him is the opportunity to build connections. By interacting with business owners, community leaders, and even elected officials, he’s been able to expand his network in ways many students don’t experience until much later.

“The networking part is insane,” he said. “You’re meeting CEOs, business owners, people in leadership. It’s a great place to be.”

Those connections have already begun shaping Luke’s future plans. While he has long been interested in real estate, his experience at the Chamber has sparked a growing interest in political science. He will begin his college career at Ivy Tech in the Fall, with long-term goals that include working in law enforcement and eventually pursuing a career in public service.



A key part of Luke’s experience has been learning from mentors he’s met along the way. Through conversations and guidance from professionals in the community, he’s gained insight, encouragement, and a clearer sense of direction.

“They’ve given me wisdom and told me to follow my heart,” Luke said. “That’s really stuck with me.”

Luke admits that his path into Work-Based Learning wasn’t exactly what he expected. Initially, he had considered a different internship opportunity, but when that fell through, he was encouraged to explore the Chamber. Looking back, he sees that moment as a turning point.



“Honestly, I wouldn’t have wanted it any different,” he said. “Even though I’m not getting paid, the experience is worth more than a million dollars.”

Through his internship, Luke has helped contribute to new initiatives like the Chamber’s Business Brief Series, where he assists with content creation by incorporating photos and supporting video production. These types of projects have allowed him to build practical skills while contributing to meaningful work.

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Beyond the day-to-day tasks, what Luke values most is the long-term impact. “These connections are for a lifetime,” he explained. “I can come back after college, and these relationships will still be here.” Luke strongly encourages other students to consider Work-Based Learning opportunities early in their high school careers.

“I’ve only done this for one semester, and I wish I would have started sooner,” he said. “There are so many opportunities right here in Avon.”

With a growing network, real-world experience, and a clearer vision for his future, Luke is a great example of how Work-Based Learning can open doors, and help students step confidently into what comes next.



Ready to Get Involved?

Explore WestNext. Find your place. Take the next step.

Scan the QR code or visit:

https://hendrickscollegenetwork.org/westnext/

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