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Continuum of Learning Announces Milestones Reached and Goals Set for Coming Year

Community Roundtable draws more than 80 community members to discuss countywide education and workforce development initiatives

SPRINGFIELD – More than 80 community members convened at the James T. Dove Conference Center Tuesday night to hear progress reports and upcoming plans by the [Continuum of Learning's](#) (CoL) action team leaders and partners.

“It was a powerful moment to see the co-chairs and action team members come together as one group to share details on progress that has been made and the alignment that is occurring among the teams,” said CoL Steering Committee Chair Harry Berman, Ph.D.

Since its inception last year, work on behalf of the CoL has helped spur multiple outcomes to benefit the community:

- *Action Team One (birth-pre-K):* Co-chair Hugh Drake, attorney at Brown, Hay & Stephens provided an overview of the team’s progress to date, which includes:
 - A \$10,000 grant to the Sangamon County Regional Office of Education by the Sangamon County Community Foundation to support development and maintenance of a comprehensive database that identifies pre-Kindergarten children living in Sangamon County;
 - Identification of a shared screening tool for kindergarten readiness to be made available to countywide pre-Kindergarten providers and educators;

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- *Action Teams Two (birth-pre-K) and Three (grades 6-12):* Co-chairs Jennifer Schwartz, assistant principal at Chatham Elementary, and Springfield Public Schools Superintendent Walter Milton Jr., Ph.D., provided updates on their teams' recent progress:
 - Development of a countywide parent/teacher conference schedule for area employers to use to encourage employees to attend these important meetings;
 - Development of an RFP by the United Way of Central Illinois to identify reading and math performance trends among first, third and fifth graders across Sangamon County and the areas most in need of support services;
- *Action Team Four (post-secondary):* Co-chair Dan Cadigan outlined Stage 4's recent work, which includes:
 - Development of "Project Graduate" – a regional initiative aimed at targeting adults with some post-secondary education but no degree and re-enrolling them in school to earn their degree;
- *Action Team Five (employee development):* Co-Chair and Lincoln Land Community College President Charlotte Warren spoke about several projects that included:
 - The recent issue of a Business Needs Survey to 1,500 area businesses to identify local workforce needs and how those needs should be addressed;
 - Implementation of the Partners Investing in Nursing's Future grant that was awarded to the community this summer by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Northwest Health Foundation to help rapidly increase the nursing workforce.

“While much work has yet to be done, the vision of the CoL’s co-chairs and members has never been more focused and strategic than it is now,” said Stacy Reed, CoL program director. “It is vital in this coming year that we remain steadfast in our goals and continue to engage diverse audiences who are concerned with education and workforce development issues.”

The Continuum of Learning is a community initiative launched in 2008 to ensure that all in Sangamon County are “ready to learn, ready to work and ready to succeed.” It is led by founding partners the [Sangamon County Community Foundation](#), [United Way of Central Illinois](#) and [The Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce](#). For more information, visit www.continuumoflearning.com.

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