

OUR OPINION: Good news in a bad economy

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Freeport, Ill. -

The ribbon-cutting at Highland Community College Wednesday represented a bright spot on an otherwise gloomy economic landscape.

Educators and business leaders gathered to celebrate the official opening of the Wind Technician Training Center at the college, the first of its kind in Illinois.

The center represents a true partnership between education and industry, providing both parties with substantial benefits.

Two companies have played a notable role in the development of the training center. EcoEnergy LLC, and Greenlee have contributed vocal and financial support to assist HCC in the opening of the center. EcoEnergy, the Elgin-based project development company with an office in Freeport, is leading the construction of EcoGrove, the 67-turbine wind farm northwest of Lena. Greenlee, based in Rockford, is an international provider of professional tools and relatively new to the wind power industry. The company committed \$35,000 in tools, measurement equipment, and other necessities to get the center started.

In return, each of these companies will benefit. Greenlee will find out if the hands-on application of its tools are suitable for use by wind turbine technicians, and through that knowledge will be a leader in developing new tools and applications for the industry. EcoEnergy will benefit from the training of HCC students as wind technicians, providing a steady stream of qualified people to service its fields of turbines.

HCC has demonstrated leadership and defined a relationship that provides evidence that investment in education provides a return for the community.

The college, and its officers, its board, and its supporters, deserve congratulations for this accomplishment.