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Perry VanKirk Career Academy

The Perry VanKirk Career Academy opened its doors in August 2011 for high school and college students. The VanKirk Career Academy is located on 2nd Street in Perry, just south of the public library.

A \$1.55 million I-JOBS grant was critical in making the building happen as well as matching private sector contributions and \$500,000 from DMACC.

According to a DMACC press release, "I-JOBS was designed to quickly rebuild our state and create jobs for Iowans, and the DMACC Center of Perry is helping us do just that," said Governor Chet Culver. "These funds will not only provide an immediate economic boost to Perry, but will lay the foundation for long-lasting educational and workforce training opportunities throughout the community."

The Executive Dean of Program Development, Randy Mead, assisted in the design process of the building with a group of Perry leaders. Consideration was given to the existing programming that had been running in Perry and also allowed for new programming capacity to expand opportunities for students in high school and adult students who could attend the center.

Budget constraints were also utilized to prioritize square footage appropriated for various programs and classrooms. "It has been a pleasure to be involved in the initial program development primarily with Perry School District and then work to design a building that would expand offerings," said Mead. These expanded opportunities include numerous other groups of students coming from many nearby communities around Perry. Supervision of the programming and the building continue to be housed in the Program Development Department at DMACC and similar centers operate at Ames and also at Southridge.

"The DMACC Center of Perry will offer a variety of exceptional educational opportunities," said Rob Denson, President of DMACC. "We congratulate Perry's economic development, government and business leaders for their hard work and initiative on this important project."

"It's gratifying to see such wonderful and long lasting results from several entities cooperating and working toward the same, common goal," said Viivi Shirley, Mayor of Perry.

The initial Director at the Perry VanKirk Academy was Jenny Foster, Ph.D. She managed the daily operations from fall 2011 through fall 2013. Hollie Coon, Ph.D. took over as the Director in the spring of 2014. The initial Director at the Perry VanKirk Academy was Jenny Foster, Ph.D. She managed the daily operations from fall 2011 through fall 2013. Hollie Coon, Ph.D. took over as the Director in the spring of 2014.

The programs offered at the Perry VanKirk Career Academy have evolved throughout the four years it has existed. Initial programs included building trades, welding, PLTW, business, and health occupations. Traditional credit courses were also offered for college students in both Liberal Arts (AA) and welding.

Currently, the center offers career academies in the areas of welding, business administration, Project Lead the Way (PLTW), teaching education, automotive technology, criminal justice, and other academic courses. In the day and evening hours, college students attend at the center and take Liberal Arts-AA courses. Welding is offered in the evening and on Saturdays.

Another huge focus of the Center is to be able to provide non-credit courses for adults in the Perry community as well as in Dallas County. During the day, English as a Second Language

(ESL) courses are offered as well as during the evenings two nights a week. The Perry center offers the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) to students in the evenings, three nights a week, in both English and Spanish.

For the large population of Latinos in the Perry area, English as a Second Language classes are offered during the day and evening. For many ESL learners, the DMACC Center will offer an opportunity to pursue a college degree for the first time in their lives.

In the fall semester of 2014, the Center offered its first Career Discovery Day and more than 60 students attended. High school students were able to come to the center to explore different career modules and they also toured Wiese Industries and Dallas County Hospital. The DMACC Perry location was the first DMACC campus or center to provide transportation to get students into local business and industry.

Created August 2015 in celebration of DMACC's 50th Anniversary.