

# A startup vision

## **Penn State President Dr. Eric Barron cuts ribbon on Penn State Shenango's VenturePointe at the eCenter@LindenPointe**

By RENEE CAREY, T.L. MILLER and MIKE ROKNICK Herald Staff Writers



HERMITAGE – Penn State Shenango’s VenturePointe is not just about giving businesses a place to start.

It is about building a community, and a partnership, with the future in mind, Penn State President Dr. Eric Barron said Thursday at the incubator’s ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Ultimately, Barron said, giving startups the resources they need is a way to support local economies and the commonwealth.

“We don’t want to export the talent of our communities,” Barron said. “We want them to realize that even after they graduate, the university and community are saying that this is the perfect place for them to create their business. You don’t need to go somewhere else. We are here for you.”

He and Dr. Jo Anne Carrick, campus director at Penn State Shenango, said this latest addition to the university’s Invent Penn State initiative is a way to spur economic development, job creation and student career success, right here at home.

And Penn State Shenango wants to continue to be a key part of creating relationships between entrepreneurs and the community through its association with the [eCenter@LindenPointe](#), Dr. Carrick said.

“We find the students that attend local campuses are more connected with the local campuses, especially when they finish their four-year degrees, which we do have at the campus,” she said. “So this is a way to say to the community and the business startups that we support you.”

A \$50,000 seed grant provided by Invent Penn State was the foundation for the local incubator, which to-date, has spawned two local startups, Guardians Nest and ATP Resources. But the possibilities are endless, Barron said. The university is prepared to offer a direct match for any local money raised to support VenturePointe.

And for Dr. Ketaki Desai, executive director of [eCenter@LindenPointe](#), this new venture is just one more piece of good news for a program that is connecting business owners and communities — and bringing jobs and potential to an area that is on its way back.

“It truly is the beginning of great things to come, and we could not be more excited to begin with a Penn State partnership,” she said. “It is said that character, like a photograph, develops in darkness. Our region has witnessed its fair share of darkness for several years. And while some had the choice, and some had no choice, to resign to the challenging times, some others like the city of Hermitage with its elected leaders

and officials, looked at the challenge as an opportunity. This team was a vision of Gary Hinkson and Gary Gulla ... (who) took what used to be an abandoned airport and envisioned a business incubator.”

Penn State Shenango’s VenturePointe is one of 17 incubators at Penn State campuses across the state. Originally, the plan was for six to eight, Barron said.

“But the proposals that were put together by the communities and the campuses were so exceptional. ... We have watched the success in terms of the number of startups, the number of students who were having opportunities to create the startups and the degree of the involvement of the faculty, so we decided there was no reason to stop.”

The project, he said, is important to the university, the communities and to Pennsylvania. And Penn State is committed to seeing it through.

“We would like every single campus to connect with their communities in order to provide opportunities to create jobs using the intellectual property of Penn State, and in partnership, create student-career success,” Barron said.

And one of the [eCenter@LindenPointe](#)’s early success stories has a Penn State Shenango connection.

Guardians Nest connects local veterans to services. And for Penn State Shenango human development and studies graduate Brian Flick, filling a need and getting the support necessary to make his dream a reality, is personal. He is a Navy veteran.

“Being offered the opportunity to continue to work with Shenango campus faculty like Claudia Brown and the staff at the [eCenter@LindenPointe](#) has been incredible,” Flick said. “It has been a dream of mine for some time to establish a one-stop-shop for veterans residing in Mercer County, and I’m pretty pleased with how much I’ve been able to accomplish so far with the support I’ve received. I’m looking forward to the day when I can open the doors to my own place and help my fellow veterans.”

Jacob Linzenbold of ATP Resources also took personal experience and turned it into a business.

The Penn State Shenango business graduate, who after experiencing his own injury, found that there was a local need for services for the disabled and others.

Now, he is a medical supply distributor.

“We’re looking at mobility products,” he said.

In addition to the startups, the eCenter@LindenPointe, also offered a entrepreneurship experience for Shenango students this past spring. They learned about taking a business from concept to reality. And as a result, a local student started a business of his own.

Remainder of article can be read here: [http://www.sharonherald.com/news/a-startup-vision/article\\_f7d9a31b-afc0-53c5-a795-7ec096e95617.html](http://www.sharonherald.com/news/a-startup-vision/article_f7d9a31b-afc0-53c5-a795-7ec096e95617.html)