

SHAK Makerspace reopens downtown

*Mayor announces Kokomo as Indiana's first Maker
City*

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Dorian Gray and Marc Brown play a version of Scrabble on SHAK's new deck.

With the goal of fostering innovation and creating economic opportunities by supporting the maker movement, SHAK Makerspace helped put Kokomo on the map last week.

At SHAK's grand opening last week, Kokomo Mayor Greg Goodnight declared the City of Firsts as Indiana's first Maker City.

“The openly collaborative, problem-solving mindset of the maker movement provides creative, nontraditional views and solutions to problems that are challenges to the growth and economic transformation of our community,” said Goodnight.

The term Maker City gained traction in 2016 after a book of the same name was written in collaboration with the Obama White House and its Office of Science and Technology Policy, discussing how the maker movement can help bridge the skills gap.

As makerspaces focus on sharing knowledge and tools and passing on skills, Goodnight said SHAK sets up Kokomo for future success.

“We as a society must do all we can to prepare our community for a highly-competitive future,” he said. “(I) call upon our community to actively engage in our ongoing efforts and initiatives. These can and must create a future where our community can disrupt the status quo to reinvent our future. Only by leveraging our greatest asset—our community—can we reinvigorate our exploration of possibilities.”

SHAK, which stands for “the Spirit of Haynes and Apperson in Kokomo,” opened its doors at its new location at 210 W. Monroe St. in August. It formerly was located on North Washington Street but closed down in order to seek a more central location, according to officials.

The new building underwent significant renovations as it previously had stood empty for three years. At the hands of Boy Scout Thomas Bragg of Troop 527, a new 10- by 40-foot deck was built in front of the building to earn him his Eagle Scout badge. The deck, which will serve as a place to socialize and offer additional space as an outdoor workshop, was brightened up with restored stadium seats that were donated by Busch Stadium.

Since its reopening, the makerspace has added several new initiatives, including monthly public maker and teacher events and a Maker City book club. In addition, an

exhibit has been on display at the IU Kokomo Union Street Gallery of art that was created by SHAK makers.

“Not only is this a time that we’re excited and celebrating our brand-new downtown space that gives us all kinds of new features and extra space for the makerspace, but we’re celebrating our growing community. And a community is really what the heart of a makerspace is,” said Nancy Braun, president of SHAK.

Braun said SHAK actively is growing new partnerships and increasing public awareness. The organization partnered with the Kokomo Parks Department and will be creating and curating art along the small section of trail that runs next to the building and will be working with the local IBEW on a learning project for its apprentices.

The goal now, according to Braun, is to rebuild SHAK’s membership, which took a dip when the first location closed.

“We do have an active challenge, and that is to get out the word that the space is ready and to drive membership back up. Our goal is to exceed our previous high point and to hit 50 members,” she said.

For those interested in learning more, SHAK is open to the public every Wednesday from 6:30 to 8 p.m. and on the first and third Monday of the month. Membership is \$35 a month, or family memberships are offered for \$50, though anyone under age 18 is required to have an adult present.

Susan Alexander, facilitator with the Greater Kokomo Downtown Association and SHAK board member, said she’s excited for the possibilities SHAK offers.

“One thing I am very passionate about is not losing the amount of knowledge that we have in this community and not passing it on to someone else,” she said. “There are people in their garages doing things, and yet no one is learning from that. There’s an

awful lot of people who could learn from that and eventually be interested in those jobs, which we are very much in need of people to do.”