‘Work Amery’ initiative seeks to keep people working local

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Roughly 1,300 Amery residents leave the city for employment elsewhere, while 950 people who live outside of Amery come into the city for work.

This demographic data came from an analysis from an industrial park study commissioned by the Amery Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) and the City of Amery. More data from this study shows that 28 percent of Amery commuters travel ten miles or less to work, 19 percent travel ten to 24 miles, 19 percent commute 25 to 50 miles and 33 percent commute more than 50 miles. Also, roughly 75 percent of the jobs in Amery are occupied by outside residents and there are many jobs still available in the city. Two companies looking

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for more employees are SMC and Cardinal Glass.

President of the AEDC Dan Draxler and Amery Community Club President Larry Coleman teamed up with the Director for the Center of Innovation and Business Development at UW-River Falls, Danielle Campeau. River Falls had put together an initiative for a similar problem and it is a model that Amery can adopt.

"It was interesting how we have cities that are quite different, but yet have the same situation," Director of the AEDC Paul Shafer said. "We think River Falls probably has more of a technical, white collar issue, where we're probably more blue collar. We thought we'd get together and see what we can do about it."

The Work Amery initiative was formed as well as a committee - Campeau, Shafer, Draxler, Coleman, pharmacist at Chet Johnson Drug Nicole Sheldon, Andrea Lewis from SMC, doctor at Amery Hospital and Clinic Gehrig Williamson, investment advisor for Kluge Investments Jordon Wold and Tyler Kilcoyne of Williamson-White Funeral Home.

"We purposefully put young professionals on it because we want to find out what is a good way to reach out to young people today," Shafer said. "What would their peers be looking at, how do you reach people?"

The first step is a questionnaire that will be sent to all of the Amery businesses to gauge both interest in the effort of a project promoting working locally and the need for workers within the city. The feedback from those surveys will point Work Amery in the best direction for the city.

"Do we have three employers that have a problem or do 33 employers have a problem," Shafer said. "That'll give us some kind of direction on what we can do."

The model project out of River Falls is where Amery is most likely headed. Shafer says the key will probably be to develop a website, specifically for working locally. It will not be part of the city website, AEDC or the Amery Community Club. Shafer is also hoping to have a billboard on 46, going south, focusing on the website.

"Work Amery is committed to increasing awareness of the good jobs that exist in Amery," Shafer said. "Talented people live in Amery, but work elsewhere. Work Amery thinks that there are jobs in Amery for them and we want to make people aware of that. By doing that we can strengthen our existing businesses and in turn, strengthen economic development throughout the Amery community."