

THE LONG-RANGE VIEW

INDIANA AND JAPAN'S THREE-DECADE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

By Marie-Christine Pence



When I meet new people and tell them that I work for Duke Energy, they usually think the company just generates and sells electricity. But I'm involved in a part of our business that many people probably don't even know about – economic development.

We collaborate with state, regional and local economic development groups to attract new businesses, as well as to help our current customers expand. We give grants to communities that want to develop prospective business sites and offer special economic development rates to encourage businesses to grow and thrive.

But one area of particular importance is attracting investments from Japanese businesses. In the early 1980s, Indiana was hit hard by an economic recession.



Working with the state government and other Hoosier companies, Duke Energy carefully began to cultivate relationships with several Japan-based companies.

Nearly every year since 1989, we have made at least one trip to Japan to meet with prospective investors and existing customers. We tell them about our Hoosier work ethic, favorable business climate and easy access to most major U.S. markets. In 1990, we organized the first community-based "Indiana Mission to Japan," accompanied by several mayors and economic development directors. These visits convinced the Japanese that we were intent on building relationships that would lead to long-term business success.

The results? There are now more than 200 Japanese companies doing business in Indiana. These companies have collectively invested more than \$7 billion and employ more than 37,000 Hoosiers. Indiana is also the only state in the U.S. with three Japanese auto assembly plants: Toyota Motor Manufacturing Indiana in Princeton; Subaru of Indiana Automotive, Inc. in Lafayette; and Honda Manufacturing of Indiana in Greensburg. Duke Energy is proud to have several of these companies as our customers.

But the Japanese have not only become our business partners, they are our friends. Duke Energy helped sponsor last year's "Bridges to Japan" exhibition at the Indiana State Fair, where hundreds of thousands of fairgoers experienced unique aspects of Japanese food, art and culture. Our hearts went out to the Japanese people when we saw the devastation along the country's northeast coast after the March 11 earthquake and ensuing tsunami. We joined with other Indiana businesses to make a significant contribution to that disaster relief effort.



Building and maintaining these long-term relationships has been enormously gratifying for me. Americans are sometimes accused of being short-sighted. But our Japanese friends have taught us that the long-term perspective yields marvelous benefits for all of us.



Marie-Christine Pence is director of economic development for Duke Energy Indiana and has worked in the company's economic development area for nearly 20 years. She and her husband live in Plainfield, Ind.