Follett’s bookstore and café solution transforms a town and its community

**The Challenge**

Greencastle, Indiana is home to a unique blend of industrial and commercial businesses as well as a top ranking private liberal arts college – DePauw University. As a State of Indiana Stellar Community grant recipient, Greencastle’s vision to revitalize its community and downtown area and create the next great college town was in motion.

With the nearest retail coffee chain located 25 miles from town and the closest general bookstore located 60 miles away, the downtown area was lacking a central draw and business that would bring the community and college together. To develop such an experience, the city approached DePauw about relocating the campus bookstore to the downtown area. The project proposed an interesting opportunity – the chance to expand beyond the traditional college bookstore and truly become a store of the community. The University realized that it needed to outsource its campus store operations to an expert and selected Follett Higher Education Group for their proven track record of successfully developing and managing blended hybrid retail stores that were university and locally focused.

Furthering the connection to the community, Follett paid homage to Greencastle by incorporating framed pictures of the city’s heyday throughout the store.

Named in honor of Colonel Eli Lilly, the local founder of Eli Lilly & Company and an avid book collector, Eli’s Bookstore officially opened its doors September 2012 to rave reviews from students, faculty and the community alike.

The locally focused campus store provides DePauw students course materials, apparel and a technology center as well as an extensive general books department satisfying a void for the community. Also located within the store is a full-service Starbucks café with seating for 75 that allows the students and community to mingle as well as access to the Mezzanine that features additional space to study, converse or host local community events. As an added bonus, a private community meeting room was carved out to host meetings, collaborative work sessions or small events by local businesses, DePauw faculty, students or other community groups.

**The Solution**

The City of Greencastle and DePauw University settled on a multi-story 11,000 square foot former department store in the town’s historic square to not only house the store and other multi-use spaces but to serve as the area’s retail anchor. To preserve and cultivate the integrity of the space, Follett’s design team chose to incorporate vintage details including tin ceilings and fixtures reminiscent of the 1920s.

“Eli’s bookstore is more than just a place where students come to purchase books; it is a neighborhood destination. By providing a venue for extended activity past the school campus, DePauw’s students, faculty, administrators, and the community at large actively interweave directly contributing to the vibrancy of Greencastle.”

KURTIS MOORE
Eli’s Bookstore and Starbucks Store Manager
With its upscale look and college town feel, Eli’s Bookstore located on the Courthouse Square has exceeded the goals of both the University and the Municipality.

Commenting on the success of the partnership between the university, the city and Follett, Dr. Brian Casey, DePauw University President said that “by developing Eli’s Books and the adjacent Starbucks downtown, DePauw has ‘put a stake in the ground’ to assure that visitors not only share in the DePauw experience, but the Greencastle experience as well.”

Serving as a catalyst for the downtown area, Eli’s bookstore is also considered a win for the Greencastle Community. “To have a major retail anchor of this size as a magnet to bring business and more foot traffic to the downtown square is a major first step in making it the center of connection and economic activity and anchoring a college town atmosphere,” reflected Susan Murray, Mayor of Greencastle.

A perfect blend of partnership between city and state as well as public and private organizations, Eli’s Bookstore, its adjoining café and the community spaces not only provide an enhanced retail experience for DePauw’s students, the local community and visitors but brings a renewed sense of excitement and purpose to downtown Greencastle.

“The Results

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