



# ACCELERATE program provides young professionals tools for success

by Brittany Kohler, Content Manager  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** - Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce hosted the official **2016 Young Professionals' Re-branding/Kick-Off** event for **ACCELERATE** at the **Jon Davis Wrestling Center** in Edwardsville, Feb. 2.

ACCELERATE is a new group founded by the chamber that focuses on the future of the region's workforce by targeting the young professionals in the area and building relations among the area's businesses.

The purpose of the program is to provide professionals with guidance in leadership and communication, provide networking opportunities, link the professionals with business mentors and much more, ultimately strengthening the business community as a whole.

"The ACCELERATE kick-off event was well attended and it appeared to be a nice mix of seasoned professionals as well as younger professionals," said **Dani Sheley**, an interior designer with **Louer Facility Planning** in Collinsville. "My understanding of

the future plans for the ACCELERATE program are to engage and create a sense of collaboration between the gap of established leaders and for the leaders to come in our local businesses and organizations.”

Approximately 50 professionals and business leaders from the area attended the event, eager and ready to be involved. The attendees comprised of newly graduated college students and seasoned professionals alike.

“Having our chief executives on board encouraging young employees in the importance of their own professional development is key to the very success of the Metro East workforce and to the future of our region,” stated **Membership Director Kerry Smith** of the **Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce**.

After a short network gathering over coffee, the attendees filed into a conference room where they were introduced to the young professionals program, presented with the new name ACCELERATE and a further explanation of the goals and plans for the group. Shortly after, retired former **President of Hortica Insurance & Employee Benefits, Bob McClellan**, was introduced.

McClellan spoke on his personal experience, shared his knowledge of the business world and expressed his enthusiasm for the ACCELERATE program and what it can do for the community.

“With the turnout today being such a mixture of potential mentors, people that are interested in mentoring, as well as up and comers and so many of our community businesses including SUIE, I think it has a lot of promise,” said McClellan. “When you can mix up and comers with mentors and the process makes mentors even better, we’ve accomplished something tremendous.”

McClellan is a well-known business figure in the professional community with much knowledge and experience to share with both young and old.



“I think the biggest advantage we have is that we have a grey leadership group in this community, meaning they are getting grey hair,” said McClellan. “They are going to be retiring soon and we have to have this new group coming ready.”

McClellan shared the importance of one-on-one mentorship within the community and stated that the program has great promise.

“We can’t wait until they leave and bring someone in and let them go through the learning exercises then, we will have a huge knowledge loss,” said McClellan. “If we can bring these people on and go through the mentoring process, we will lose very little of the knowledge in the process of change.”

The event allowed the opportunity for the young professionals to link with the business leaders, a relationship that may not occur often enough in the work force.

“I really enjoyed the ACCELERATE event,” said **Brooke Brown**, a personal banker with **First Clover Leaf Bank** in Edwardsville. “Networking was fun and Bob's words were very motivating. I always think its great when young professionals are offered opportunities to better themselves.”

The Chamber encourages any young professional looking for business growth and success to get involved and learn more about the ACCELERATE program.

“Any young professional that is wanting to further their career should join the ACCELERATE program,” said Brown. “If you're given an opportunity to diversify yourself and be around other young professionals that want to become successful, I don't see a reason why you wouldn't take that opportunity.”

To join ACCELERATE or the mentorship program, visit [www.edglenchamber.com/accelerate](http://www.edglenchamber.com/accelerate).

Completed forms may be emailed to [membership@edglenchamber.com](mailto:membership@edglenchamber.com), faxed to (618) 656-7600, or mailed to:

**Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce  
1 North Research Drive  
Edwardsville, IL 62025**

# ACCELERATE

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**ACCELERATE Edwardsville/Glen Carbon** is a new Ed/Glen Chamber initiative designed to build and solidify our region's vibrant future workforce.

**ACCELERATE Edwardsville/Glen Carbon** is a **business-centric initiative** designed to provide professionals like you with the tools to **accelerate your leadership acumen, hone your communication skills, expand your professional network, connect you with mentors**, and ultimately **strengthen our business community** as a whole.

## Your Contact Information

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_



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☐ **\$50 Participation Fee Enclosed** *(Make checks payable to Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce)*

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**\* \* \* PAYMENT DUE UPON RECEIPT OF APPLICATION \* \* \***

Return Application & Dues to: Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce  
1 North Research Drive Edwardsville, IL 62025 618.656.7600 (p) | 618.656.7611 (t)