



RiverBend Growth Association's YAC makes huge difference in youth

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Area students had a special morning at Riverbender.com Community Center, celebrating the success of the Young Adults Committee of the RiverBend Growth Association.

Amber Scott, vice president for marketing and communications for 1st Mid America Credit Union, was the key presenter during Monday's celebration with **RiverBend Growth Association President Monica Bristow**. The mission of the YAC Committee is to teach students the importance of giving back to their community.

There were 10 students from five schools selected and five mentors from the RBGA to work with the students. Students partner with a non-profit and arrange for five volunteer experiences, one each month December to April.

Bristow said the YAC has been in existence with the RBGA for 25-plus years. About six years ago, the focus was switched more to the community and non-profits.

"It is an awesome, uplifting and amazing experience for these students," she said. "Every one of the kids talked about the program being an eye-opening experience. I think it leaves a lasting impression on all of them."

This year the students prepared for the Christmas toys and food giveaways with Community Hope Center, played activities and had breakfast with children at Riverbend Head Start & Family Services, brainstormed on ways to bring education about abuse to teens at Madison County Child Advocacy Center, had a small Olympics event at Kreative Kids, and painted with residents at Beverly Farms.

The students organized and implemented a fundraiser. This marked the fourth year for trivia. Proceeds benefit one of the students with a college scholarship and one of the non-profits with a financial contribution.

Each student, if they wanted, had a part in the presentation: announcing 50/50, awarding raffle winners, explaining "head to toe", etc.

Students write an article as an overview of their volunteer projects, which are included in the RBGA's newsletter and on the website.

Bristow said the benefits of the YAC range from:

Exposure to the organizations within our community

Receive letters of recommendations

Financial rewards

Skill development: public speaking, leadership, organization, sales/marketing, time management

Friendships

YAC Committee Members this past year were:

Alexandra Cope, Centerstone

Trish Holmes, RiverBend Growth Association

Lindsey Kahl, Shell Community Federal Credit Union

Jeff Lauritzen, COUNTRY Financial

Amber Scott, 1st MidAmerica Credit Union

Cindy Smalley, Cope Plastics

These are the students involved in the program:

AHS:

Senior Jake Bohn and Junior Annie Maynard

Mentor: Cindy Smalley Cope Plastics

NP: Beverly Farm Foundation

CM:

Senior Jack Walker and Junior Allie Troeckler

Mentor: Amber Scott of 1st MidAmerica Credit Union

NP: Kreative Kids

EAWR:

Senior Cameron Foust and Junior Haley Shewmake

Mentor: Lindsey Kahl of Midwest Members Credit Union

NP: Madison County Child Advocacy Center

MCHS:

Senior Tommy Morrissey and Junior Alex Cousley

Mentor: Jeff Lauritzen with Country Financial

NP: Community Hope Center

ROX:

Senior Kara Meyer and Junior Taylor Antoine

Mentor: Alex Cope of WellSpring Resources

NP: Riverbend Headstart & Family Services

The trivia night fund-raising event raised \$6,000 for YAC. \$3,000 for college and the other went to one YAC student and the other half a non-profit.

The non-profit is selected by the 10 students and Beverly Farm was the one chosen.

Jake Bohn was the student selected for the \$3,000 scholarship based on points for attendance, fund-raising, and other factors.