

RBGA annual meeting awards several honorees

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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GODFREY - The **Riverbend Growth Association (RBGA)** held its Annual Dinner on Thursday, Jan. 26, 2017, at the **Commons of Lewis and Clark Community College (LCCC)** with a sold out crowd in attendance.

The annual **Chairman's Award** was given to everyone in the crowd, who were asked by **2016 RBGA Board Chair Karen Wilson** to stand, raise their right hands and pat their neighbors on the back for being this year's Chairman's Award winners. Those awards are usually given to local businesses and community members who have worked to make the Riverbend a better place in some form or another.

Wilson said, "As a Growth Association member you: support the promotion of the entire region; you have a physical presence in the community; you are flexible and open to new ideas; you understand that not only the big things, but the little things promote growth in the Riverbend; you create and maintain personal contacts with the business community; you utilize shared resources to create new ideas and new ventures; you use the statistics provided by the association to strategically plan; you advocate for the Riverbend region; you understand the importance of 'community;' when there are so many choices for your resources, you invest in an organization, the Growth Association, knowing there are benefits even when they don't always appear before your eyes.

"Some of you don't even take advantage of many or any of the resources offered to you by the organization, but still continue to support it because of the accumulative effect of an Economic Development Organization and a Chamber of Commerce.

"You are the heart of our organization!"

Riverbender.com's own **Patrick Schwarte** was announced as the **Ambassador of the Year** by the RBGA. This is the third time Schwarte has been given that award.



"To be honored as the Growth Association's Ambassador of the Year for the third time is gratifying because the award acknowledges the work I put into promoting, growing and supporting the Riverbend area," Schwarte said in an email. "Much of the time and effort I put forth as a Growth Association Ambassador is during business hours, so there is sacrifice made by my boss, **John Hentrich**; without the backing and support I get from John, I wouldn't be able to participate. I'm grateful for the honor bestowed upon me. I came upon some challenges in 2016, and I know that I wasn't able to give the RBGA or its Ambassador Committee my full attention. I look forward to a fresh 2017, and hope that my contributions as an Ambassador to the Growth Association and the Riverbend area will be to influence others to rally around and support our region as a great place to live, learn, work and visit."

During the regular business meeting opened by Wilson, three new RBGA board members were announced: **Eric McRoy** of **Advantage News**, **Dr. Stephanie Monroe** of **Riverbend Chiropractic** and **Lori Artis** of **LCCC**. Five returning board members were also presented, including: **David Miller** of **St. Louis Regional Airport**, **Dan St. Peters** from **St. Peters Hardware and Rental**, **Denise Wolff** of **Berkshire Hathaway Home Services** and **Jess Woodman** of **Woodman Collision Center**.

Four board members were elected to their second three-year terms, including: **Melissa Erker** from **Philips 66 Wood River Refinery**, **Diane Schuette** of **OSF St. Anthony's Health Center**, **Sam Stemm** of **WBGZ**, **David Stevenson** of **Quality Buick GMC Cadillac** and **Charlie Yancey** of **IBEW Local 649**.

Jake Bodi of **Ameren Illinois**, **David Braasch** of **Alton Memorial Hospital**, **Pam Heepke** of **Raifort Properties**, **Charlie Linnemeyer** of **Alton Steel**, **Ed Ryrie** of **Regions Private Wealth Management** and **Kent Scheffel** of **LCCC** rotated off the board.

The board's 2017 is **Augie Wuellner** of **Alton Securities**, who took the gavel from Wilson and concluded the meeting with a photo montage to the tune of "Taking Care of Business."

Before the meeting concluded, Wilson, with the assistance of Riverbender.com, took a giant selfie, and had everyone participate in a massive "Mannequin Challenge."

SEE BELOW FOR RBGA "MANNEQUIN CHALLENGE":





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