



JLGA Raises \$3,000 for Riverbender.com Community Center to Fund Unlimited Access Memberships for Underprivileged Youth

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Members of the JLGA presented the Riverbender.com Community Center with a check for \$3,000. Pictured from left to right: Dr. Laura Hill, Michelle Pulaski, Amber Raab, Lisa Pace, Jill Tueth, Amber Haring, Tawnya Hooper, Lori Artis, Robyn Maag, JLGA President Karin Johnes, Jen Gottlob, Riverbender's John Hentrich and Michelle Pawloski, Emily Hejna and Leslie Rynders.

ALTON - The Junior League of Greater Alton recently raised \$3,000 for the purpose of providing free, unlimited access premium memberships to the Riverbender.com Community Center for area middle school students, in cooperation with Drug Free Alton.

The group presented the funds to Riverbender.com Community Center staff on Saturday, Nov. 3 during the Middle School Dance.

The money was raised by the JLGA's Provisional Class through solicitations of area individuals and businesses. The goal of the fundraising project was to provide a safe, drug free environment for Alton area youth who could not otherwise afford it.

"Everyone in the community is very aware of the positive impact the Riverbender.com Community Center has on area youth, so when we set out on this project to provide underprivileged youth with access to the Center, we were flooded with donations from businesses and individuals who recognized the same benefits of this project," JLGA Project Co-Chair Lori Artis said. "We set out to raise just enough for memberships for a few, but soon realized the support in the community around this project."

Artis said the support was reciprocated by Riverbender, which in turn offered to provide premier memberships to this group of selected students. The premier memberships provide the students with unlimited access to afterschool activities and the social events at the Center, something which would ordinarily cost more than \$1,000 per member.

"The best part about this project was how Riverbender itself was behind it 100 percent," Artis said.

"I was thrilled when Junior League approached me with this idea and was totally overwhelmed when I heard their final donation amount," John Hentrich of Riverbender.com Community Center said. "We really appreciate the tremendous support not only from Junior League and Drug Free Alton, but from the community as well. It's incredibly rewarding to see everyone rally around our mission of providing a safe place for teens."

The JLGA group worked in conjunction with Drug Free Alton to brainstorm some ideas of how to further spread the drug free message to area youth, and particularly to the students who access the center.

"Our group decided that we wanted to raise money that would be used to benefit adolescents in the community, and above all provide them with a drug-free, safe place to learn and socialize," JLGA Member and Co-Chair of the Project Lisa Pace said. "These two groups were already working together, and it made our fundraising efforts that much easier."

The project was aided by Alton Middle School Principal David Schwartz, who is working with middle school teachers to identify students who cannot afford an annual membership or regular access to the center, show potential in class and will ultimately benefit from one of the memberships.

“As a member of the Riverbender.com Community Center Board of Directors, I was pleased to hear that a community group was working to provide our middle school students with this opportunity,” Schwartz said. “We are pleased that Junior League and others in the community recognize the significance of providing area youth with a safe environment, and we hope this encourages others in the community to consider doing the same.”

Karin Johnes, president of the JLGA, said the service group was pleased to see so much community support for this initiative. “I think it speaks highly of the work that John Hentrich and the entire Riverbender.com Community Center staff have done to provide this community with a safe place for people of all ages,” Johnes said. “We look forward to partnering with Riverbender in the future to continue to meet community needs.”

The project received tremendous support from area businesses. Donors at the \$500 level included The Simmons Employee Foundation and Atlantis Pools; \$250 from David Rismiller, Esq., Legacy Settlement Group; \$200 from Alton Memorial Hospital; \$100 from Marjorie Duvivier, Berco Industrial; Zevan & Davidson Law Firm, Eason & Voytas LLC, Rossiter & Boock, LLC, Lewis and Clark Community College, Diane and William Schuette, Arrow Signs and the Madison County Sheriff’s Office. Other donations were made by AB Machine Shop, Leslie Rynders, Tawnya Hooper, Dan and Gayle Lake, Dr. Gita Malur, Dr. Kathie Wuellner, Tricia Pytlinski, Godfrey Animal Control, Academy Lawncare, Piasa Armory, Bunkhouse Joe Coffee, Unlimited Imprints, Dr. Laura Hill, Fabrication Specialist, Trickey’s Inc., Maggie Do’s, Sandy Hartstock, Stefanee and Michael Keth, Gail Fowler, Jackie Cain, Jill Tueth, Lori Artis and Document Copy Service.