

SIUE Meridian Derby showcases grand hats, celebrates big hearts

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EDWARDSVILLE - The Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Meridian Society's annual Meridian Derby featured a beautiful spectacle of large, glamorous hats and fascinators as the philanthropic organization celebrated women's leadership and investment in SIUE community-based projects.

The 7th annual Meridian Derby was held Tuesday, May 8 at Fairmount Park Racetrack's Top of the Turf in Collinsville. Approximately 250 attendees decked in derby attire enjoyed fellowship and a picturesque view of the horse races. Scott Credit Union sponsored the event.

“Through collective giving, the women of the Meridian Society demonstrate a spirit of philanthropy and commitment to making a positive impact in the community,” said Julie Babington, director of annual giving with the SIUE Foundation. “We are always delighted to host these fantastic women, and men, in this festive atmosphere.”



Chancellor Randy Pembroke welcomed attendees and extended his gratitude for their incredible support of SIUE community-based projects.

“The Meridian Society is doing amazing things, having contributed nearly \$300,000 to support our students, faculty, staff and community through 117 outstanding outreach programs and projects,” Pembroke said. “I like to talk about the wonderful traditions at SIUE, and this is one of the best. Thank you for all you do.”

“I love the projects that the Meridian Society supports and find it to be a wonderful relationship builder between the University and the community,” said member LaVernn Wilson, of Edwardsville. “The Meridian Derby is always fun. It offers a great opportunity to be around happy, vibrant spirits and enjoy beautiful hats!”

“This is my third year at the Meridian Derby,” added Stefanie Perryman ‘03 of Belleville. “I love spending the afternoon with these fabulous women who serve our local communities in various ways.”



A few attendees were awarded for their extraordinary derby style, including:

- Biggest Hat: Jackie Smith '72
- Best Hat: Antoniee Mann
- Best Member Hat: Marcy Pinnell '82
- Most Glamorous: Rachel Clothier '06 '08
- Hattitude: Anna Farner

Clothier, owner of Goff & Dittman Florists in Granite City, used her talents to create her own fascinator.

“It was like making a big prom corsage and putting it on a headband,” Clothier said. “I built a platform of mesh, tulle and ribbon to match my dress and then glued in fresh flowers.”

“I am a proud SIUE alumna, and enjoy seeing how the University has grown and developed,” she added. “It was a pleasure to be invited to this event and meet these women who make such a positive impact.”

Mann is a longtime attendee of the Meridian Derby. This year, she added her own gorgeous flair to her hat that featured feathers, flowers and tulle. She was thrilled to celebrate an award win during this year’s event.

“I most enjoy the camaraderie at this event,” Mann said. “It’s an opportunity to socialize and relax with friends in a fun environment. Plus, I always love wearing a different hat each year. Every time I buy a dress, I think about which hat I can wear with it!”

“This group of influential women continues to outdo themselves with their fantastic attire, which further enhances their already vibrant spirit,” said Vice Chancellor for University Advancement and CEO of the SIUE Foundation Rachel Stack. “Private support is increasingly important in education, and we greatly appreciate this group’s strong desire to make a positive difference. Our membership continues to increase, as does the significant impact this organization makes in the community and at SIUE.”

During a jazz event held in April, the SIUE Meridian Society inducted 15 new members, its largest ever group of inductees.

For more information or to join the [SIUE Meridian Society](#), contact Babington at 618-650-2378 or jbabing@siue.edu.

[The SIUE Meridian Society](#) officially launched its philanthropic mission in October 2003 with its first official meeting. It is an organization of women dedicated to supporting a variety of SIUE programs. The Society's name is based on the fact that the 90th Meridian, exactly one-fourth of the way around the world from the Prime Meridian, runs through the SIUE campus. The Meridian Society educates members on personal finance and philanthropic goals, inspires women to become leaders in supporting SIUE and community causes, enhances understanding and knowledge of women in philanthropy including their charitable support priorities as well as community influence, participates in influencing SIUE and the community via annual Impact Fund Awards, and supports SIUE's long-term goals for active community engagement and excellent reputation.