

## **SIUE Alumnae named among area's most influential business women**

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**EDWARDSVILLE** - Two Southern Illinois University Edwardsville alumnae have been honored by the St. Louis Business Journal as being among the most successful female business leaders in the St. Louis region.

Receiving recognition on the Most Influential Business Women Class of 2018 list are Vicki LaRose and Catherine Taylor Yank. The female leaders are among 25 honorees selected out of more than 250 nominees.

LaRose completed a bachelor's in civil engineering from the SIUE School of Engineering in 1990. She is founder and president of Civil Design, Inc. (CDI), a multi-disciplined firm focused on the design of quality infrastructure and centered on Building Stronger Communities.

"This recognition is a proud reflection of our team and the CDI family," LaRose said. "As a company, we strive to use each project to help our clients build a stronger community whether that is a better community center, an improved intersection or cleaner water. My personal goal is to provide the best environment for the CDI team, so the best comes out of them. Our four main values are responsiveness, personal ownership, mutual trust and respect, and continuous learning and growth."

Looking back on how she rose to the top, LaRose recalls when she first stepped foot on SIUE's campus. She says, "It felt like home to me."

"I loved being able to walk to campus through the trees and appreciated the small student-teacher ratio," she recalled. "Only years later did I understand what a great education and degree I received. One-third of our company has a degree from SIUE, which shows that the University delivers on graduating high-quality engineers and GIS professionals."

She founded her company in her basement in 1996, after recognizing the industry needed more female-led engineering firms.

"By far the most rewarding aspects of my career are giving someone a job, watching them grow and seeing all of the great projects we get to work on to improve people's lives come to fruition," LaRose explained.

As for advice to aspiring female leaders, she says, "I have come to realize that success looks different for everyone. Take time to think about what is really important to you and hold true to it. Do not let others define what a work-life balance should be for you. Lastly, give your heart to all that you do and make sure you help someone along the way."

Catherine Taylor Yank echoes a similar sentiment, as she encourages emerging leaders to strive for balance and always do the right thing.

She earned a bachelor's in mathematics from the College of Arts and Sciences in 1972 and completed SIUE's Construction Leadership Institute.

Taylor Yank, owner and chairman of Jim Taylor, Inc. has achieved much success and professional recognition in the construction and engineering industries. Of her BizJournal distinction, she says she is “honored and overwhelmed.”

“My project administrator DeeDee Fund told me someone finally recognized what she’s known for 17 years and called me her role model,” Taylor Yank. “That means a great deal to me!”

A role model and trailblazer, the influential woman charted new territory with her professional goals.

“Sad to say, when I was graduating high school, I was told I couldn’t be anything except a teacher or a nurse,” Taylor Yank explained. “But, since I excelled in math, I decided to teach math. Women weren’t told they could be engineers in the late 1960’s and I’m glad that has changed today.”

Her full-service roofing company prides itself on its core values of integrity, quality and family. Taylor Yank lives those values both professionally and personally.

“I have been so blessed,” she said. “I feel an obligation to help others, whether it’s in my community or around the globe.”

The BizJournal will detail the professional journeys of LaRose, Taylor Yank and their fellow 2018 Most Influential Business Women in an exclusive section being published Friday, Aug. 10. An awards luncheon will be held for the honorees that day.

[Southern Illinois University Edwardsville](#) provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River’s rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of nearly 14,000.