



# **RiverBend Growth Association, Tourism Bureau Present Annual Awards at Dinner**

by Charles Thomas, Video Producer  
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<https://www.riverbender.com/video/details/river-bend-growth-association-annual-dinner-2020-video-3737.cfm>

GODFREY - The RiverBend Growth Association had its annual meeting Thursday night at Lewis and Clark Community and honored several with awards.

The Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau “Spirit of Tourism” Award went to Parrot Pointe, Marine, Inc. Karen Baker Brncic accepted the Spirit of Tourism honor. Great Rivers and Routes Tourism Bureau President, Brett Stawar presented Parrot Point, Marine, Inc., the honor.



Stawar said Karen Baker-Brncic and staff have shown great perseverance over the years as the Mississippi River has flooded 12 times in her tenure, along with fires and a tornado. Karen and staff have found a way to succeed and doubled slip revenues and tripled transient revenues in their time, Stawar said.

“Karen and staff display genuine hospitality,” Stawar said. “Karen and her team at the Marina take a full-service approach. The Marina offers a gorgeous entryway into our destination and they are one of the best welcome mats out there. We are very lucky to have Karen.”

**RBGA Chairman Award Winners were as follows:**

**Michael Haynes, Executive Director of Alton Parks and Recreation Department**

It was pointed out that Haynes helped generate more than \$400,000 in new revenue to the Alton Park systems, including funds for different projects. These projects included the new Splash Pad coming this year and the all-inclusive playground. Haynes also quickly assisted the RBGA to ensure the Duck Race event was moved to Gordon Moore Park after river flooding and it was renamed for this year the “Party in the Park.” More than 500 people attended the party, thanks to Haynes’ quick efforts.

### **The Alton Memorial Health Services Foundation**

Ken Ballsters received the award for the Alton Memorial Health Services Foundation. It was pointed out that for the last 10 years, at area athletic events, the foundation has funded medical trainers to be available on site. This includes Alton High, Marquette Catholic, Civic Memorial, East Alton-Wood River, Jersey, Metro East Lutheran, Roxana and Southwestern athletic events. Kristie Baumgartner, the incoming Alton superintendent, said the program funded by Alton Memorial Health Services Foundation has become an essential part of the athletic community in keeping the student-athlete healthy.

### **The Riverbend CEO Program led by Katie Sabolo**

Sabolo has been at the head of the Riverbend CEO Program, which has made a remarkable difference in area high school seniors since its start in 2015. Sabolo’s leadership and unlimited energy with the project were credited for being a large part of the group’s success. The Riverbend CEO Program is funded by local investors. The program has 30-40 speakers a year and features visits to 30-50 businesses. Alton High, Marquette Catholic and East Alton-Wood River all participate in the program.





[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)