



Fostering Community And Creating Opportunities: RiverBend Growth Association's 2019 In Review

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The RiverBend Growth Association (RBGA) would like to thank the Riverbend community for helping make 2019 a truly amazing year! Through community support the RBGA has grown its organization and fostered connections between community members, regional leaders, local businesses, organizations, and more. Attendance at Total Networking Luncheon and Breakfast Connections has increased to a five-year high by offering networking events that are informative and in an environment that

fosters networking opportunities. The RiverBend Growth Association also continued to be a strong voice in Springfield for Riverbend area businesses fighting for employees, employers, and the community.



More than 50 new members from 11 different municipalities joined the RiverBend Growth Association in 2019. Alton and East Alton both had more than 10 organizations join the RBGA. The momentum inspired by AltonWorks and East Gate Plaza has generated a renewed synergy for the Riverbend area creating growth and more advantageous opportunities. The RBGA ended 2019 with roughly 650 members who work together to make the Riverbend area a great place to live and work.

The RiverBend Growth Association's monthly networking events saw an increase in



attendance. 2019 had the best attendance for Total Networking Luncheon and Breakfast Connections networking events. The attendance for both events was more than 500 guests, up from 445 in 2018, making 2019's networking events the most attended thus far. The RBGA would like to thank its Promotions Committee who plans these events and makes sure that the events are engaging, informative, and fosters connections between member organizations.

According to Trish Holmes, IOM, Director of Member Services, "We were thrilled with the engagement and participation from our membership in 2019, and we already have great opportunities planned for our membership in 2020. Our business organization is one of the best ways to help you network or bring visibility to your business or organization. We have diverse events and platforms for all including entrepreneurs, small businesses, large businesses, and youth committees that are in this community to help it thrive. The RBGA Team is excited about the future of the Riverbend community and we invite you to join us."

In 2019 the RiverBend Growth Association continued to be a strong voice in Springfield for its members. The RBGA fought for pro-business legislation like House Bill 3902 which is designed to help keep Illinois aviation repair businesses competitive with those

from neighboring states. The RBGA also lobbied to make sure money from the \$45 billion infrastructure plan (also known as the Capital Bill) came to the Riverbend region. Allocations such as \$37.5 million for the renovation and repairs of the main complex at Lewis and Clark Community College, \$150,000 for infrastructure improvements at the Lewis and Clark State Historic Site in Hartford, and \$200,000 for capital improvements for the Bethalto Boys and Girls Club.

“The RiverBend Growth Association is excited about the future of economic development in the Riverbend area,” said John Keller, President. “With the new state funding, strong private-public partnerships, and an engaged community the Riverbend area has an opportunity for growth. We must take advantage of this opportunity and build a culture of positive outcomes that benefit all concerned.”

In 2020, the RiverBend Growth Association is celebrating its 35-year anniversary. Along with continuing its mission of providing the leadership required to attract, promote and support new and existing enterprise growth throughout the Riverbend, the RBGA is also taking an initiative of empowering the Riverbend’s future leaders. The RBGA aims to partner with Madison County Career and Technical Education System, Madison County Employment and Training Department, and other organizations to help destigmatize trade school and vocational training. While there is value in pursuing education in a classroom, vocational training provides another path to a successful career, and the Riverbend community should value and promote those who choose this path. The RBGA intends on working with students, educators, parents and others to illuminate the benefits of trade schools and vocational training. Many trade jobs offer high incomes and great benefits that equal or sometimes surpass the income and benefits from so-called “white-collar” jobs.

The RiverBend Growth Association continues to support the Riverbend CEO program and its Young Adults Committee. The Riverbend CEO program promotes the entrepreneurial spirit in our local high school seniors by having them create their own business model. The RiverBend Growth Association’s Young Adults Committee stimulates community involvement in high school juniors and seniors by having them coordinate volunteer experiences with local non-profits. The students also create and implement their own fundraiser which benefits one student in the form of a scholarship and a non-profit the students volunteered with in the form of a donation.

The Riverbend community has created a culture of synergy and teamwork to better the region as whole. Collaboration between local municipalities, businesses, organizations, non-profits, and community members is important to the success of our region and will continue to be in 2020. The RBGA will continue to make the connections needed between these groups to make the Riverbend a great place to live and work.

About the RiverBend Growth Association

The RiverBend Growth Association is the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Organization for the communities of the Riverbend. As a Chamber of Commerce, we actively promote activities between our member businesses. As an Economic Development Organization, we work closely with state, regional, county and local officials to develop new employment opportunities.

The mission of the Growth Association is to provide the leadership required to attract, promote and support new and existing enterprise growth throughout the Riverbend community.