



SBDC For Metro East At SIUE Assists With 2020 Virtual 'Immigrants in Our Midst'

by Doug McIllaga
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EDWARDSVILLE – The Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) for the Metro East at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, the Latino Roundtable of Southwestern Illinois, Busey Bank (the sponsor) and additional partners will host the virtual conference, “Immigrants in Our Midst,” from 8 a.m.-noon on Friday, Oct. 2. The conference’s focus will be on how to better serve the U.S. immigrant workforce.

SIUE alumnus Raffi Mikaelian is helping to coordinate the event that includes presentations by regional specialists in the fields of immigration law, immigrant demographics, Latino outreach, employment services and state resources. Professionals and students, who seek to increase their involvement with immigrant communities in and around St. Louis, are expected to attend.

“I’ve attended and heard many inspiring presentations at the ‘Immigrants in our Midst Conference,’” said Latino Roundtable Chairperson Katie Heaton. “Dedicated professionals share their stories and offer insight that can be educational and relevant to current trends.”

Past conference participant and immigration law practitioner Jessie Chappell, founder of Chappell Grant Immigration LLC, noted the importance of the SIUE supported conference to immigrants and professionals working in the international community. “Even though I work with immigrants daily, I am still surprised by all of the new information I gain at this program,” said Chappell. “Hearing how vital immigrants are to our neighborhoods and economy helps me recognize the instability that mass deportations would cause.

“This conference teaches how to effectively research local immigration trends. I also learned how to connect foreign and U.S.-born communities. This expertise provides the tools to connect my clients with the many resources that can help them succeed in their personal and professional lives.”

Speakers at the conference will include: Kathy Bernard, CEO of WiserU.com; Alicia Plemmons, PhD, assistant professor in the School of Business's Department of Economics and Finance; Tony Fuhrmann, Madison County Workforce Development; Matthew Jones, St. Clair County Workforce Development; and Diana Alfaro, Latino Business Development manager in the Office of Minority Economic Empowerment.

The event is open to the public and costs \$20. To register, visit Immigrants in Our Midst. For more information about registration, contact Cynthia Cobetto in SIUE’s Office of Educational Outreach at 618-650-2164 or cgorsag@siue.edu.

The Latino Roundtable (LRT) Southwestern Illinois is a group comprised of representatives from community organizations, businesses, colleges, universities, agencies and more. It has a unified purpose of serving the Latino community in the St. Louis Metro East area. LRT’s mission is to work together to develop and expand available resources of social services to the Latino community in Metro East area. Contact the Latino Round Table at thelatinoroundtable@gmail.com.

The Illinois SBDC for the Metro East assists existing companies as well as new businesses headquartered in the nine-county Metro East region of Calhoun, Jersey, Madison, Bond, Clinton, St. Clair, Washington, Monroe and Randolph. It is a no-cost service to the community supported by the U.S. Small Business Administration, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and SIUE.

By aiding entrepreneurs and companies in defining their path to success, the SBDC network positively impacts the Metro East by strengthening the business community, creating and retaining jobs and encouraging capital investment. It enhances the region's economic interests by providing one-stop assistance to individuals by means of counseling, training, research and advocacy for new ventures and existing small businesses. When appropriate, the SBDC strives to affiliate its ties to the region to support the goals and objectives of both the SIUE School of Business and the University at large. To learn how the SBDC can help your small business, contact the Metro East SBDC at (618) 650-2929 or sbdcedw@gmail.com.