



# **Lawyer, Entrepreneur Opens Law Practice and Brings Unique Business Experience to Riverbend**

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Jeff Roberts has great stories to tell about his life in the gaming industry during and after his baptism with fire in the corporate world with Argosy Gaming Company. Although he has called Jersey County home for over twenty years, Jeff's primary business activities have largely been elsewhere since building his first ski lake in Jersey County in 1992. He brings to the Riverbend a wealth of legal, finance and practical business experience – experience he is anxious to share to help local businesses and friends thrive in today's tough economic times.

“Before returning to the day-to-day practice of law, one of the things I really missed in my business life was the satisfaction of helping people,” Jeff explains. “Whether it’s a business or personal matter, it’s still personal. There is something about taking a problem that someone else can’t solve on their own and owning it. Finding the solution and making the solution work is rewarding – and it’s really pretty fun.”

Jeff grew up in Alton with nine brothers and sisters and currently lives in rural Jersey County with his wife, Sandra, and four kids: Nellie, Will, Edward and Michael. Jeff attended Marquette High School and Illinois College, where he graduated Summa Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa and also earned first team Academic All-America honors in football as a defensive back. During college as a full-time student, the work ethic he got from his dad became evident as Jeff worked over 40 hours per week at a local grocery store to try to keep up with tuition and bills. While still in college, Jeff became a CPA. Then, he headed east to Champaign to get his law degree at the University of Illinois, where he became a die hard Illini fan. He says he is still fuming over the Illini basketball team’s 2005 loss to North Carolina in the NCAA championship game.

Jeff is an entrepreneur at heart and in practice. He began his career at Deloitte Haskins and Sells, CPAs in Denver and since then has held posts at several other notable firms in the pacific- northwest and in the midwest. Jeff counts among his greatest gifts having had the opportunity in the late 80’s and early nineties to learn about business, taxes, law and life from accountants/attorneys John Farrell and Tom Long at Farrell and Long, P. C. in Godfrey where he practiced law (ultimately as a partner) immediately prior to joining Argosy. “Finer gentlemen, mentors and thinkers are hard to come by,” he says of Farrell and Long.

His wide-ranging and extensive experience in tax, gaming, finance, real estate, estate planning and in structuring business transactions and transitions differentiates Jeff from typical practicing lawyers. When asked about “transition planning,” Jeff pointed out that every business that succeeds (and most don’t) travels through a cycle. “Transition planning is assistance to business owners as they grow and make the transition first from a start-up to a successful enterprise. Some companies then must transition through additional funding to a larger scale need for working capital due to changes in scale and competitive forces. Ultimately, owners must transition to successor owners, or simply die on the vine,” Jeff added. These transitions also include sales, acquisitions and mergers.

Jeff spent several years in the world of big business where he served a member of the executive team of Argosy Gaming Company during its rise from a one casino, \$60mm company with 500 employees to a five casino, \$500mm company with over 4,000 employees. In that capacity, he served as Argosy’s in-house lawyer and its primary

interface with local politicians, decision-makers and as a primary contact at Argosy for government regulators, including the gaming commissions from five states. About that experience, Jeff quips: “I was getting paid pretty well to get the practical equivalent of an MBA. During my time there, we raised over \$750 million on Wall Street and had almost 1,000 employees at each casino. We won competitively-awarded licenses against industry giants such as Harrah’s Circus-Circus, Caesars and Hollywood Gaming. Most importantly, I was lucky to work with super people who had great legal, casino and business acumen.”

Jeff has spearheaded two rural residential developments centered upon water ski lakes, both in Jersey County, as well as Eagle Crossings subdivision in Dow. His other entrepreneurial endeavors have included four casino development companies, a web-based advertising company and an investment company. For all of these companies, Jeff has provided executive leadership and has taken care of legal matters. Jeff believes his entrepreneurial spirit and experience suits him ideally to be a lawyer for entrepreneurs. “I’ve had to make tough decisions about political matters, capital expansion, employees, diminishing margins due to competition, marketing and budget cutbacks,” he notes. “At RobertsLaw, we’ve been there. We get it.”

When he’s not working early mornings and late nights at RobertsLaw at either his Alton or Jerseyville office, Jeff’s passions center around his family. During the summer months, you can find him behind the wheel of a ski boat pulling his kids in practice or tournaments. If not there, he will either be mowing grass at his home in Dow or sweating in the heat at a swim meet. During the winter, he and his wife continue to run to competitions as his daughter turns to dance and his sons’ swimming meets move indoors. “Don’t EVEN get me started talking about swim times,” Jeff warns.

Jeff is involved in several local organizations and is quite proud of his long-standing affiliation with Father Hembrough and the Holy Ghost parish and the Sisters of St. Francis of the Martyr St. George who run St. Anthony’s and St. Clare’s Hospitals in Alton. He can be reached by phone at 618.406.0461, and you can learn more about him and RobertsLaw at [www.robertsplanninglaw.com](http://www.robertsplanninglaw.com).