

Cooperation key in finding home for new Clark Properties business

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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A level of cooperation between the City of Alton, Clark Properties, Challenge Unlimited, the River Bend Growth Association, Alton Main Street and others has led to the opening of a new big-scale business at Clark Properties.

The new Advanced Outsource Solutions is a business that may have opened elsewhere if it not for the efforts of the city, the RBGA and other organizations. It is speculated that this unified effort will bode well for other future developments or expansions within existing businesses. The new Alton business is taking 40,000 square feet of a previously vacant area at Clark Properties.

Alton Mayor Brant Walker said he helped establish the retention program about two months after he entered office to visit businesses and see what their needs were in hopes of keeping businesses in the city.

“The retention program has gone very well and made a difference,” said Walker. “This business was looking at other cities, but we compiled a data base of information as a snap shot of what the city looks like and we took a big chunk of the vacant space and the business has potential to double the space available at Clark Properties.”

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held recently to announce Advanced Outsource Solutions at 1440 Discovery Parkway in Alton. The new business will likely look for workers with disabilities and disabled veterans and also disadvantaged citizens. A total as high as 80 people are expected to be hired based on work.

Tom Moehn, CEO at Challenge Unlimited, said that at one time, the new organization was looking at the Pontoon Beach area and Granite City, but he said when the mayor and the others heard about this, they saw the value for Advanced to locate in Alton.

“We wanted to make sure we had an arm length distance from ourselves,” Moehn said. “We got others interested in forming a board for a non profit and making a financial commitment to make this start. We will be very involved with the new business, but we don’t have control. A management team has been hired to get this off the ground.”

Challenge Unlimited President Charlene Hammond said the hope is to move people from the development training center into the community based on their goals and aspirations and this is a perfect next step for many. Hammond praised Mayor Walker for taking the lead in this project and his commitment to seeing it through.

RBGA President Monica Bristow said she thinks the retention work being done is working and it was evident in this case. She hopes to continue that retention work model in the future.

The business retention work was something Walker planned ahead of being in office and after a few months in the mayor’s seat, he made this a major priority.

“We are moving ahead an idea we had several years ago and bringing it to fruition,” he said. “We now have the right people involved to make it successful.”

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