



Riverbender Community Center Founder and Executive Board Steps Down After 12 Years of Service

May 20 2022 2:30 PM



Twelve years! That's how long the Riverbender Community Center (RBCC) has been a proud pillar of this community.

After twelve extremely successful years, the current Riverbender Community Center founder and executive board will be stepping down and the CommunityCenter will close its doors this Friday, May 20, 2022, following the completion of the last Friday Night Open Play.

“It has been an amazing run and I’ve enjoyed every minute of my time spent with the Riverbender Community Center. From collaborating with local business owners, non-profit organizations, and individual donors in the development of the Center over a decade ago, to working with our volunteers and the kids on Friday nights - every moment has been a gift. Seeing the smiles and hearing the laughs, and watching them participate in what we have created has been as rewarding as just about anything in my life. I am blessed and proud to have had this opportunity to serve my community in this special way, but it’s now time for me to step down. It’s time to spend weekends with my family and to give more energy to my for-profit business, Riverbender.com”, shared John Hentrich. “It’s time to let someone else take the reins.”

The development of a facility where families could spend time together, community members could gather and special community events could be held, was the vision of John and his late-wife Dawn. Together, with many dedicated individuals and extremely generous donors, they brought their vision to reality and built the Riverbender Community Center. Over the years, RBCC has been a gathering place for many non-profit groups, a place for churches to get their start, a place for school meetings and field trips, senior citizen luncheons and game days, award banquets, talent contests, music lessons, and homework help. The Center has been a place for live music concerts, plays and shows, Santa and free toys, lots and lots of smiles, and a lifetime of memories.

The following video was made 4 years ago as part of an application for the small business revolution grant. It gives you an idea of the events that have taken place there and the mission of the non-profit organization.

John continued, “My dream was to build a community center full of opportunities that would be available to families forever. I knew from the beginning that one day the torch would need to be passed. In 12 years, we’ve accomplished so much. We developed a model where children, community members, and local businesses could come together. We proved that the concept of building and running an organization solely with passionate volunteers could be done. We proved that volunteers and kids could create lasting memories and have a lifelong impact on each other, and we proved that this could all be accomplished right here in Alton. I was in a unique position when I first began the Riverbend Community Center. Friends, family, and colleagues were willing to give generously. I had great connections with local businesses through my work at Riverbender.com and I had a hometown advantage.”

Sustainability of a community center for Alton has always been the goal, but unfortunately, two years of conversations with the City of Alton's past and current administration did not produce a desire for the city's acquisition of the non-profit center or its mission.

“The RBCC provides a necessary and vital role in our communities. Quite often in small communities, active environments for our kids can be in all the wrong places,” stated Lucinda Lowe, RBCC Board President. “The Riverbender Community Center has played an important role in this community and I've been proud to be part of all that has been accomplished.”

Even after a long break from CoVID, the community center sprung back to life and tickets have been sold out each night since the reopening - showing the demand for these services is still strong. “We've had so much fun since reopening that it's made it even harder to make this decision,” said Vicki Grover, long-time Board Secretary.

And although the founder and current Executive Board team is stepping down, there is still hope that another organization will step up to the plate and continue the good work that has been done so far.



“The Center is financially self-sustaining, the facility is in good repair, we have state of the art equipment and materials, programs already developed, and most importantly, we have a strong volunteer base,” said Catherine Hentrich, RBCC Board Vice-President. “It would be a shame if the doors closed permanently.”

In hopes of the Community Center continuing for years to come under new management, The RBCC will be accepting applications for two roles:

1. An organization that is willing and prepared to assume all responsibilities of the Riverbender Community Center.
2. Individuals who would be interested in dedicating their time and be *active* participants to an Executive Board position.

“The Riverbend area is full of good people who care about their community, who want to see it thrive. I am hopeful that there is a local organization that will be willing to step up and continue this great mission. If not, our doors will be permanently closed,” said Hentrich.

For more information on the Riverbender Community Center, visit RiverbenderCommunityCenter.org

[Click here for videos from past events](#)

Applications for acquisition proposals and Executive Board positions can be found here: RiverbenderCommunityCenter.org/Applications

The application process will be open until July 15, 2022, and applications will be reviewed after that date.