



RBGA Presents Inaugural Chamber Choice Awards

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GODFREY – Hosting its first large-scale indoor event in two years, the RiverBend Growth Association welcomed a room full of guests to The Commons at Lewis and Clark Community College in Godfrey on May 25, 2022. The purpose? To celebrate the winners of its inaugural Chamber Choice Awards, as well as to catch up on a bit of organizational business.

Among those attending were Growth Association members, Riverbend community mayors, and other municipality representatives from throughout the region. Also

attending: State Representative Amy Elik (R-Fosterburg) and Jersey County States Attorney Ben Goetten.

Board Chairman Alan Meyer of 1st MidAmerica Credit Union called the business meeting to order to first affirm board action taken in January 2022. Confirmed votes for RBGA leadership positions were Meyer as Chair, and Dan St. Peters of St. Peters Hardware who will serve as Chair-Elect in 2022.

Five new members were confirmed to the RiverBend Growth Association board of directors. They were Brian Campbell, co-owner of Colman's Country Campers and 5 Diamonds Campground; Crystal Officer, CEO at Beverly Farm; Jane Saale, president and CEO of Cope Plastics, Inc.; Martha Schultz, community bank president and market manager for First Mid Bank & Trust; and Rob Schwartz, senior vice president and market president of Madison County for Busey Bank.

Four other board member nominations were confirmed to serve their second three-year terms. They were Thomas Berry, Attorney at Jackson-Lewis P.C.; Cody Hinkle, co-owner of Piasa Body Art; Jeff Lauritzen, Country Financial representative; and Bernie Sebold, senior manager of health and safety for Illinois American Water.

The other 18 returning board members were also recognized. They include:

- Lori Artis, Lewis and Clark Community College
- John Barnerd, Simmons Hanly Conroy
- Jake Bodi, Ameren
- Nick Darr, Big Z Media Group
- Melissa Erker, Phillips 66 Wood River Refinery
- Mike Fitzgerald, Scheffel Boyle
- Brad Goacher, Alton Memorial Hospital
- Pam Heepke, Heepke Farms
- Tim Kuebrich, Lakeside Logistics
- Dave Miller
- Dr. Stephanie Monroe, Riverbend Chiropractic
- Jim Rankin, West Star Aviation
- James Rogalsky, The Old Bakery Beer Company
- Jerry Rumph, OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center
- Terry Shewmake, IBEW Local #649
- Matt Waters, Liberty Bank
- Karen Wilson, State Farm Insurance
- Denise Wolff, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Select

Outgoing board members recognized for their years of service were Mark Haggard, John Roberts, Jim Shrader, Augie Wuellner, and Dwight Werts. Further acknowledgments were given to two past board chairs who had served in that role during the height of the pandemic. They included 2020 Chair Brad Goacher, vice president and chief operating officer at Alton Memorial Hospital, and 2021 Chair Jeff Lauritzen of Country Financial.

Given that this was the first large-scale indoor gathering of the RBGA members and supporters, time was also taken to recognize the winners of the Small Business of the Month Award from January 2020 through April 2022. Those businesses recognized were:

- B&B Custom T's & Gifts
- WBGZ Radio
- Serenity Title and Escrow
- Flat Branch Home Loans
- Cork Tree Creative
- Colman's Country Campers
- Alton Securities and Asset Advisors
- Rister's Automotive
- Bakers & Hale
- Morning Glory Home Care
- Brush Hair + Makeup
- Robert Diaz, Edward Jones
- Chapel & Keller Dentistry Partnership
- St. Peters Hardware and Rental
- Great Rivers Tap & Grill
- Gent Funeral Home
- Miller King, LLC
- Humbert Road Dentistry
- McGilvrey's Fine Portraits
- Tucker's Automotive
- The Brown Bag Bistro
- Waggoner Equipment Rental
- The Woodlands Golf Course

Presentation of the inaugural Chamber Choice Awards, with recipients selected by the RBGA team, followed the business meeting and recognitions.

The first Chamber Choice Award to be presented was the "Captain" Award. There were two recipients: the City of Alton and the Village of Godfrey.

“Both received the award for the efforts of their respective parks and recreation departments and the improvements that have been done to their facilities,” said Meyer. “These improvements also improve the quality of life, not only for their own citizens, but for the Riverbend as a whole.”

Alton’s Michael Haynes, director of parks and recreation, accepted the Captain Award on behalf of the city. Alton’s award was sponsored by Alton Memorial Hospital. The Village of Godfrey’s Captain Award was accepted by its director of parks and recreation, Chris Logan. Godfrey’s award was sponsored by OSF Saint Anthony’s Health Center.

The Bon Voyage Award was presented to two individuals who recently retired after years of service to the RBGA and the communities it serves. First to be recognized was Linda McCormick, longtime owner of the Cookie Factory and Café at Alton Square Mall. McCormick’s award was sponsored by CNB Bank & Trust, N.A. McCormick owned and ran the Cookie Factory for 43 years, from November 1978 until selling it and retiring in December 2021.

Jim Shrader received the second Bon Voyage Award from the RBGA. His award was sponsored by Busey Bank. Shrader previously served as publisher of The Telegraph. He began his newspaper career in 1979 and first came to The Telegraph in 1989, returning in 1998. Shrader retired in October 2018, and from the RBGA board in December 2021.

The Chamber Choice Pioneer Award was presented to Tammy Iskarous, founder and executive director of Riverbend Family Ministries. This award was sponsored by Beverly Farm.

“A pioneer is described as someone who sees potential and is willing to try new things,” said Meyer. “This award was given to Tammy, as someone who saw a need in the community and was most definitely willing to try new things to follow her calling, no matter what unknown path it may have taken her down.”

Next, the Perseverance Award was presented to two recipients: OSF Saint Anthony’s Health Center and Alton Memorial Hospital. Accepting the award on behalf of OSF Saint Anthony’s Health Center, which was sponsored by Werts Welding and Tank Service, was Dr. Dennis Sands, chief medical officer. David Braasch, president, accepted on behalf of Alton Memorial Hospital, with the award sponsored by Midwest Members Credit Union.

Meyer said, “One of the definitions of perseverance is the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition. I think that pretty well sums up what the healthcare industry has been doing throughout this pandemic.”

Tyler Shereck of Godfrey's Imo's Pizza was recognized with the Chamber Choice Phoenix Award. Becoming only the third owner since the location opened in 1992, Shereck and his brother Tom, kept a promise to reopen after a fire struck the business in the early morning hours on Oct. 2, 2020.

"To rise like a phoenix from the ashes, to emerge from a catastrophe stronger, smarter, and more powerful, so too Imo's Pizza Godfrey has become," noted Meyer.

The final award presented was the Chamber Champion Award. It also had two recipients – Martha Schultz of First Mid Bank & Trust in Alton and Busey Bank's Rob Schwartz.

This award was given to recognize both Schultz and Schwartz for helping the Growth Association achieve its mission and goals through their participation in the organization's various fundraisers, projects, or leadership. "Today we give out plaques to two individuals who have quietly helped the RBGA in numerous ways though the years without fanfare," Meyer said.

The gathering wrapped up with the presentation of college scholarship checks to high school students taking part in the RBGA's Young Adults Committee.

Scholarships for \$500 each were awarded to:

- Alton High School: Anbrielle Blake, Kamren Mason-El
- Civic Memorial High School, Bethalto: Allie Lively, Ben Werts
- East Alton-Wood River High School: Addison Denton, Mary Nguyen, and Mia Seibert
- Marquette Catholic High School, Alton: Joe Brangenberg
- Roxana High School: Ava Meneses

One scholarship for \$1,000 went to Reagan Williams of East Alton-Wood River High School. A \$2,000 scholarship was presented to Kennedy Bickmore of Civic Memorial High School, and Alton High School's Allie Schrumpf received a \$3,000 scholarship from the organization.

The RiverBend Growth Association is the Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development organization for the 11 communities known as the Riverbend. For more information about the Growth Association, please visit www.growthassociation.com or call (618) 467-2280.