



Rep. Elik Honors Two Local Women At The Illinois Capitol

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SPRINGFIELD - Illinois State Representative Amy Elik (R-Alton) honored Lewis & Clark Community College Board of Trustees Chairperson Julie Johnson and Desirée Bennyhoff, President & Chief Executive Officer of the Edwardsville-Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce at the Emerging Women Leaders brunch held at the State Capitol in Springfield on Tuesday. The event honored the contributions of emerging female leaders from throughout the state.



“Julie Johnson and Desirée Bennyhoff are two local leaders making a positive impact in our communities,” said Rep. Amy Elik. “Julie is strengthening our community college system to better prepare students for today’s workforce, and Desirée is committed to helping our region’s economy grow and prosper. It brings me joy to witness their success as two emerging leaders in the Metro East.”

Julie Johnson serves as Chairperson of the Lewis & Clark Community College Board of Trustees and is a retired CPA. She received an associate degree in Accounting from Lincoln Land Community College, a Bachelor of Science in Accounting from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale and a Master's in Business Administration from Washington University in St. Louis. After working as auditor for KPMG in St. Louis, she was an auditor and accounting manager at Maritz, Inc. in Fenton. After caring for her three children, she now assists with accounting work for various not-for-profits and her family's businesses, which are located in southern Illinois. Johnson grew up on a dairy farm in Nokomis, Illinois and still helps her husband's family farm there. She currently lives on a cattle farm near Hamel and is a member and volunteer at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Hamel.

Desirée Bennyhoff serves as President & Chief Executive Officer of the Edwardsville | Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce. Bennyhoff oversees the strategic direction of the 500-member organization – the largest pro-business organization in southern Madison County, Illinois – which is dedicated to a strong, private sector regional economy. A Southern Illinois native, Bennyhoff holds a master's degree in speech communication (now applied communication studies) from SIUE. One of Bennyhoff's most recent recognitions include the St. Louis Regional Chamber's 2016 Jim Anderson Professional Torch Award & Scholarship, which is presented annually to recognize an outstanding chamber of commerce professional from Missouri or Southwestern Illinois. Additional recognitions include being named one of St. Louis Small Business Monthly's 'Southwest Illinois People to Know' in 2016, multiple 'excellence in communications' awards from IACCE,

SIUE's prestigious Robert B. Hawkins Graduate Award in Speech Communication, and the James Walker Graduate Scholarship. In addition, her research was presented at Texas A&M's Annual Assessment Conference in 2009.

Rep. Amy Elik added, "I was honored to introduce these two women at this special event while providing them the opportunity to share their vision to help our region prosper with my colleagues in the House of Representatives. We heard from dozens of female leaders from around the state, including Illinois Supreme Court Justice Holder White, Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton, and Architect of the Capitol, Andrea Aggertt. We heard different views and opinions and learned from women leaders from across Illinois."

Julie Johnson and Desirée Bennyhoff joined 50 female leaders from across the state who are each taking bold steps to make Illinois a better place to live and work. In addition to the recognition brunch, the group participated in a discussion about what issues are important for Illinois women, and how the General Assembly can create policy that reflects their priorities.

The contributions of these women were further recognized by House Republican Leader Tony McCombie from the House Floor during session on Tuesday.

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