



Riverbend CEO Students Demonstrate Enormous Talent, Bright Futures

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - The recent Riverbend CEO 2023 Trade Show demonstrated a talented class of young entrepreneurs at the Best Western Premier in Alton.

Katie Sabolo has been the mastermind behind the Riverbend CEO program for the past seven years. She said the Riverbend CEO Class of 2023 has a bright future ahead, thanks in part to the businesses that have taught them the value of determination, innovation, and hard work.

"Riverbend CEO has been the highlight of my year!" Sabolo said.

She continued and said the program is "an investor-funded entrepreneurship program that connects local high school seniors to businesses in our community.

"CEO gives students an incredible opportunity to start their own businesses and network with other business professionals in our community. Each year, students tour more than 30 local businesses and meet with 30 guest speakers to help them learn the ins and outs of running a business.

"While learning about businesses in our area, students launch their own small businesses with a product or service they market to the community at our annual Trade Show. This year, 11 students are completing the program and showcasing their businesses at our show. Along with learning about entrepreneurship, Riverbend CEO students learn tools and skills that are essential to success in the business world."

The Best Western Premier Hotel in Alton was a proud host for the Trade Show.

"I'm incredibly grateful for the behind-the-scenes tours, encouragement, and speakers that being part of CEO has allowed me to experience," Jacob Schaper of Fortitude School Note to Self Piano Tuning, said. "I am grateful to launch Note to Self Piano Tuning in our very supportive community."

Schaper recently received an honorable mention in Midland Institute for Entrepreneurship's annual Pitch Competition. He received a prize package including a check and CEO swag for placing in the competition.



“For anyone wondering if you should take this class, just do it! I’ve had some of the best memories made with this program and group of students and learned more than I ever thought I would!” Maireli Figueroa of Mai’s Crochet said.

“My business is called Creased and its mission is to help others unfold their creativity,” Donald Holliday of Creased said.





