

## Illinois gets mixed reviews from site selectors

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

What do prospective companies want in a community? They want workforce skills, transportation infrastructure, and quality of life.

What they don't want are politics and lack of responsiveness.

Southwestern Illinois leaders got some rare insight into what firms everywhere are looking for in the way of development potential during a two-day visit by the executive vice president of Site Selection magazine.

Drawing the attention of the prominent international business publication is a coup, and locals didn't waste the visit — gladly highlighting opportunities that exist in Metro East.

The guest of honor for the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois was Ron Starner, executive vice president of Conway Inc., which operates the magazine and many

related ventures.

The publication covers corporate real estate and economic development and is sent to almost 50,000 domestic and international high-profile site selectors and companies.

"Corporate real estate really is our heartbeat," Starner said. "It's the foundation of the publication because that's our readership. We have over 45,000 'qualified subscribers.' You have to be involved in some aspect of decision making at a company in order to receive it."

About 60 percent of those 45,000 would be executives at manufacturing companies. A majority of those companies employ 100 or more workers, he said.

Starner has been with Conway Inc. for 19 years and serves as editor of the TrustBelt Report and lead organizer of the annual TrustBelt Conference. He also writes extensively for Site Selection and Conway's Custom Content Publishing Division.

The TrustBelt report offers news and analysis on corporate real estate and economic development activity throughout the Midwest. This includes content on Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri and Northern Kentucky, along with Western New York and Pennsylvania.

Starner's background in is journalism, with degrees from Liberty University in Virginia and University of South Florida, Tampa.

Site Selection magazine debuted in 1954. Ninety percent of its advertisers are economic development organizations, of which Leadership Council is one, as are the Regional Chamber of Commerce in St. Louis, the state of Illinois, under Intersect Illinois, and World Business Chicago, another public-private regional business group.

In recent years, international circulation

### Top performing metro areas

1. Nashville, TN
  2. Seattle, WA
  3. Austin, TX
  4. San Jose, CA
  5. Napa, CA
  6. Salt Lake City, UT
  7. San Diego, CA
  8. Indianapolis, IN
  9. Atlanta, GA
  10. Portland, OR
- 113. St. Louis, MO-IL**

Source: Dr. William Fruth, POLICOM.com, 2019 (383 U.S. Metropolitan Areas) Site Selection magazine data prepared for the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois

has been going steadily up, with a fair amount of subscribers in China, the United Kingdom, France and Germany, among others.

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## SIUE corporate partnerships educating business employees



Student Rebecca Andersen speaks at a special hooding ceremony held for SIUE MS Healthcare Informatics graduates in Spring 2018. Andersen is a registered nurse at St. Louis Children's Hospital.

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

SIUE's Office of Educational Outreach hopes to expand on corporate partnerships that allow businesses a convenient way to add to their employees' education credentials.

Interim director Mary Ettling said her office is stepping up efforts that have been underway for many years, primarily with area hospitals. The idea is to get a wider base of businesses willing to contract with and pay SIUE for accelerated classwork taken by their workers.

"That takes out the need for the student to figure out how to pay for their classes, how to navigate things that students normally have to figure out and allows them to just start taking their classes," she said.

A corporate partnership is an exclusive contractual agreement between SIUE and a company for the sole purpose of building mutually beneficial relationships that align industry needs with the university's resources. Ettling's office works collaboratively with university academic units to create the contract.

Most of the program effort so far has

revolved around health-care organizations and some smaller hospitals.

If hospitals need, say, a baccalaureate-prepared nurse, the SIUE office creates a contract with the hospital and then moves forward with the appropriate School of Nursing or Health Care Informatics programs.

So far, the office has built up 12 program partnerships that involve seven hospitals and the Madison County Regional Office of Education.

The partnerships can involve master's level programs or specific sets of courses, like a professional development sequence, that would help someone in a particular profession.

Ettling has been talking more recently with representatives of the Madison County Office of Employment and Training about new opportunities, perhaps using the county's Incumbent Worker Training program, which pays for training through Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act funds, and helps businesses effectively train and retain employees by providing skills upgrades. The program aims to help

companies remain competitive through an improved workforce.

Ettling said that smaller businesses don't have the resources of larger companies, like hospital systems, when it comes to paying for or coordinating education of employees.

"Hospitals have a lot of human resources infrastructure to handle billing and monitor reimbursements," Ettling said. "Smaller hospitals, smaller companies, smaller entities don't always have those immediate resources."

Such resources would address things like payroll deductions if students went over what their cap was for the year.

"So, we're looking at ways to engage with smaller companies that may not have that infrastructure," she said.

BJC HealthCare and SSM Health are two of the biggest participants. Anderson Hospital in Maryville, Gateway Regional Medical Center in Granite City and Hospital Sisters Health System (HSBS) are involved, too.

"We also work with Baptist Hospital in

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## Illinois Business Journal purchased by Better Newspapers Inc.

Greg Hoskins says his growing company aims to make the best newspapers better.

His firm, Better Newspapers Inc., based in Mascoutah, has purchased the Illinois Business Journal, based in Edwardsville, from owners Alan J. Ortals and Dennis Grubaugh.

The sale was finalized on May 31 and brings to 21 the number of papers owned and operated by Hoskins, including several serving the Metro East market.

"We're really glad to have a great paper like this to join our complement of community newspapers," Hoskins said.

No significant changes are anticipated,

he said.

The Illinois Business Journal prints 18,700 editions a month as a newspaper mailed to nonresidential addresses in Metro East. It also operates the news and advertising website, [ibjonline.com](http://ibjonline.com), and publishes a weekly newsletter, IBJ Digital News.

The Illinois Business Journal was founded in 2000 by a longtime newspaper reporter, Kerry Smith, who in 2003 brought aboard Ortals as co-owner. Ortals' background was in Southwestern Illinois economic development. Smith sold her stake in 2013, at which time Ortals enlisted another longtime Southwestern Illinois

newspaperman, Dennis Grubaugh, as partner. Smith returned to the IBJ in 2018 as marketing manager. All three individuals live in Edwardsville.

"The exit plan is an issue for every small-business owner," Ortals said. "The deal with Better Newspapers not only solves that problem for us but does so in a way that gives the Illinois Business Journal a bright future so that it will live on long after Dennis and I."

Grubaugh will remain editor of the Illinois Business Journal. Ortals, who is nearing retirement, will serve in a consultant role. Smith will continue to serve as marketing

manager.

"I'm glad we found Greg to take over as owner," Grubaugh said. "It gives the Illinois Business Journal the chance to continue to grow, using the resources of a much bigger operation dedicated to community newspapers."

Grubaugh said the unique focus of the paper will continue to reflect the interests of the business community in Southwestern Illinois.

Hoskins, 62, is originally from Streator, Ill., but has lived many years in Mascoutah.

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