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Rick and Anna Lee Woods, whose Woods Basements Systems has been honored for marketplace ethics six times since 2005 by the Better Business Bureau.

Woods’ great workplace started in the basement

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Rick and Anna Lee Woods built a great place by starting in the basement. Their company, Woods Basement Systems, was top vote-getter of the Best Places to Work in Southwestern Illinois 2020, based on a reader poll of the Illinois Business Journal.

“We’ve been blessed with plenty of great people with the right heart for homeowners,” said Dave Thompson, marketing director for Woods, who has worked for the company 20 years.

Thompson said the company is filled with longtime employees and family members of the Woods couple, who came to Southwestern Illinois from Astoria, Ill.,

in 1986.

The couple, along with a partner, started a waterproofing company called Gateway Basement DeWatering. The couple operated from the upstairs of a four-room house that they rented across the street from their current location, 524 Vandalia St. in Collinsville.

“Rick would find a lead, sell the job, and Rick and Anna Lee would install the work,” Thompson said.

In 1998, the business name was changed to Woods Basement Systems Inc. Today, it has more than 200 employees, a 16,000-square-foot administrative office,

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New vintage market offers reminder of simpler times

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Business after business has felt the glare of 2020, but some are finding ways to work within the challenges.

For the Blanquart family, COVID-19 meant having more time to polish a Rusty Gem.

“I know we could look at this a whole different way, but with the outcome, we feel really blessed,” Christine Blanquart says of her new business, Blanquart’s Rusty Gem Vintage Market, 501 Lebanon Ave., Belleville.

Blanquart and her family have taken a 1960s automobile repair shop and turned

it into a market housing a collection of vintage merchandise and antiques that have been collected from around the country.

“We closed on the building in February with the anticipation of opening in April, not knowing the events that would happen this year. Instead we opened in June. But it all worked out for the best because it gave us time to work on the building for a few months,” she said.

The Rusty Gem is described as a pop-up store that opens on the third weekend of each month to offer collectibles and

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Tax amendment derided by business

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

The business community is loudly speaking out against a proposed constitutional amendment on income taxes facing voters in Illinois.

The governor backs the measure, which would change the state’s income tax from a flat tax to a graduated one based on income. He says the revenue generated would help address the state’s dire financial situation, but opponents say the change will open the way for legislators to take advantage of taxpayers, even long into the future.

“This is a generational change,” said Todd Maisch, the president and CEO of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce. “The amendment makes it easy as possible for legislators to be as creative as possible to get into your checking account.”

Most ballots refer to the measure simply as a Constitution Amendment, but variously it’s coined as the fair tax amendment or the progressive (graduated) tax amendment.

Make no mistake, business sees nothing fair about it.

Maisch said a recent independent study of the issue concludes “what many of us already knew: This is the worst possible time for a \$3.6 billion tax hike on Illinois families and businesses. The pandemic has already crushed small-business owners, manufacturers and farmers, and this independent study proves that the tax hike amendment would be the last straw for many more.”

A “yes” vote would support repealing the state’s constitutional requirement that the state personal income tax be a flat rate and instead allow the state to enact legislation for a graduated income tax.

A “no” vote opposes a constitutional

amendment and would continue to require that the state personal income tax be a flat rate and prohibit a graduated income tax.

In June 2019, Gov. J.B. Pritzker signed SB 687, which would enact a graduated income tax if voters approve. SB 687 would change the state’s income tax from a flat rate to graduated rates beginning on Jan. 1, 2021.

Voting on the issue began Sept. 24 and will conclude on Election Day, Tuesday, Nov. 3.

“The Illinois Chamber is very much opposed to this amendment,” Maisch said recently, speaking to members of Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois. He said a growing coalition of opposition includes the Illinois Farm Bureau, National Federation of Independent Business-Illinois, manufacturing entities and many local chambers, including the Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce.

If approved, Illinois would join some 32 states that operate under a progressive tax system.

Under the Illinois Constitution adopted in 1970, taxes are set at a flat rate, currently 4.95 percent. There are two basic protections in the law. One, is that the state and only the state, not any jurisdictions within the state, can levy a one-time annual tax based on income. The other is that the state is capped on the tax rate it can levy on corporations, currently 9.5 percent.

“If this amendment goes through, both of those taxpayer protections go away,” Maisch said.

He said that a flat rate does not mean that the existing rate can’t be gradually increased.

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The Blanquart family, from left, Carter, Christine, Brad and Chase.



The Illinois Business Journal Celebrates 20 Years

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ILLINOIS BUSINESS JOURNAL ROUTING SLIP

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