



Illinois Business Journal



The principals behind Desk Guardian, from left, Jon Woodrome, Michael Wunderlich, Matt Hankins, CJ Yancey and Landry Sorbel, standing outside Rossman School in Creve Coeur.

GUARDIANS OF THE CLASSROOM

Men's school-friendly business nothing to sneeze at

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Call them guardians of good in an age of bad — men of steel with plastic as their shields. Whatever you call them, the five friends behind Desk Guardian are coming to the rescue of schoolchildren throughout the country. Based in Metro East, their company produces customized sneeze shields for schools, classrooms and

offices. The new business has roots in a conversation that took place early this year at a family birthday party when the talk turned to the safety of schoolchildren during the pandemic. “We were all talking about COVID and what school was going to look like next year,” remembers Michael Wunderlich. “It seemed like there were a

lot of questions and really not too many solutions.” Intrigued by the discussion, Wunderlich did some early research, checking into the potential for barriers in school. He found online products, but they were basic sheets of plastic that would be upwards of \$200 per sneezeguard.

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Grant aids start of dislocated worker training

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

A \$1.47 million grant will be used to support dislocated worker education and training in Metro East, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and one of the biggest challenges may be in finding the participants. Madison County Employment and Training Department has partnered with St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Department and SIUE to serve 100 dislocated workers participating in a digital badging workforce training program to prepare them for occupations such as lab technician, chemical technician and food science technician. Madison County Employment and Training is to administer the program, which will take place over the next 18 months.

The project is awarded by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity as part of the U.S. Department of Labor Employment COVID-19 Recovery funds.

A cast of local and federal officials gathered last month outside the university's Biotechnology Laboratory Incubator, which abuts the National Corn to Ethanol Research Center where many of the potential clients will be trained. Among those present were SIU System President Dan Mahony, SIUE Chancellor Randy Pembroke and Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Denise Cobb, Madison County Board Chairman Kurt Prenzler, Madison County Employment and Training Director Tony Fuhrmann, St. Clair County Intergovernmental Grants Director Rick

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Junk operator says coronavirus has helped fuel home cleanups

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

If you want to clean up in business, junk is a good place to start. And, in these days of pandemic, there appears to be a desperate need for decluttering, as people stuck at home get a good look at the insides of their houses. “Some of it is old couches, old furniture,” says Les Claypool. “I will say this: What I see is people at home trying to make their home more like a vacation. New furniture, new fence, new deck. A lot of it is, ‘Hey, I’m at home, I want to enjoy where I live’.” Remote work has been a boon for people

in the junk business, and one of the biggest in Metro East is 1-800-JUNKPRO, for which Claypool is the area's franchiser. The company, part of a national operator, has two basic services. One is renting of self-service dumpsters. JUNK PRO delivers a bin, the customer fills it up and the company returns to pick it up — contactless in terms of the safety measures, which has been important to residents. On Feb. 1, the company adopted a paperless system for the drivers so that

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HOSPITALS

of Southwestern Illinois

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