

Wednesday, February 17, 2021
Mattoon Business Incubation Center 'Elevate' recognizes graduates

Five recent members of Elevate, a Mattoon based non-profit, were recognized Thursday, January 28, 2021, for their achievements in entrepreneurship. Amy Patrick, Evie Rudibaugh, Katie Haifley, Keegan O'Connell, and Latonya Davies were recognized as the first-ever 'Elevate Celebration of Innovation & Growth.'

With assistance from Elevate, Keegan O'Connell (pictured left) has utilized the KIVA Crowdsourcing Loan Program via the centers' partnership with LISC Rural. This loan will enable his business, Buzzed & Board Media LLC., to expand further.

Latonya Davies (pictured right) has reached new clients for her LLC. All For Them - Latonya's Pet Care Services since becoming an Elevate member.

Evie Rudibaugh registered her business, Peace of Mind Home Services LLC, with the team's help at Elevate. Evie initially found inspiration for her home care services business during her Class E participation, a high school entrepreneurship class that teaches students about starting a business. Elevate has recently become the home of Classe-E, the course which inspired Evie to become a business owner.



Submitted Photo
Left to Right; Keegan O'Connell, Latonya Davies and Evie Rudibaugh

Not pictured members Amy Patrick and Katie Haifley have also graduated from various Elevate programs and look to succeed in their ventures. Amy was the first graduate of Elevates' 6 Step Program and is now operating her own life & wellness education organization online. Katie Haifley was the first Elevate member to graduate from 'The Elevate-Lake Land College Initiative' program, a partnership between

Elevate and Lake Land College. Lake Land College has graciously provided 15 tuition waivers to full members of Elevate. This partnership between Lake Land College and Elevate allows aspiring entrepreneurs to receive the knowledge necessary to start their venture without accruing a significant financial burden.

Elevate looks to the future and is excited for the chance to provide equitable

opportunities and success for all.

The incubation center hopes to encourage, connect and grow small and startup businesses in the region by creating a mixed-use, co-working space that provides resources and opportunities to empower success.

The full list of graduates includes:

Amy Patrick
 Business: Amy Patrick Life & Wellness, LLC.

Location: Mattoon, Coles County, IL
 Program/Service: 6-Step Program

Date of LLC. Registration: October 7, 2020

Amy Patrick is the first graduate of the Elevate 6-Step Program, a course which teaches entrepreneurs how to start a business in 6 simple steps. Amy has since registered her business, Amy Patrick Life & Wellness LLC.

Evie Rudibaugh
 Business: Peace of Mind Home Services, LLC.

Location: Charleston, Coles, County, IL
 Program/Service: Class-E

Date of LLC. Registration: October 23, 2020

Charleston native Evie Rudibaugh is a Class-E graduate and has registered her LLC., Peace of Mind Home Services with the help of Elevate.

Katie Haifley
 Business: TBA

Location: Mattoon, Coles County, IL
 Program/Service: The Elevate-Lake Land Initiative

Date of LLC. Registration: TBA

Katie Haifley is the first Elevate member to graduate from 'The Elevate-Lake Land College Initiative' program, a partnership between Elevate and Lake Land Col-

lege. Katie plans to use the information learned in these courses to open her own business.

Kegan O'Connell
 Business: Buzzed & Board Media, LLC.

Location: Charleston, IL, Coles County

Program/Service: KIVA Loan Via LISC Rural

Date Of LLC. Registration: March 16, 2020

Keegan O'Connell, owner of Buzzed & Board Media LLC., is receiving a \$5,000 loan towards growing his business via Elevate and our partnership with LISC Rural. Using the KIVA crowdsourcing loan platform, Keegan now has funding to hire employees and advance his media production company.

Latonya Davies
 Business: All for Them-Latonya's Pet Care Services, LLC.

Location: Charleston, IL, Coles County

Program/Service: Consultations

Date of LLC Registration: August 5, 2020

Latonya Davies, owner of All for Them - Latonya's Pet Care Services, is successfully growing her pet care business with the help of consultations from business professionals available at Elevate.

Winter weather travel and safety tips from the American Red Cross

Local Volunteers Respond to Home Fire

Volunteers with the American Red Cross helped one individual in Marion impacted by a home fire from January 18 through today.

Red Cross volunteers with the Disaster Action Team provided financial assistance and information about recovery planning to the resident impacted by the incident.

Home fires claim more

lives than all natural disasters combined every year. As the weather gets colder, we see an increase in home fires. A fire can take a home in as little as two minutes. Therefore, escaping in less than two minutes can be the difference between survival and tragedy. The Red Cross encourages everyone to talk to their children about fire safety to help families stay safe. We want to ensure families and children are prepared.

Two steps to prevent fire tragedies: To help protect your family year-round, test your smoke alarms monthly and practice your home fire escape plan until everyone can escape in less than two minutes.

For free home fire safety resources, including an escape plan, visit redcross.org/fire or download the free Red Cross Emergency App. In addition, the free Monster Guard app teaches children

how to prepare for emergencies by playing an engaging game. Download the apps by searching "American Red Cross" in app stores or going to redcross.org/apps.

If you need assistance after a home fire or disaster, please call our dispatch line: 1-844-319-6560.

Winter Weather Safety Tips

Beginning today, snow, freezing rain and windy conditions will be impacting our

region. Here are some winter weather safety tips from the Red Cross:

Winter Travel Safety:

Stay off the road if possible, during severe weather. If you must drive in winter weather, follow these tips:

- * Give your full attention to the road.
- * Don't follow other vehicles too closely. Sudden stops are difficult on snowy roadways.
- * Don't use cruise con-

trol when driving in winter weather.

- * Don't pass snowplows.
- * Ramps, bridges and overpasses freeze before roadways.
- * If you become stranded, stay in the vehicle and wait to help. Do not leave the vehicle to search for assistance unless help is visible within 100 yards (91

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Tuscola native Chana Ray is appointed Douglas County EMA Director

By Doris Elmore

It is the first Tuesday of the month, and it is 10 a.m.; if you are connected to the Hyper-Reach Emergency Notification System, you will hear the pleasant voice of Chana Ray, Douglas County's new EMA Director, conducting a monthly test. Chana was officially appointed to the position on January 20 at a meeting of the Douglas County Board. Her appointment is retroactive to January 1, 2021 and will continue to 2024.

Chana was born and raised in Tuscola and is a 1989 graduate of Tuscola High School. She earned an Associate's Degree as Administrative Assistant from Parkland College in 1991. Chana started her career with the Douglas County EMA/Coroner's Office in 2008 as an Administrative Assistant. She served 10 years as a Deputy Coroner and in 2018 became the Deputy Director for EMA under Joe Victor. Joe passed away unexpectedly in May, 2020. Chana was appointed Interim Director after his death and became the permanent director on Jan. 20. In this role she will continue the work that Victor began to plan for emergencies and help keep the county running

during disasters. Chana said that Joe was grooming her to take over the position when he died. She says he was the best mentor anyone could have.

If you walk into Chana's office in the Douglas County Annex across from the Court House, you will find her at her computer hard at work managing grants for EMA. There is a great deal of work involved to make sure the annual grants, FEMA (Federal Management Agency) and IEMA (Illinois Emergency Management Agency) are kept up to the criteria needed. When younger, Chana was a volunteer with the Medical Reserve Corp and Search & Rescue. When she wasn't working her other part-time jobs, she would go into the office to work her volunteer job filing and any other odd jobs needed done.

Prior to being hired at the office, she took an EMT class that was taught by Joe Victor. She found out they had a lot of family and friend connections in this field. Joe was the type of person that knew everyone and worked hard for the betterment of Douglas County. As the years passed, Chana worked as Adm. Assistant and then Deputy Di-



rector. Joe had made many connections over the years and made sure Chana was acquainted with them as well. She says they are people in the EMA field that she can depend on for help.

Her day-to-day activities include monitoring the

grants, which include three exercises a year, for example the tornado exercise in Garrett in 2013.

The last exercise was in 2018. This was a functional exercise train derailment in the middle of Tuscola. This also involved local emergency agencies, police, fire and HAZMAT. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all the agencies, including EMA, have been kept busy and no exercise was done. They continue to work with the pandemic issues.

Chana says they are not able to have full in-person meetings so they continue Zoom discussions on the training exercise plan. Every other week is a Zoom COVID task force meeting. Each task force has a part in the meeting including Douglas County Health Dept., municipalities, EMA, schools, nursing homes, and Brian Moody, President of the Fire Association. The EMA helped in getting the PPE needed by first responders, police, fire and nursing homes.

Chana can not say enough about the volunteers. She adds that they have been a blessing and assisted in so many ways during COVID. She says the departments and volunteers have learned to adapt and overcome.

Chana credits Joe Victor for teaching her "the ropes" and learning the proper way things should be done. Joe had worked for Douglas County for over 40 years. She is also proud of her family. Chana's husband, Todd, and her children, Christian and Brooke, and her daughter-in-law, Cheyenne, are all very much emergency service oriented and involved in EMA, Search and Rescue, EMS, Fire Department and Dispatch. She also has a grandson, Asher, who will probably follow in the family footsteps as he grows up.

Chana states, "It is my pleasure to serve the citizens of Douglas County. I enjoy helping them. If I don't have the answer, I will find it out. Over the years I have been trained by the best. This is where my life has been guided, helping others." Chana wants to make sure Joe Victor's legacy lives on. She wants to make him proud. As the new EMA director, she is off to a great start.

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