



Leadership Council announces 2023 officers, executive committee

The Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois held its annual meeting on Friday, Dec. 2, 2022, at the Regency in O’Fallon, Ill. At the meeting, board members voted to keep the Council’s 2022 officers in place for 2023.

Serving for the year ahead as president is Gary Hoelscher of Millenia Professional Services. The Korte Company’s Jay Korte will continue to serve as vice president. Kathy Federico of Jack Schmitt Dealerships will serve another year as treasurer. Tim Giddens of Progressive Recovery, Inc., will serve again in 2023 as secretary.

Six new members joined the Leadership Council’s Executive Committee for 2023. New members include Dan Barger, Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council; Thomas Berry, Jr., Jackson Lewis P.C.; Chris Blair, World Wide Technology Raceway; Robert DeConcini, TWM, Inc.; Dr. James Minor, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville; and Eric Whitfield, Ameren Illinois.

They join the four officers and other current Executive Committee members Steve Donahue, Horner & Shiffrin, Inc.; George Evans, Kaskaskia College; Rick Ortyl, Metro East Industries, Inc.; Rick Parks, First National Bank of Waterloo; Donna Richter, Southern Illinois Builders Association; and Steve Zuber, BarberMurphy.

Three long-standing members of the Council’s Executive Committee also departed due to term limits set forth in the organization’s bylaws.

“We want to thank Bruce Holland,



Mike Riley, and Dennis Wilmsmeyer for their years of leadership and direction,” said Executive Director Kyle Anderson. “We look forward to having them continue to be involved in the Leadership Council, and will rely on their guidance moving forward.”

The Leadership Council has been the premier organization fostering economic growth in Southwestern Illinois since 1983. The council strives to unite the region for growth through its eight committees, serving Madison, St. Clair, Macoupin, Clinton, Monroe, Jersey, Bond, Washington, and Calhoun Counties.

For more information, visit online at leadershipcouncilswil.com or call (618) 692-9745.

The Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois is excited to celebrate its 40th year of advocating for our terrific region. In partnership with the Illinois Business Journal, the Leadership Council is introducing “Leaders & Legacies” to honor and celebrate the leaders of the Leadership Council and all they have accomplished working in unison with local government and business principles. This month we look at its formation and honor those with its vision.

-Kyle Anderson, Executive Director

40 years later: The mission continues

On May 19, 1983, the Leadership Council Southwestern Illinois was officially established as an organization dedicated to taking an active role in promoting the general welfare, economic development, and image of Southwestern Illinois. Now, 40 years later, that mission remains the same – to unite the region for growth. “It has brought the region together, from Waterloo to Godfrey,” said co-founder Ralph Korte. “It’s not a competition between Madison and St. Clair County that there would have been before. It has brought the region together because people know each other.”

While the organization was founded in 1983, its roots can be traced back even further. In a 2018 interview, Ralph Korte, founder of the Korte Company, said the head of the St. Louis Regional Chamber and Growth Association (RCGA) was frustrated more Illinois companies weren’t joining and suggested forming a new organization in Illinois. Korte discussed the idea with Carl Mathias of Illinois Power (which would eventually become part of Ameren) and the

two agreed the only way it would work would be to involve a “neutral party,” in this case Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville. They approached then-SIUE president Earl Lazerson, who asked for a month to think about the proposal. In the fall of 1982, Lazerson invited 25-30 presidents and CEOs of major Southwestern Illinois companies to an event without telling them why, which is where he laid out his vision for what would become the Leadership Council.

The organization was formed with 30 members and was headquartered on the campus of SIUE. Lazerson passed away in October 2021, but in a 2018 interview he said, “I am proudest of the fact that the original vision of those people has been fully substantiated. There is no question in my mind that what they hoped would happen has happened.”

As mentioned before, the mission of the Leadership Council is “uniting the region for growth.” That often means working behind the scenes and even letting others bask in the glory of the success, so long as we are doing the right thing to move Southwestern Illinois forward and make it a better place to live and work.

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