

Journal Notes: A regional roundup of what’s happening at the start of 2023

Harvested from the Southwestern Illinois and Metro East ‘grapevine’

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The Illinois Business Journal recently launched this monthly “Journal Notes” feature to share business-related briefs from all over the Metro East and Southwestern Illinois region.

New establishments, ribbon cuttings, development updates, what’s coming, and other verified tidbits being talked about, but maybe not ready for a full news story, can be shared here.

If you have something you’d like considered for a story or a brief, send it in an email to macmeske@ibjonline.com. Help us help you spread the word.

Foxes Boxes Bakes and Blooms held a grand opening and ribbon cutting in mid-January at its new **Bethalto** location at 515 N. Bellwood. Owner Tanya Fox said that the new location triples the space and its footprint from their former East Alton location. With a larger location, Foxes Boxes is able to expand its menu offerings and its hours of operation.

The **Village of Godfrey** recently shared that a residence located at 5330 Godfrey Road, across from Moto Mart, had been demolished to make way for the construction of a new **Scooters Coffee**. Also noted was the demolition of the two buildings located on the former Halloran auto lot. This preliminary site work was completed as a part of partnered plans with **IDOT** to **extend Stamper Lane** into the property. The Village said that there are plans for the site to include two new retailing facilities. Also noted: **Dollar Tree** is open and **Walmart** has completed a \$6 million renovation.

In the months ahead, **Edwardsville** will welcome **Play it Again Sports**, a new (and used) sporting goods store. Dan Brynildsen is the new store’s owner. Play It Again Sports is a hometown store



Foxes Boxes Bakes and Blooms held a grand opening and ribbon cutting on Saturday, Jan. 14, 2023, at its new location at 515 N. Bellwood, Bethalto. The RiverBend Growth Association team coordinated the ribbon cutting for owner Tanya Fox. In attendance were RBGA members and ambassadors, Bethalto Mayor Gary Bost, building owner Dwight Fowler, and community members. Fox’s team includes her husband Brian Holmes, Mallory, Paul, Diana, Maranda, Alena, Nathan, and Denis. Foxes Boxes boasts itself as the area’s only union bakery. Breakfast and lunch options are now available in addition to an extensive variety of baked goods and French macarons. Flower arrangements grown on the couple’s local organic farm are also available seasonally. Foxes Boxes can be reached at (618) 251-8081. (Photo courtesy RBGA)

with a stocked variety of new and quality used sporting goods for all levels, from beginner to varsity and for fun or for pros. The Edwardsville location will be at 4 Club Centre Court, Suite A. Plans are to be fully open in March.

Edwardsville also celebrated the opening of **Pretzel Pretzel** in early January at the southwest corner of Troy and Center Grove Roads, 6694 Center Grove Road. And according to **Village of Glen Carbon** reports, a new **Chick-fil-A** is on tap to open on Feb. 9 at **Orchard Town Center**.

Granite City is welcoming to **Ollie’s Bargain Outlet** and a combination **Family Dollar/Dollar Tree** location to Nameoki Commons Shopping Plaza, 3521 Nameoki Road. The current separate, standalone locations of Family Dollar and Dollar Tree nearby will relocate to the combo store location. The space these retailers are filling has sat vacant since the former Shop n Save store closed in 2018.

Fairview Heights also recently welcomed **Scooter’s Coffee**, now open at 5709 N. Illinois St. And just a little way down the road, construction is

being completed on the region’s first **Popshelf**, a new retail concept from Dollar General, to open in the former Pier 1 building in the Lincoln Place Shopping Center at 6101 N. Illinois St. Popshelf focuses on home decor, seasonal entertaining and health and beauty, with 95 percent of items priced below \$5. Its store’s color scheme is a more adventurous pink and white versus Dollar General’s green and yellow.

On Jan. 10, the **City of O’Fallon’s** Planning Commission approved plans to move forward to the city’s Community Development Committee a **redevelopment of the former Southview Plaza Shopping Center** that will include a **Starbucks** in its front along Route 50 as well as **several new retail shops** and a **multi-story residential facility with inside parking**. Other businesses noted as coming soon to O’Fallon include **Dunkin Donuts** at 1755 Frank Scott Parkway, **Gigi’s Italian Market** at 1407 W. Highway 50 Ste. 102, and an **Out-back Steakhouse** to be built in front of the Drury Inn off Central Park Drive.

Zeal Marketing & Consulting, Huneidi Services partner to launch ZH Sites in Edwardsville

New web design collective ensures small, local businesses access to affordable, custom websites



From left, ZH Sites founding partners Kate Allaria Cantrell of Zeal Marketing & Consulting and Ryan Huneidi of Huneidi Services. (Photo courtesy ZH Sites)

When creating their company websites, small businesses often had only two options to choose from: An agency-led custom design with a high price tag or a basic template with limited functionality and a lack of branding.

Through their new collaboration, ZH Sites, two Edwardsville-based web experts – Kate Allaria Cantrell of Zeal Marketing & Consulting, a full-service marketing firm, and Ryan Huneidi of Huneidi Services, an IT consulting and managed services & security company – have brought together a collective of creative professionals who custom-tailor solutions to each client’s needs.

This collective of marketing consultants, copywriters, designers, social media specialists, and IT experts works together under the core belief that every small business deserves a powerful custom website without a high price tag.

The mission of ZH Sites is to ensure that companies of every size can launch an affordable website that fits their budget without compromising design or usability. Each site is tailored to a client’s needs and budget and designed to drive traffic and generate leads.

“For the past two years, our separate teams have worked to-

gether on various website projects,” said Huneidi. “We discovered that by partnering right from the start on each project, we can combine our IT and marketing expertise to see the big picture and problem-solve beyond a simple website.”

ZH Sites clients can tap into various solutions to meet their marketing objectives, including strategy, branding, custom design, messaging, search engine optimization, and business integration. The partners have successfully developed custom websites for companies in numerous industries, but specialize in multi-family properties, healthcare, and small businesses.

“At ZH Sites, we take the time to do a deep dive and really understand the company’s business process, the owner’s goals, and the ‘why’ behind it all,” Cantrell explained. “Everything we produce is custom because we want our clients to truly feel represented as the experts they are. By far, my favorite feedback is when a client sees the homepage design for the first time and says, ‘You guys really get me!’”

To learn more about partnering with ZH Sites, visit www.zh-sites.com or call (618) 580-7114.

Discover Downstate Illinois: New brand identity launched by regional tourism bureau

For more than a decade, ILLINOIS-South Tourism has grown its awareness throughout the region as it helps promote communities, businesses, attractions, and events in their 20-plus county coverage area of Southern Illinois. Today the bureau is announcing that after ten years of being known as ILLINOISouth, they are rebranding to Discover Downstate Illinois, which will take effect immediately.

“This is a project that we have been working on very diligently over the last eleven months,” explains Darlene Chapman, president/finance director for Discover Downstate Illinois. “This journey has included surveys, countless brainstorm sessions, focus groups, and we took all of that information and came up with a new identity that we are very proud of. We believe that it describes our area of the state perfectly, and it allows us to keep expanding our reach in years to come.”

Aside from the name change, Discover Downstate Illinois has a new look as well – complete with updated logo designs and a new color scheme. The bureau has also refreshed its website, which can now be found at downstateil.org. Another exciting piece of news for the bureau is that they recently released their new-look 2023 Visitors Guide, which is the 20th edition of the publication.

“We are elated to be able to time the release of our 2023 Visitors Guide in conjunction with our new brand launch,” says Andy Waterman, communications director for



Discover Downstate Illinois. “This year’s guide features fun segments that highlight our 20th edition. Folks can read about 20 things to do under \$20 or learn about 20 notable events in our region. We’ve also peppered in interviews with past employees, past board members, and tourism partners who have helped build the bureau over the past two decades into what it is today. We have added in more editorial so that not only is this a guide with some great travel ideas, but it’s also more like a magazine that folks can look to for a few stories,” Waterman adds.

Discover Downstate Illinois currently covers the following counties: Bond, Clark, Clay, Clinton, Crawford, Cumberland, Edwards, Fayette, Hamilton, Jasper, Lawrence, Marion, Monroe, Perry, Randolph, Richland, St. Clair, Wabash, Washington, Wayne, White, and the City of Highland.