

RBGA Young Adults Committee annual scholarship fund raffle gets underway

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The RiverBend Growth Association’s Young Adults Committees reaching out to ask for business community support for its annual scholarship fund raffle. Raffle proceeds benefit the RBGA YAC scholarship program.

The Young Adults Committee of the RiverBend Growth Association is composed of volunteers from the Growth Association membership who mentor student representatives from the organization’s member high schools. The goal is to teach students to work collaboratively with a common goal of benefiting the community at large.

Participating students learn organizational, management, and leadership skills throughout the process. YAC members also leave with letters of recommendation for future endeavors and with continued benefits of lifelong friendships and ongoing professional relationships.

From December to April, YAC members learn about area community-based nonprofit organizations, developing their professional skills and furthering their commitment to community service. They will also enhance their public speaking, leadership, organization, time management, sales and marketing skills.

This year, the YAC students have chosen to volunteer with five organizations throughout this school year: Alton Little Theater, Kreative Kids Learning Center, Madison County Child Advocacy Center, Riverbend Family Ministries, and Treehouse Wildlife Center.

YAC students then plan an event to apply what they learn from their mentors and from their active involvement. The intent is to raise money while also learning the skills necessary to design, organize, and host a fundraiser. Money raised by the YAC event becomes year-end scholarship awards. Those students who show high levels of professionalism and active involvement are eligible to receive an award.

There are 22 students from local high schools participating in the 2023 Young Adults Committee. They include upper-grade high school students from Fortitude School and Alton, Civic Memorial (Bethalto), East Alton-Wood River, Marquette Catholic and Roxana High Schools.

YAC senior student representatives for the 2022-23 academic year include Anbrielle Blake and Jayden Ross from Alton High School, Olivia Goodman and Benjamin Werts from Civic Memo-

rial High School, Mary Nguyen and Mia Seibert from East Alton-Wood River High School, Max Cogan and Samantha Hentrich from Alton’s Marquette Catholic High School, and Lily Daugherty and Ava Meneses from Roxana High School.

YAC junior student representatives this year are Emily Schrumpf and Khalilia Spitz from Alton High School, Alyssa Abernathy and Taylor Stanford from Civic Memorial High School, Kylan Johnson and Mia Plumb from East Alton-Wood River High School, Blake Schaper and Jacob Schaper from Fortitude School, Lawson Bell and Marissa Statos from Alton’s Marquette Catholic High School, and Joshua Gilbert and Calista Stahlhut from Roxana High School.

Several RBGA business members volunteer their time and knowledge to

mentor the Young Adults Committee each year. This year’s mentors include John Barnerd of Simmons Hanly Conroy, Terri Herbstreit with 1st MidAmerica Credit Union, Tiffany James with Midwest Members Credit Union, Brian Campbell of Colman’s Country Campers and Andrea Schrader with MillerKing LLC.

The sponsorship opportunity window is now open to help support the raffle drawing to take place in May, and the RBGA is asking for help from the business community in supporting this fundraiser.

Gift cards and monetary donations of \$25, \$50, \$75, \$100 or other amounts are welcome, as are other ideas such as event tickets, merchandise, etc. Businesses and organizations that donate will be recognized and promoted on

the RiverBend Growth Association’s social media platforms and website.

For more information or to donate, contact RiverBend Growth Association Member Engagement Director Stefanie Withers at (618) 467-2284, swithers@growthassociation.com. To learn more, visit online at growthassociation.com/yac. Donations can also be mailed directly to the RBGA, P.O. Box 425, Godfrey, IL 62035.

Raffle ticket sales began on March 15, 2023, and will only be available for purchase online. The raffle drawing will be streamed over Facebook Live starting at 9:30 a.m. on May 11, 2023, with winners contacted as soon as possible after the drawing. Reach out to Withers, or email info@growthassociation.com, regarding tickets for the raffle.

DCEO announces \$175 million in B2B grants for restaurants, hotels, creative arts industry

Applications open April 5 through May 10; community navigators available to conduct outreach, provide technical assistance

Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) recently announced \$175 million in available grant funding through the Back to Business (B2B) program.

Following state recovery for businesses totaling nearly \$1.5 billion, the latest American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) -funded opportunity is designed to provide additional support for the hardest-hit sectors, including restaurants (B2B Restaurants), hotels (B2B Hotels), and businesses or organizations in the creative arts sector (B2B Arts). To provide hands-on support and raise awareness about the program, the State has mobilized a network of more than 100 community navigators across Illinois.

“In the three years since COVID-19 brought our state, our nation, and our world to a standstill, Illinois businesses have come back swinging—in part thanks to our Back to Business program,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “My administration is committed to helping small business owners move past survival and onto long-term success—and this latest investment of \$175 million in B2B grants does exactly that.”

As outlined in statute, B2B Arts and B2B Restaurants grant award amounts will be determined by rev-

enue declines, as reflected on tax returns, and funding for hotels will be allocated by number of rooms.

Applications are open from April 5 through May 10, 2023, and awards are expected to be made several weeks after the deadline date. All eligible applicants will receive a grant as long as the business meets eligibility requirements and submits proper documentation and attestations.

The program design is based on legislation establishing the Restaurant Employment and Stabilization Grant Program (\$50 million), Hotel Jobs Recovery Grant Program (\$75 million) and the Illinois Creative Recovery Grant program (\$50 million). The funding is designed to offset losses and support job retention in the hardest-hit industries.

“Illinois’ businesses have made a strong recovery since the most difficult times of the pandemic and we’re proud to build upon that progress through additional support for hard-hit industries,” said DCEO Director Kristin A. Richards. “Restaurants, hotels and creative arts are industries designed to bring people together, and with an additional \$175 million we are investing in communities and supporting continued economic development.”

DCEO has enlisted a robust network of more than 100 community navigators to conduct outreach and provide techni-

cal assistance in the hardest hit communities. Community Navigators will be conducting outreach, hosting webinars, and supporting prospective applicants to prepare before the application opens on April 5, 2023. This is in addition to available small business support available through Illinois’ network of Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs).

In order to manage a high volume of applications in a timely manner, DCEO has enlisted a program administrator – the National Community Reinvestment Coalition Community Development Fund (NCRCCDF) – to support with application review, provide technical portal support for applicants, manage the development of the application portal and provide support in processing payments.

“The impacts of the pandemic are far from over for small businesses and its aftermath continues to threaten their long-term success, especially for those owned by Black, Latino, and other underserved entrepreneurs,” said Marisa Calderon, Executive Director of NCRCCDF. “These grants will help to shore up small businesses, preserve what they have worked so hard to build, and save jobs in our communities.”

• For the full eligibility list and guidelines, visit <https://dceo.illinois.gov/smallbizassistance/b2b.html>.

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