

RiverBend Growth Association hosts 2023 Chamber Choice Awards luncheon May 24

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RiverBend Growth Association members and honorees gathered at The Commons on the main campus of Lewis and Clark Community College in Godfrey on May 24 for the 2023 Chamber Choice Awards luncheon. This annual celebration marks those who have impacted the organization and the communities it serves over the years while also awarding a host of scholarships to its Young Adults Committee members.

“Individuals, organizations, businesses and government are annually nominated, selected and recognized for their contributions to the area’s quality of life, the economy, and for making the RiverBend such a wonderful place to live,” RBGA President John Keller noted. “The awards are meant to show appreciation for the efforts of the organization, or the individual, who has promoted the work and the purpose of the Growth Association and its efforts to unite the region into a cohesive working body that keeps our individual communities strong.”

The Pioneer Award, sponsored by Alton Memorial Hospital, was presented to Margarette Trushel. Trushel is a founding member of the Oasis Women’s Center in Alton, and has served as its executive director for the past 43 years. Trushel was unable to attend the event; accepting the award on her behalf was Marcy Jacobs, who serves as the client services coordinator at Oasis and has worked with Trushel for the last 35 years.

“A pioneer is described as someone who sees potential to solve a need and is willing to try new things to achieve that,” explained Dan St. Peters of the Growth Association’s board as the award was presented. “Over 46 years ago, award winner Margarette Trushel saw a need in our community, and that she had the potential to comfort, console and counsel those with this need.”

Sponsored by 1st MidAmerica Credit Union, Beverly Farm Foundation was next presented with the Perseverance Award. This award recognizes “the continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure or opposition,” said St. Peters. Beverly Farm has served its families and the area for the past 125 years. Accepting the award for the organization was its CEO, Crystal Officer.

There were two Captain Awards presented this year. These awards are presented to an area business or governmental body for their efforts to improve the quality of life in the Riverbend region. The first Captain Award, sponsored by CFCU, was presented to Old Bakery Beer Co. and its owners, Lauren Pattan and James Rogalsky. The second Captain Award, sponsored by Werts Welding and Tank Service, was presented to the City of Wood River. Mayor Tom Stalcup accepted the award on behalf of the city.

Therese Kuddes was presented with the Chamber Champion Award, which was sponsored by Midwest Members Credit Union. This award is given to an individual who has helped the RiverBend Growth Association achieve its mission and goals through his or her participation in the organization’s various fundraisers, projects or leadership. Kuddes and her company, Kuddes Advertising Specialties, has been a member since its inception in the 1980s.

Sponsored by Cope Plastics, Inc., there were also two Legacy Awards presented. These awards are given to outstanding individuals who have recently retired after years of service to the



The RiverBend Growth Association hosted its annual Chamber Choice Awards luncheon on May 24 at Lewis and Clark Community College in Godfrey. Beverly Farm Foundation, as the event’s Title Sponsor and Perseverance Award honoree, had staff on hand to greet attendees and answer any questions about Beverly Farm’s services and employment opportunities. (Melissa Crockett Meske/Illinois Business Journal)



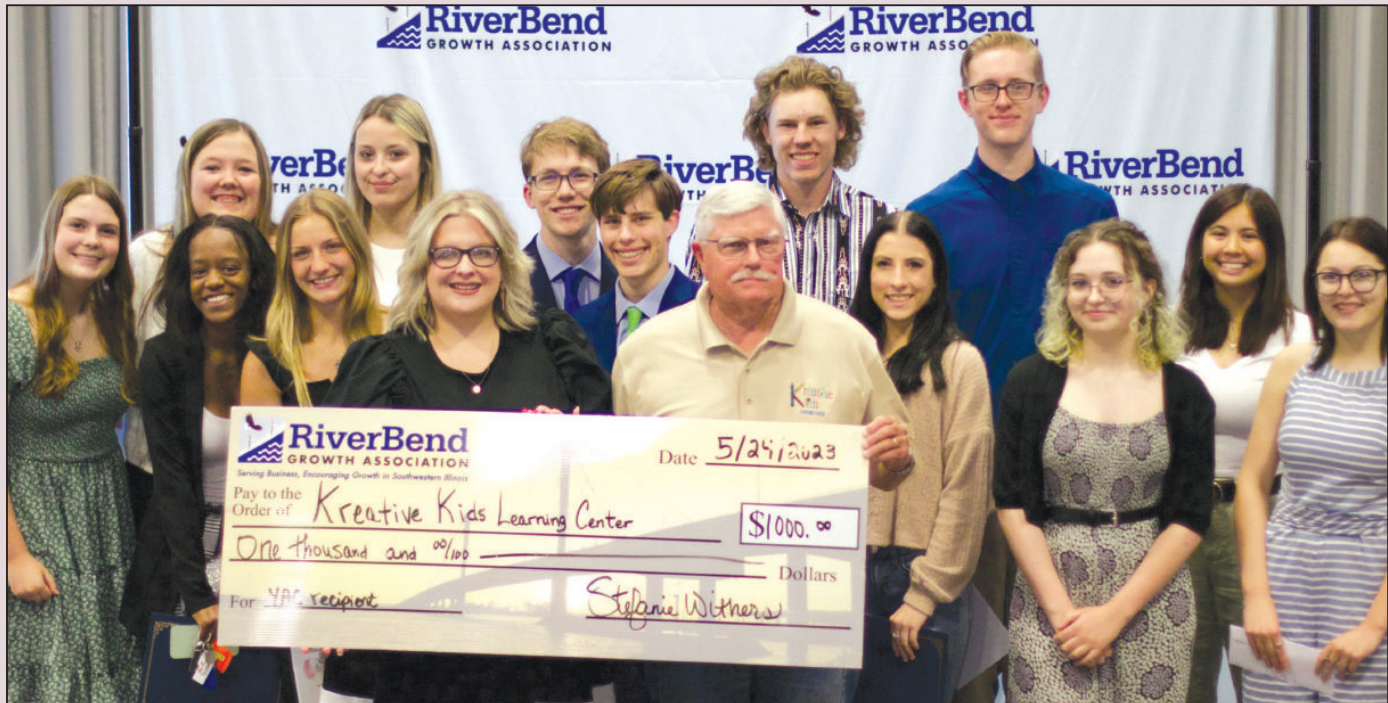
Marcy Jacobs, client services coordinator at Oasis Women’s Center in Alton, accepted the Pioneer Award on behalf of honoree and Oasis Executive Director Margarette Trushel. (Melissa Crockett Meske/Illinois Business Journal)



A second Captain Award was presented by the RiverBend Growth Association at its May 24 luncheon to the City of Wood River. Mayor Tom Stalcup accepted the award on the city’s behalf. (Melissa Crockett Meske/Illinois Business Journal)



Therese Kuddes, owner of Kuddes Advertising Specialties, was the recipient of the RiverBend Growth Association’s Chamber Champion Award on May 24 at the organization’s annual awards luncheon. (Courtesy RiverBend Growth Association)



Members of this year’s RiverBend Growth Association’s Young Adults Committee raised funds through a raffle that allowed them to present Kreative Kids Learning Center in Godfrey with a check for \$1,000 as a part of the May 24 Chamber Choice Awards luncheon held at Lewis and Clark Community College. (Courtesy RiverBend Growth Association)

community as well as to the organization. The first went to Dick Propes, retired Alton School District administrator and Alton Memorial Hospital volunteer. The second went to Karen Baker-Brcic, who recently sold the Alton Marina after owning and operating it since 1996.

Ten members of the RiverBend Growth Association’s Young Adults Committee were then awarded scholarships after completing this past year’s worth of community service, leadership growth and service learning development.

Seven scholarships were awarded at \$500 each to Sammy Hentrich of Marquette Catholic High School in Alton, Calista Stahlhut of Roxana High, Blake Schaper and Jacob Schaper from Fortitude School, Khas Spitz of Alton High, Alyssa Abernathy of Civic Memorial High School in Bethalto, and Mia Seibert of East Alton-Wood River High School.

The YAC’s Mary Nguyen, from East Alton-Wood River High, was the recipient of a \$1,000 scholarship. Alton High’s Emily Schruppf was awarded a

\$2,000 scholarship. Then rounding out the scholarship awards, with a presentation of a \$3,000 scholarship, was Joshua Gilbert from Roxana High.

The Young Adults Committee also presented Kreative Kids Learning Center of Godfrey with a check for \$1,000, funds they had raised through their annual raffle project.

For more information about the RiverBend Growth Association, visit online at growthassociation.com or call (618) 467-2280.