

‘Be the Change:’ Local chamber empowers professionals to lead change by embracing it

By MELISSA CROCKETT MESKE
IBJ Managing Editor
macmeske@ibjonline.com

The fifth annual “Be The Change” Women’s Conference took place on Nov. 6 at The Outlet Event Center, which is part of the Edison’s Entertainment Complex in Edwardsville. This year’s theme was “Transforming Generations.”

Well over 100 attendees packed the day-long agenda that featured both morning breakout sessions and after-lunch presentations by a diverse group of regional experts. Among the attendees were several local high school students who are a part of the CEO program.

“When planning this year’s conference, we wanted to focus on engaging multiple generations and five different generations were represented at the event,” said Troy/Maryville/St. Jacob/Marine Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Dawn Mushill. “We saw many of our 108 [attendees] taking notes and engaging with our speakers throughout the event.”

Morning breakout session topics included “Breaking Imposter Syndrome” by Jeff Koziatek, “Step Into Your Domme Power” with Jennie Bellinger, “Emotional Intelligence – Understanding It and Using It” with Tracy Bianco, and “Shared Leadership: How to Influence Culture From Every Position on the Organization Chart” with Wendy Symer.

After-lunch talking points included topics “AI – It’s A Tool – Use It As Such” presented by Joe Harris with Sales Mastery Shop and “Bridging Generations” with 1st MidAmerica Credit Union’s Beth Newcom. Morning talking points, prior to the breakout sessions, discussed “Successful Women in a Male Dominated Industry” through a panel presentation by Carol Sparks of Beckemeier LeMoine Law, Linda Manley of Edward Jones and TechKnow Solutions’ Michell Stockmann.

Throughout the day at various intervals, a series of five life tips were shared as well. For example, the final set, “Five Tips for a More Powerful You,” presented by Sparks, who also serves as board chair for the chamber, included: “Create a power list; trust the power in the process; rely on the power of the momentum; use the power of ‘one more’ questions; and share your perspective-it is powerful.”

Attendees also enjoyed a light breakfast, a taco bar buffet lunch, and a fall fruit bar along with a series of door prizes. Most importantly, though, attendees met like-minded people, expanding their own circles while further strengthening the woman’s place in the workplace and in the world.

“The combination of professional speakers, riveting panelists and a beautiful venue helped to make this year’s Women’s Conference a huge success,” Mushill said further. “The purpose of the conference is to bring together women (and men) who can meet other professionals, offer a learning environment with diverse topics and enjoy a great day out.”

“The event was a great end to the Chamber’s 40th anniversary year,” Mushill added. “We felt such a great vibe in the room.” That vibe carried into the post-event networking, and throughout the conversations among all who had the opportunity to take part in this year’s event.

Next year’s date has already been set, be sure to mark your calendars for Nov. 5, 2025.

For more information, reach out to the TMSM Chamber at (618) 667-8769, info@troymaryvillecoc.com, or visit online at <https://www.troymaryvillecoc.com/>.



Wendy Symer, at the photo’s far right, can be seen leading the interactive breakout session, “Shared Leadership: How To Influence Culture From Every Position on the Organizational Chart,” as a part of the day-long Nov. 6 Women’s Conference hosted by the Troy/Maryville/St. Jacob/Marine Chamber of Commerce at The Outlet at Edison’s in Edwardsville.



Joe Harris with Sales Mastery Shop presents the after-lunch talking point topic “AI – It’s A Tool – Use It As Such” at the Nov. 6 Women’s Conference hosted by the Troy/Maryville/St. Jacob/Marine Chamber of Commerce.



Left: 1st MidAmerica Credit Union’s Beth Newcom shares a laugh with attendees during her after-lunch presentation, “Bridging Generations,” as a part of the fifth annual Be The Change Women’s Conference hosted by the Troy/Maryville/St. Jacob/Marine Chamber of Commerce on Nov. 6.



Right: Linda Manley with Edward Jones shares a set of five life tips during the afternoon sessions of the Nov. 6 Be The Change Women’s Conference held at The Outlet at Edison’s in Edwardsville.

Photos by Melissa Crockett Meske/
Illinois Business Journal