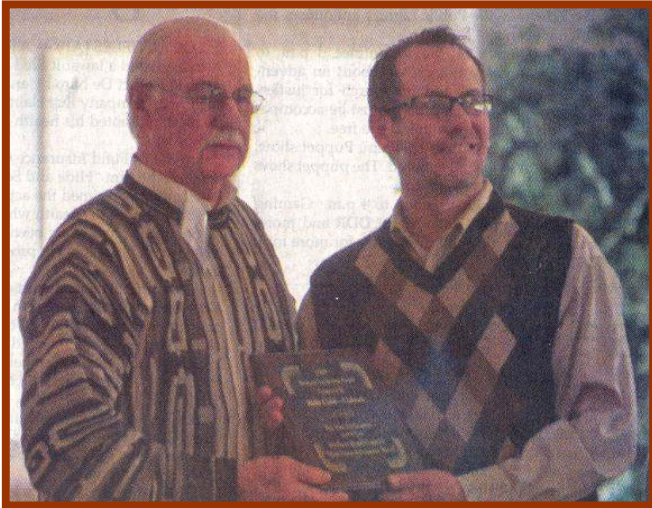


Edwardsville Intelligencer

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Board recognizes top area businesses

Steve Rensberry, the Edwardsville Intelligencer



Making a difference – Jack Minner, standing in for Madison County Board Chairman Alan Dunstan, presents awards to Kelly Cobb, owner and operator of the Edwardsville Culver's Restaurant, top, and bottom, to representatives Jessica Rose, Executive Administrator, and Shawntaya Wagner, Recruiting Specialist, of Your Travel Biz, a travel business that develops, sells, and supports online travel Web sites for referring travel agents. The Madison-Bond County Workforce Investment Board presented the awards to the local businesses for demonstrating leadership and making significant contributions to workforce and economic development activities at a luncheon Wednesday at Sunset Hills Country Club.

Edwardsville's own Culver's Restaurant and owner-operator Kelly Cobb were among the honorees at an awards banquet recently hosted by the Madison-Bond County Workforce Investment Board.

The annual event was conducted at Sunset Hills Country Club in Edwardsville and featured the bestowing of a total of 11 awards.

Culver's was recognized with the board's 2008 Business Leadership Award, which recognizes private sector companies which have made significant contributions to workforce and economic development activities.

In the two years since opening its Edwardsville location, the business has immersed itself in the community, including making contributions to the American Red Cross, creating a youth scholarship program and conducting fundraisers with 10 percent of sales going to charitable organizations.

Cobb himself is a member of the Workforce Investment Board and serves as Youth Council President and as a member of the board's Marketing Committee.

"I was surprised and very honored," Cobb said, referring to the outstanding effort put forward by the location's 40 employees, which are called partners.

He expressed optimism about future activities with the board.

"As part of the Workforce Investment Board, I look forward to working with all the committees to create a cohesiveness and synergy between (them), Cobb said.

The Wood River-based Internet travel business Your Travel Biz (YTB), accessible at YourTravelBiz.com, also was a recipient of the 2008 Business Leadership Award.

Founded in 2001 by J. Lloyd "Coach" Tomer, Scott Tomer and Kim Sorenson, the company has grown from just six employees to more than 250.

The company is currently involved with a \$10 million renovation project of the former K-Mart store, where it is located, and expects to employ close to 600 employees by year's end.

YTB develops, sells and supports online travel Web sites for referring agents.

Debra Angleton was this year's Individual Leadership Award recipient.

Angleton has worked for more than 30 years with the Madison County Employment and Training Department (MCETD) and was honored for going the extra mile as office supervisor during some very trying times last year, which included a serious family illness and the unexpected death of long-term MCETD employee Susan Hutchens.

Individual Achievement Awards, given to those "who have overcome significant

obstacles in achieving their personal career goals,” went to Shelley Greenwood, Trinetta Bolds, Denietra Franklin, Patrick Grant, David Holt and Toni Reynolds.

The 2008 Innovative Solutions Award went to the BEST Project.

BEST, which stands for Basic and Effective Supervisory Training, was developed to respond to a nursing shortage in southwestern Illinois and operated successfully from March 2005 to June 2007, drawing the participation of 837 employees and 12 employers. Of the participants, 243 were employed at one of three area hospitals, Anderson Hospital in Maryville, Alton Memorial Hospital and St. Anthony's Health Center.

Connie Carroll, a full-time employee with the Head Start program, was honored with a Journey Award, which recognizes the accomplishments of an individual whose workforce journey has brought about more than just their own success. This is the first year in which this award has been given.

Finally, Greenwood also was recognized by the Workforce Investment Board for receiving an Individual Achievement Award from the state last October in Springfield. Greenwood was noted for maintaining a 3.7 grade point average while at the same time caring for a daughter with autism, attending school and working part time.

“This is our 20th awards banquet. Whenever I learn about the stories of nominees, I truly appreciate their courage, perseverance and positive attitudes to overcome any challenges they have faced. They possess the very spirit that this community needs to share and promote,” WIB Chairman Rod Wolter said during his opening remarks.

The Madison-Bond County Workforce Investment Board works in cooperation with the Madison County Employment and Training Department to promote area workforce development and resources and to distribute funds that improve a community's overall economic well-being.