



theVoice

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**GROUNDBREAKING
 CEREMONY FOR 'SILENT
 SPORTS' TRAILS, MAY 3**

Trade talks, awards celebration highlight Manufacturing Dinner

The importance of trade between the United States and Canada was the focus of the remarks by Canadian Consul General John Cruickshank. Cruickshank, whose offices are in Chicago, has the Midwestern territory of Illinois, Wisconsin and Missouri to engage with on behalf of the Canadian government. In his remarks, the Consul General outlined some of the importance of the relationship between the two countries. Millions of jobs depend on trade and investment with Canada. Of the 50 U.S. state, 47 of them count the Canada as their first, second or third most important export market. Additionally, Canada buys more goods from the U.S. than China, Japan, and the UK combined.



PHOTOS BY BRIAN THOMAS PHOTOGRAPHY

Manufacturer of the Year was awarded to JC Milling Co., Inc. Owners Dean and Dominique (center with award) celebrated with a number of their employees.

Looking at Illinois specifically, Illinois is the fifth ranked exporter of the 50 states in the U.S., and is the fourth ranked importer. Illinois exports to Canada to the tune of \$17.7 million (2017), its number one export relationship. In addition, imports from Canada are \$32 million (2017). Overall the trade balance is 47/50. Cruickshank, in his remarks, also shared that the annual value of goods & services exported to Canada from Illinois' 16th and 17th Congressional Districts are \$1.5 billion and \$1.1 billion, respectively.

The Consul General during his remarks also talked about the importance of having the USMCA trade agreement ratified by Congress. Already signed off by President Trump, the final stage is for Congress to complete its actions. During the portion of his remarks, the Consul General also recommended the removal of Section 232 tariffs from Canadian steel and aluminum.

In addition to the Consul General's keynote, the Celebration

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State of the County Luncheon

Winnebago County Chair Frank Haney won't seek re-election

Community leaders anticipated a spirited conversation during the Rockford Chamber of Commerce's State of the County luncheon. What they didn't expect, however, was the announcement from Winnebago County Board Chairman Frank Haney that he will not seek re-election when his term ends in December 2020.

Haney broke the news to a crowd of about 400 during his annual address, which was held on April 25 at Tebala Event Center.

Early in his presentation, Haney recommended the community put a referendum on the ballot next year to make the chairman position a permanent position. This would eliminate a voter-chosen chairman.

Haney said he made his decision in the last few days. "The job I have today is much different than the one I got elected to," he said. "And there have been attempts to change my job

long before I got elected into it. When we look at how we tackle the big, tough generational problems, there are never simple solutions. There are never any easy answers and there are always going to be disagreements. But every time we have a disagreement, we can't have a threat of ending someone's job or changing it. Because what happens then is the discussion isn't about policy, it's about the job, and then we don't have real discussions."

The relationship between Haney and the 20-member County Board has been strained ever since he took office. Things got worse at the end of last year, when several board members asked for Haney's resignation. Haney said he has no plans on stepping down.

"When I ran for the job 14 months ago, I got vetted, poked at, prodded and challenged," he said. "I had to lay out a vision of what I believe in and how I do

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Rockford Park District will host a groundbreaking on May 3 kicking off the development of the Atwood Park Silent Sports Trail System. Enter Seth B. Atwood Park at 7074 Rydberg Road to attend.

Citizens voiced that investing in trails, open space and recreation paths were very important during open sessions of the park district's community-led Master Plan.

Phase 1 will be funded by a grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Atwood Foundation and more than 40 individual donors, and include five miles of multi-use natural surface trails for beginner and intermediate users, a parking area, trail signage and a bike wash/repair station. Eventually, 20 miles of interconnecting trails on the north and south sides of the Kishwaukee river will accommodate hiking, mountain biking, trail running, paddle sports, snowshoeing and cross country skiing.

N-TRAK Group, LLC, which includes trail builder subcontractor Terra Firma Trails, LLC, received the construction contract. Phase 1 is expected to be completed this summer.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

**ROCKFORD CHAMBER
 Golf Classic**
 MAY 20 • FOREST HILLS COUNTRY CLUB

For more info, see page 27

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PROPOSALS SOUGHT TO TRAIN NEEDED WORKERS

The Workforce Connection seeks proposals by May 15 from qualified training providers to prepare individuals for employment in high-growth job sectors in Boone, Stephenson and Winnebago counties as a part of the Bridge to Employment program.

Sector-based training modules may include bridge programming and should feature academic and occupational skills training, job readiness and work experience within a specific industry. The successful bidder must work with local employers or training providers to train a strong pipeline of skilled workers. Funding comes from the federal Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act. Visit theworkforceconnection.org.

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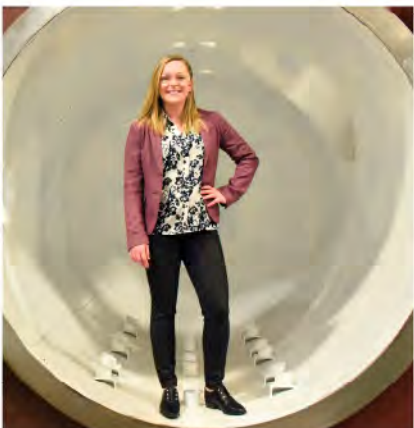
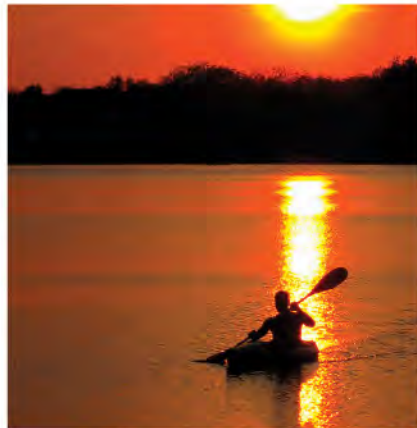
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Manufacturing Dinner

(continued from front page)

of Manufacturing Dinner featured a well-attended Expo, and the event was highlight by the two manufacturing awards announced, the Manufacturer of the Year, and the Individual Business Catalyst of the Year.

Manufacturer of the Year

JC Milling Co. Inc. was announced as the 2019 Manufacturer of the Year. This 40-year company has undergone significant change in the past few years. This is a company that makes parts for a variety of industries around the country, including gas and oil, medical, aerospace, manufacturing, automotive and military applications. The company's capabilities include precision CNC machining, milling, turning, grinding as well as cutting tool design.

In 2015, the company's current owners purchased the company from its long time owners. Always a strong and successful company, the former owners knew that changes were needed to keep the company relevant in the new age of technology. The new owners along with its team of employees launched a "change-a-thon" and worked together to bring about several notable changes in technology, facility design, and training.

In addition, this company worked to enhance computer applications to better support company operations, going from just four computers to over 30 with redundant networks. They also enhanced their engineering programs to allow customers to submit prints electronically. Recently the company also fully embraced an ERP system that tracks all movement, workflow, accounting and costing.

The core of the company remains with this company's great team of employees. With the average employee tenure of 8 years, the knowledge and collaboration is a true asset and serves as the heart of the company. Management works to ensure that all employees are valued, and that the family values that were in place before the changes continued to be upheld. The team celebrates its accomplishments together and in unique ways to also have some fun. This company has also added or improved upon employee benefits options as well as special event days and



outings to thank and recognize their importance.

Owners Dean and Dominique accepted the award but were quick to make sure their team of employees were the most critical component to their success.

Individual Business Catalyst

The Individual Business Catalyst honoree is someone we all know, as he is a very visible member of the community. He has been active in the Stateline Quiz Bowl, Rockford Region Manufacturing Day, and Made in the Stateline. He is Eric Wilson of WTVO/WQRF. Eric was very proud to accept the award but wanted to make sure the audience knew that the things that they do could not be done without the leadership and support of so many people within WTVO. Wilson also shared a personal moment that changes his life forever, and demonstrated his passion for our community and Made in the Stateline.

Eric Wilson has been able to use his profession to advance our community and awareness of key assets in our community as well.

Nearly 400 area manufacturing leaders and other businesses attended the dinner and expo. The Presenting Sponsor for the Celebration of Manufacturing Expo and Dinner was QPS Employment Group, who has sponsored this event for nine years. [theVoice](#)