

2024

# COMMUNITY LEADERS

## Top Under 40<sup>and</sup> Up & Coming



Produced by:  
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## TOP LEADERS AND UP & COMING LEADERS SHARE PASSION FOR COMMUNITY

We're proud to introduce this year's amazing group of leaders: 22 Leaders Under 40 and seven Up & Coming! These folks come from all walks of life, but they share one big thing in common, a deep love and commitment to our community.

As we went through the nominations, one thing became clear about our Top Leaders Under 40: They're all-in when it comes to Effingham County. Not only do they live and/or work here, but they also go the extra mile to make it a better place for everyone. They juggle it all with impressive balance, a strong work ethic, and the kind of energy that inspires those around them.

Our Up & Coming Leaders may be younger, but they're showing the same drive and passion. Reading their nominations, it's easy to see the impact they're already having in our county. Their potential? Its huge, and it's only going to keep growing!

As you flip through the next few pages, we hope you'll take a minute to get to know these fantastic leaders. Dive into their stories, soak up their wisdom, and who knows, you might find a nugget of inspiration or a new perspective!

A special thank you from the Effingham County Chamber Board of Directors, our dedicated staff, and the Effingham Daily News to this year's class of Top Leaders! We're grateful for your hard work, dedication to our community, and commitment to making Effingham County an amazing place to live, work, and play. Congrats to all!



Katie Koester  
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Becky Brown  
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Nicole Morrison  
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Michelle Markham  
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# Brandy Kelley

OWNER, COUNSELOR  
BRANDY KELLEY COUNSELING, PLLC



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1993

## **WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

I am involved in Birth to Five Illinois: Region 3 as part of their family council, Crisis Nursery of Effingham County as a Board Member, and Postpartum Support International (PSI) as a co-leader of their event The Climb-Team Effingham.

## **EDUCATION/TRAINING**

I earned my BA in Psychology from Elmhurst University in 2014. My junior year I was nominated to attend a Leadership Conference in Kentucky where I spent a week training on leadership skills and management. I then went to graduate school at Argosy University to earn my MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. While I was there, I was a member of Chi Sigma Iota-Counseling Academic and Professional Honor Society International. Upon graduation I sat for my licensing exam

to receive my Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) license. After two years of supervision and experience, I was qualified to sit for my clinical exam, then receiving my Licensed Clinical Professional License (LCPC) allowing me to practice independently. I was also trained in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) through the EMDR Institute in 2015, now practicing this trauma therapy for 8 years. Recently, I took training on Perinatal Mental Health Disorders and received my certification, PMH-C through Postpartum Support International.

## **WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

To me, success means achieving goals that align with my passions while consistently showing up as the best version of myself. It's about staying true to my values and embracing authenticity in everything I do, while making a positive impact on the people and community around me.

## **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

My advice to today's youth is to focus on who you truly are and strive to show up authentically in all areas of life. Avoid the trap of comparison and the pressures from media and social media. Instead, invest your energy in causes and organizations that genuinely resonate with you. By doing so, you'll surround yourself with like-minded, goal-oriented individuals who inspire and support your growth.

## **WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

I believe the most important factors in living a happy life are holding firm to your beliefs, surrounding yourself with positive people and environments, and setting healthy boundaries to protect your peace and well-being.

## **WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

My mother has been my greatest inspiration and role model. She is strong, focused, and driven, always putting her family first while managing to do anything necessary for us. I watched her successfully run a company alongside my dad, all while raising three children. Now, as an adult, business owner, and mother myself, I realize how remarkable that balance truly is. I deeply admire how she poured so much of herself and her love into everything that mattered to her, and I strive to be that same example for my own children and community.

## **WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

I believe the most important qualities in a leadership role are empathy, integrity, and strong communication. A great leader listens and understands the needs of their team, acts with honesty and transparency, and communicates a clear vision that inspires and motivates others to work toward common goals. Effective leadership is about empowering others while remaining grounded.

## **WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

A thriving community where people want to call home offers a strong sense of connection and belonging. It's a place where people feel safe, supported, and valued. Opportunities for personal and professional growth, access to quality resources, and spaces for recreation and engagement are essential. Most importantly, a welcoming and inclusive environment fosters pride and ensures that all individuals feel they can contribute and grow within the community.



# Alec Stevenson

GARBAGE MAN

THE ALLEYCAT: DUMPSTER RENTALS AND JUNK REMOVAL



## BIRTH YEAR

1996

## WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?

Brazilian jui-jitsu: EpLegend's Martial Arts

## EDUCATION/TRAINING

Effingham High School  
Lakeland College  
Eastern Illinois University

## WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?

My definition of success would be having strong friends and family that support you through the good times and bad. Success is being surrounded by people that bring the best out of you and support you no matter which endeavor you choose in life. To me, that is true success.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?

Try to understand things are completely different than our parents time just a single generation ago. Social media and smart phones have been a part of your entire young lives. This technology has completely changed how we work, handle business, have relationships, and function in everyday life. It can be a double-edged sword. Try and minimize the bad and make the most out of the good. You need to know the most wonderful things that can happen to you in this life aren't going to happen sitting at home behind a screen. Get out of your comfort zone, take as many calculated risks as you can, and openly squeeze life with both hands.

## WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?

I don't think there is one factor that guarantees a happy life. Happiness is a choice. I believe if you stay true to yourself, work hard, and treat other people as you want to be treated, at the end of the day I would see no reason to be sad. No matter what cards you were handed in this life, you can create your future as long as you are persistent.

## WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?

My parents are hands down both my biggest inspiration and role models. Everything I am is because of them. Mom and Dad are incredibly hard workers. They care deeply about helping others. They have always been in my corner and supported my dreams. I know I can count on them for anything. They have taught me some of the most important things to value: Family, friends, and hard work. They have shown me what a good marriage is. I definitely hit the jackpot twice to have them as my mom and dad.

## WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?

I believe the most important qualities for being a leader would be having a vision, good persistence, and having tough decisiveness. Having a vision is easy but being able to move towards a goal while inspiring others to follow is an extremely important quality. Some people think you have to have a Type A, outgoing, dominant personality to be a leader. Some of our strongest leaders and entrepreneurs have been from all different backgrounds and environments. One thing they all have in common is they are persistent and didn't give up. A leader must be able to make the hard decisions that don't just feel good, but actually have positive results.

## WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?

In order for a community to thrive, people need two things: Something to draw them in and something to make them stay. Of course, people have practical needs such as affordability, safety, education, and access to healthcare. However, personal fulfillment is something not all communities possess that make people want to grow and start their families here. Home is where you make it. It is where your parents reside and where your friends are. A sense of community is where people come together and support one another to build strong social ties. Home is close to nature that is open to where our kids can play and not have to worry. A balance of both can make people proud to say where they are from and give future generations a place to call home.



# ***Congratulations Alec Stevenson***



**Top Community Leader Under 40**

**We are proud of you and all that you have accomplished.**

**Effingham Family Dental - Dr Jeff Stevenson**

**310 W Jefferson Ave, Effingham, IL 62401**

**217-342-3850**



# Alex Steppe

MANAGING BROKER/CO-OWNER  
REMAX KEY ADVANTAGE



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1992

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

Blessings in a Backpack Board  
TIF Board  
Effingham County Chamber Board of Directors  
Central Illinois Board of Realtors  
Effingham Community Support Group  
Mentor at Unit 40 Schools

**EDUCATION/TRAINING**

Bachelor of Liberal Arts and Sciences(Communications) at the University of Illinois

**WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

Success to me is when you have reached the goals you have set. Sometimes you have to fail in order to succeed. Work hard for your dreams every day!

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

To work hard every day to reach your goals and to also be humble. Being humble allows you to be open to learning. Also, take advantage of your youth!

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

Surrounding yourself with people you love most. When you have family, good health, and are able to put food on that table every night; that's a happy life to me!

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

My mom and dad, Mark and Jill. They have been the best parents teaching us what respect is. Their love for us kids has carried over to my siblings and I, as we all are now parents. I look up to my parents very much.

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

Being approachable and listening. Employees will work harder when they have a leader they can trust/talk to and want to be around.

**WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

Great jobs, community leadership, great schools, and a safe environment. Effingham, IL hits all these. What an amazing community we live in!

*Employees will work harder when they have a leader they can trust/talk to and want to be around.*





# *Congratulations Alex Steppe*

for being named Top Community  
Leader under 40. Thank you  
for dedication to Remax and  
contributions to our community



# RE/MAX

*Key Advantage*



# Allison Stevens

BANKING CENTER MANAGER  
MIDLAND STATES BANK



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1990

## **WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

I was lucky enough to be voted in as an Ambassador for the Effingham County Chamber of Commerce. I also volunteer for Relay for Life. I am fairly new to the area and looking forward to being able to join/volunteer for more local organizations and give back to my new community.

## **EDUCATION/TRAINING**

I graduated from Streator Township High School and attended two years of college at Illinois Valley Community College. I am a recent graduate of the Master's 1 program here at Midland which is a yearlong leadership development program.

## **WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

For me, success isn't just about reaching the milestone. I define success as the continuous process of growth and improvement. It's about becoming a little bit better version of myself each day. Success also involves me staying true to my values while pushing myself beyond my comfort zone.

## **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

My advice for today's youth would be to recognize the power they have right now in shaping their own future. Every decision you make today influences where you will be tomorrow. There is no "right time"- start taking small steps now towards the life you want in the future. The only person who can truly change your life is you, and the sooner you embrace that, the more control you'll have over your future.

## **WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

I believe the most important factor to living a happy life is finding joy in the little things. It's easy to get impatient waiting for something monumental to happen, but I believe true happiness comes from appreciating the simple, everyday moments. One of my very best friends refers to them as "glimmers.": Some small moment throughout the day that adds a sparkle or "glimmer" of happiness to your life. Whether it's a good cup of coffee or a conversation with a friend, by acknowledging the joy these moments bring us, we can create a deeper sense of contentment within our lives.

## **WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

My Grandmother, Barb, has always been my role model. She exemplifies what it means to be a hard worker, not just in

the traditional sense, but in how she has dedicated her life to taking care of her family and putting others first. No matter what challenge she's facing, she always handles them with grace and strength. She has shown me that what matters most is how we treat other people and the love we show to the world. Being her granddaughter has and will always be a blessing, and her love has shaped who I am today.

## **WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

I believe the most important qualities of a leader are empathy, tenacity, and positivity. Empathy allows a leader to truly connect with their team and understand where they are coming from. Tenacity is essential for pushing through challenges and staying focused on the goal when the path is difficult. Finally, positivity is key in creating an encouraging environment where people feel motivated, supported, and seen. These three things can inspire a team to give their best and empower them to navigate challenges knowing their leader is right behind them.

## **WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

I believe a sense of belonging is crucial for a community to be a place people want to call home. It's not just about living in the same area, but it's about creating an environment where people feel seen, valued, and included. When people feel connected to their neighbors, I believe they're more likely to invest their time and energy into making their community a better place. A strong sense of belonging fosters trust and mutual support which are essential for a thriving community. It's this feeling of connection that turns a physical space into a community where people feel proud to live and call home.





# CONGRATULATIONS

## Allison Stevens

on being named one of Effingham's  
top community leaders under 40!

We are proud of your bright-shining  
dedication to our community.  
Thank you for your passion and  
commitment to helping others thrive.



**Midland** 

**BRIGHTER TOGETHER**

Midland States Bank is Member FDIC



# Anthony Jansen

ENGINEERING MANAGER  
FARNSWORTH GROUP, INC.



## BIRTH YEAR

1987

## WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?

American Public Works Association (APWA) - Past President and current Scholarship Chairman (Prairie Branch of IL State Chapter), Director (IL State Chapter)

Effingham County Chamber of Commerce - Chamber Community Scholarship Selection Committee Member

Effingham Knights of Columbus (Council 665) - Member and Tootsie Roll Drive Committee Member

Illinois Society of Professional Engineers (ISPE) - Member

Sacred Heart Parish - Building and Grounds Committee Member

## EDUCATION/TRAINING

BS, General Engineering, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010

## WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?

I feel that success is a relative term that is a personalized blend of being a productive, ethical, and respected member of society while earning enough personal wealth to be happy and do what you want in life - whatever that is.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?

Enjoy being young and don't take a single day for granted. Find what you want to do in life and create a series of small, incremental goals to get there. Stay flexible enough to take change in stride, capitalize on good fortunes, and find alternative happiness when life isn't fair.

## WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?

Family. Whether relation or just close friends, life is a whole lot happier when you have people to share it with.

## WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?

My personal inspiration comes from my wife and kids - they drive me to make them proud every day. My biggest professional role model is my former supervisor, John Dabrowski - he guided me through my most formative years on the job. He was raised in England, so he always brought a unique perspective. His approach to work and life was generally very practical, and above all he always did things the right way. My experience with him has served me well on a professional and personal level.

## WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?

Integrity, common sense, a strong work ethic, and being levelheaded.

## WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?

A desirable community should have sufficient amenities to keep people active and healthy, from both a physical and mental standpoint, while offering many avenues for the citizens to achieve their own definition of personal success. For the average person in our area, I think that equates to a place with ample professional opportunity, a sense of community pride, a clean and accessible town center, and a reputation for being a safe place to raise a family.



# CONGRATULATIONS!

## Anthony Jansen, PE

Engineering Manager

Farnsworth Group is honored to congratulate Anthony on being selected as one of **Effingham's Top Community Leaders Under 40!**

His selection is a testament to his talent, integrity, and dedication to his work.



**Farnsworth**  
GROUP

[www.f-w.com](http://www.f-w.com)

400 West Jefferson, Suite A  
Effingham, IL 62401  
p 217.531.1253



# Brooke Hoene

SCHOOL COUNSELOR  
TEUTOPOLIS UNIT 50



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1987

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

Effingham County Chamber, Construction Trades Education Curriculum Program, National Council for Adoption, American School Counselor Association, Teutopolis for Tomorrow

**EDUCATION/TRAINING**

I earned my Bachelor of Science with a Secondary Science Education degree from EIU in 2010. I taught science at Vandalia Community High School for 7 years and Teutopolis for 5 years. I earned my Masters of Science in School Counseling in 2022 from Capella University. I have since been a school counselor at Teutopolis High School for 2 years.

**WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

I think this looks different and is different for everyone. Personally, I want to feel that I am constantly improving in my professional and personal life.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

Everyone's path is different. Do not compare yours to someone else's! That path is not going to be an easy, straight line either. You will have ups and downs, but it is how resilient you are during those times that will get you through! That is also what makes you a great leader.

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

Living each day in a positive way and having gratitude for everything in my life.

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

Definitely my parents. They began our family business when I was young, and I never knew a time where they were not working hard and teaching us the value of hard work. I was pouring concrete and chalking lines at a very young age! My husband and children also make me want to be better all-around not only for them, but for our school and community as well. All of these people are why I constantly look for ways that I can improve.

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

Compassion, integrity, leading by example, being a good role model, inspiring others, being a great communicator, empathy, ability to adapt, and being creative.

**WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

Coming together and being supportive of one another is a huge reason why I love our community and county. Providing ample opportunities to citizens and their families, all while making them always feel safe and secure, is another huge element in my book.

*Coming together and being supportive of one another is a huge reason why I love our community and county.*



*Congratulations Brooke Hoene  
on being named one of Effingham's  
Top Community Leaders under 40!  
We are proud of you!*



# JOHN L. LEWIS

## CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION, INC.

**Commercial, Residential, and Farm.  
Over 45 years experience.**



# Carissa Snow

CONTROLLER/OFFICE MANAGER  
GRUNLOH CONSTRUCTION, INC.



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1993

## **WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

I am a mentor through the Unit 40 Mentoring program. My mentee is in 6th grade at EJHS. She is so much fun! We have lunch together one day per week. We chat about what's going on in her life, and I encourage and support her in any way that I can. I am also a member of St. John's Lutheran Church, where I teach Sunday School to 4th and 5th graders. This age is so much fun to teach because they are SO eager to learn, and their curiosity is through the roof!

## **EDUCATION/TRAINING**

I graduated from the University of Illinois College of Business with a Bachelor of Science in Accountancy in December 2014. While I was attending U of I, I was working as an intern in the Accounting Department at Jimmy John's Corporate Office in Champaign. It was so helpful to not only learn accounting concepts in the classroom, but also being able to apply them in real time through my internship!

## **WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

My definition of success is being a person who my kids can be proud of and look up to. I have 3 boys, and when they are grown, I hope they call me because they want my advice, in their personal lives or in the workplace.

## **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

My favorite advice I have ever heard comes from Admiral William McRaven, from his University of Texas at Austin 2014 Commencement speech. He gives 10 incredible pieces of advice, but my favorite is Make Your Bed. If you make your bed every morning, you will have accomplished the first task of the day. It will give you a small sense of pride and will encourage you to do another task, and another, and another. It will also reinforce the fact that the little things in life matter. If you can't do the little things right, you'll never be able to do the big things right!

## **WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

There's an old saying that goes "Find a job that you love, and you'll never have to work a day in your life." While this is probably not 100% true, I do feel that enjoying the work that you do can boost your overall mood, and then when you get home from work, that positivity can flow to your family. I love the work I do, so when I get home to my family, I can still pour into my kids because I am not mentally drained from my workday. In turn, they are happy children, which creates a happy home!

## **WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

When I was interning at Jimmy John's Corporate Office, my direct report was Rachel (Eckert) Crozier. Rachel was young but respected in the office. She was incredibly smart, efficient, and a great teacher. What I remember most about my time working with her is that

she held me to a high standard. I felt that it was because she trusted me to get my assigned tasks not only completed, but completed correctly. I carry that style of leadership with me to this day! I still look up to Rachel. In my current position, I have called Rachel to get her input on different situations. Her opinion is one that I will always value!

## **WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

I feel that trust is the most important quality that a leader can possess. It's important that your team feels that you have confidence in them to do their job correctly. Micro-managing is not my style at all, and I hope that my team feels they have freedom to do their tasks to the best of their abilities!

## **WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

I did not grow up in the Effingham area, but I am proud to say that as an adult, I chose to live in the Effingham area. I think it's so important that a community has programs or places where people with common interests can come together and bond over their interests. Right now, my family enjoys so many things that Effingham County offers for young families. We go to the library often, where we usually meet other families with kids around the same age as mine! My son played soccer and attended Adventure Camp all summer long, both through the Effingham Park District. My two youngest attend Little Hearts in Effingham, which was already a great daycare when it was Little Lambs, but Unit 40 has brought it to new levels! We love the programs that are targeted towards young families! I hope that my kids have fond memories of their time spent with others in the community.



*Congratulations*  
*Carissa Snow*  
on being named  
**Top Community Leader!**  
**We are proud of you!**



**Grunloh  
Construction  
Inc.**



# Emily Flach

REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR  
LEARNING TECHNOLOGY CENTER



## **BIRTH YEAR**

1989

## **WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

St. Rose Church in Montrose  
More for Montrose, which is a community development organization  
International Society for Technology in Education, Consortium for School Networking  
Other various professional organizations

## **EDUCATION/TRAINING**

Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Eastern Illinois University  
Bachelor of Science in Health Administration from Eastern Illinois University  
Master of Social Sciences from Ohio University

## **WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

Success involves a combination of professional achievements, community impact, and personal growth. In my definition of success, I am making a positive impact on the community, while maintaining a strong work-life balance and prioritizing family.

## **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

Spend less time scrolling and more time interacting with people in the real world. Hard work is the foundation of success. No matter your dreams, dedication and perseverance are essential for achieving them.

## **WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

The most important thing for a happy life is to spend time with the people you love. Family, friends, and your community are the best sources of support and joy.

## **WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

My former teachers were huge inspirations to me, which is probably why I chose a career in education. Mr. Craig Lindvahl was an excellent example of how a positive outlook and strong relationships can make life truly meaningful. Other teachers that left a notable impact on me include Mr. Bill Schnabel, Mr. Steve Fritcher, Mrs. Misty Mapes, and Mr. Wayne Bloemer.

## **WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

The qualities of a good leader are dependability, follow-through, active listening, and leading by example. A good leader is not afraid to get their hands dirty and do the hard work alongside others.

## **WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

A great community gives people a chance to grow and thrive in all areas of life, like their faith, family, health, and work. It's a place where people feel connected, involved, and safe.

*No matter your dreams, dedication and perseverance are essential for achieving them.*



*Congratulations Emily Flach*  
on being named a  
**Top Community Leader Under 40!**



Congratulations on your accomplishments and serving on the  
Illinois State Board of Education. We are proud of you!  
Your family, friends and staff at Effingham Unit 40.



**Illinois**  
**State Board of**  
**Education**



**EFFINGHAM**  
**UNIT 40**  
**SCHOOLS**



# Emily Hille

CHIEF PROFESSIONAL OFFICER  
UNITED WAY OF EFFINGHAM COUNTY



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1995

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

United Way of Effingham County

**EDUCATION/TRAINING**

Bachelor of Applied Communication  
Studies, Public Relations from  
Southern Illinois University of  
Edwardsville  
Teutopolis High School

**WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

My definition of success is not only being able to provide for yourself and your family, but being able to end each day knowing you did something to brighten someone else's day too. Even bigger success is being able to do that without telling anyone else that you did it.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

I would tell today's youth that if something does not directly impact your life, to not waste more than a few minutes worrying about it. Quickly and quietly react, then move on.

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

Perspective is the most important factor in living a happy life. It's important to remember that your worst day could be a day someone is dreaming to have.

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

Throughout my entire life, my uncle, Doug Walk, has always been a role model to me. Doug has worked hard every day of his life and takes nothing for granted. He loves God and would give the shirt off his back to someone in need. He's taught me that it's so important to work for what you have and to make something for yourself.

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

To be in a leadership role, most importantly, you have to have kindness. If people are looking to you for guidance, you have to lead with kindness. You also have to be focused and be able to pivot when things do not always go as planned.

**WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

For a place to be home, we need community and support. It is so important for everyone to have each other's back. Never let pride get in the way. If you need a hand, reach for it. When you're able to give the hand, lend it. Greg Sapp always says it best when it comes time for the FISH Christmas Store. You may not need to shop at the store this year, so donate now. You never know when you'll find yourself needing the assistance of a program like that.

*My definition of success is not only being able to provide for yourself and your family, but being able to end each day knowing you did something to brighten someone else's day too.*



**Top Community Leader Under 40**

# *Congratulations* **Emily Hille**



**United  
Way**



**United Way  
Of  
Effingham County**



# Hannah Hutchinson

ADMINISTRATOR  
EVERGREEN NURSING AND REHAB CENTER



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1995

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

Illinois Healthcare Association  
Eastern Star  
Knobs Baptist Church  
National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners

**EDUCATION/TRAINING**

At the age of 16, I decided that I loved long term care and taking care of peoples' loved ones. In between my junior and senior year of high school, I took a college course to become a Certified Nursing Assistant. I took my state test and began working as a CNA all the way through the rest of my high school. After high school, I was nervous at the impending difficult decision of what I wanted to be now that I had "grown up." After a lot of thinking and praying, I discovered I wanted to become a nurse. I began taking a Licensed

Practical Nurse vocational training program. I was blessed to have passed my state boards to become a nurse. I truly enjoyed being a nurse and getting close to my residents. Sometimes it was difficult when important people passed on but sadly it was part of the job. Later into my nursing career I was looking for something more. I wasn't sure exactly what that would be. I did some studying and discovered that College of Dupage had a Long-Term Care Administrators Certificate program that was all online. It worked well with my busy work life balance. I finished the course and currently sit as an Administrator for Evergreen Nursing Home here in Effingham. I can finally say that I believe I have found my true passion and what I was destined to become.

**WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

When I think of success a lot of ideas come to mind, whether it is passing an important test or getting that dream job. Success is different for everyone. Success to me is not exactly goal oriented on my work legacy. Success to me is what I leave with my family and what I am remembered for, whether that is a good wife, a good mother, a good friend or a great leader.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

One door may close but a new one is about to open. Life has many paths and doors. It is okay to not succeed or have to try again, and that door may have to close but be prepared for the next one to open.

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

I believe the most important factor in living a happy life is having a personal relationship with God.

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

This is a difficult one for me. I have had several inspirations or role models in my life. First off, my Grandpa Pete. He was a very humble man and would give the shirt off his back to help anyone. He was an avid donator to the Oconee Church food pantry. He loved to help anyone he could, as long as you had faith and were a good, honest worker. He was a man of his word, and I knew I could trust him to give me honest, maybe gruff opinion. My next inspiration is my parents. With me being an only child, I have a great relationship with them. They are very hard workers and work hard for the items they have. They always believed in me and showed me what a great, solid marriage and team they are.

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

Honesty, Compassion, Empathy, Consistency and Self-Awareness

**WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

This really hits home for me. The elements I believe that are needed in a community to make it a place people want to call it home is having the empathy to care and assist for each other when needed. I'm not talking about being a nosey neighbor. I am referring to when you can visually glance and see that someone is struggling, offer a hand or even an ear to listen to. Everyone struggles at some point in their life and just being able to assist and help is an important aspect for someone to want to call a community home.



# Evergreen Nursing and Rehabilitation

Salutes Our Administrator

## Hannah Hutchinson

*CONGRATULATIONS*

**on being named a Top Community Leader Under 40!**



**EVERGREEN**

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*bringing you home*



**1115 N. Wenthe, Effingham, IL 62401 • 217-347-7121**



# Jessica Reeder

PRINCIPAL OF SOUTH SIDE SCHOOL  
EFFINGHAM UNIT 40



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1984

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

Effingham Unit 40  
Teutopolis Education Foundation Board of Directors  
Regional Office of Education Planning Committee

**EDUCATION/TRAINING**

University of Illinois Urbana Champaign  
Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology  
Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology

**WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

As an educator, I believe that success is not just about test scores or accolades, but rather the lasting impact we have on our students' lives. It's about helping them develop the skills, knowledge, and character they need to thrive, both in and out of the classroom.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

As an educator, I have the privilege of helping guide and shape the minds of the next generation. In that spirit, I believe the most important advice we can impart is to encourage our students to be curious, resilient, and compassionate. Curiosity fuels the thirst for knowledge and drives us to explore the world

around us. It's the foundation for lifelong learning and personal growth. We should inspire our students to ask questions, seek understanding, and never stop discovering. Resilience is equally crucial. The road ahead for our students will be filled with challenges, setbacks, and difficult decisions. Teaching them to persevere, adapt, and bounce back from adversity will equip them with the strength to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals. Finally, cultivating compassion is paramount. In a world that can sometimes feel divided, we must instill in our students the value of empathy, kindness, and understanding. By fostering a sense of community and concern for others, we can empower them to make a positive impact on the world.

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

To me, the individuals we choose to have in our lives can have a profound impact on our overall well-being and happiness. Surrounding ourselves with positive, supportive, and uplifting people can truly make all the difference. These are the friends, family members, and colleagues who lift us up, encourage our growth, and help us navigate life's challenges.

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

I have been fortunate to have some incredible role models in my life, and my parents, Frank and Jennifer Hettiger, have been a constant source of inspiration. Their unwavering commitment to kindness, generosity, and hard work have always been a guiding light for me. Their commitment to lifelong learning and their belief in the transformative power of education have been a constant source of inspiration for me. Their compassionate nature and loyal support have been invaluable in shaping the educator I am today.

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

In my opinion, some of the most vital leadership qualities include:  
**Integrity:** Leaders must demonstrate honesty, transparency, and a commitment to ethical decision-making. This builds trust and credibility with the team.

**Vision:** Successful leaders have a clear, compelling vision for the future and the ability to inspire others to work towards that vision.

**Adaptability:** The ability to pivot and adjust in response to changing circumstances is essential. Leaders must be flexible and open to new ideas.

**Empathy:** Effective leaders understand and connect with the experiences and perspectives of their team members. This fosters a culture of support and collaboration.

**Decisiveness:** Leaders must be willing to make tough decisions and take decisive action when necessary, while still being open to input from others.

**Collaboration:** The best leaders recognize that they can't do it all alone. They actively seek out and value the contributions of their team.

**Fun:** Don't forget the importance of creating an enjoyable, positive work environment. Leaders who can infuse a sense of fun and camaraderie can boost morale and engagement.

**WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

In my experience, a thriving community requires a delicate balance of factors. First and foremost, it needs a strong sense of belonging and community spirit. This can be fostered through shared public spaces, community events, and opportunities for residents to connect and engage with one another. Equally important is ensuring the community is safe, clean, and well-maintained. Reliable infrastructure, effective public services, and a commitment to environmental sustainability all contribute to making a place feel like a desirable home. Access to essential amenities, such as quality schools, healthcare facilities, and a diverse range of businesses, is also crucial. Residents need to feel that their daily needs can be met within their community, reducing the need for frequent travel outside the area. Finally, a vibrant community should offer a variety of recreational and cultural opportunities. Parks, libraries, arts centers, and sports facilities provide avenues for personal growth, leisure, and community bonding.

# **Congratulations Jessica**

**on being named one of Effingham's Top  
Community Leaders Under 40.**



***Jessica Reeder***  
***South Side Principal***

**Thank you for your dedication and  
commitment to making our community great!  
Effingham School District #40 is proud of  
your achievement.**



# Kalen Whitney

PRESIDENT  
WHITNEY ROOFING INC.



## BIRTH YEAR

1989

## WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?

BNI R.I.S.E.  
Coach Summer Baseball  
C.E.O. Mentor  
N.R.C.A.

## EDUCATION/TRAINING

High School Diploma from Sullivan IL  
2008  
I.B.E.W. L.U. 146 Journeyman Inside  
Wireman 2013  
Always Learning and educating myself  
with business and new products in my  
industry

## WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?

Be a good Father/Husband first. Being able to create generational wealth so that my great-great grandchildren feel the flap of my wing. And willingness to continue to do better and be better at all things in life no matter where you currently are at.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?

Everything you want in life is attainable no matter where you currently are in life or what path you may feel is already set for you. You truly are the narrator of your own story. You just have to be resourceful and see opportunities for what they are and listen to them. Also be careful of who you allow to speak into you as not everyone has your best interest at heart, and once you can realize that, you will unlock a secret to success.

## WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?

Being a good Father/Husband and trying to always be improving as a human. Truly understanding that time is something you will never get back, so making the most of your time on earth doing whatever makes you happy is really all that matters.

## WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?

I've looked up to many people through my life, finding little things in each of them that I would like to emulate. But if I had to pick only one person, it would be by my high school baseball coach Troy Rogers. He coached me from 7th grade baseball all the way through high school and helped me realize my potential in life in more ways than just what I could do on a baseball field. He is still a huge part of my life today. With my business, he sold for me for two summers and is now handling our companies 401k plans for all our employees.

## WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?

Self awareness: Knowing when you aren't being the person people should look up to and making the adjustments as needed to get back on course.

## WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?

The local park district does a great job at making our community an awesome place to live. Having local events often help get that sense of community. Not being from Effingham originally, I've been able to get to know more and more people through coaching, soccer and baseball and just attending different community events.

*Truly understanding that time is something you will never get back, so making the most of your time on earth doing whatever makes you happy is really all that matters.*

Top Community Leader Under 40

# Congratulations!

## KALEN WHITNEY



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asked for!  
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& the Kids



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# Kasey Kemme

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT EDUCATOR  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION



## BIRTH YEAR

1991

## WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?

The National Association of Extension  
4-H Youth Development Professionals  
Illinois Extension Professionals for Youth Education  
Eastern Illinois University Association

## EDUCATION/TRAINING

Bachelors in Science in Elementary Education with a Middle Level Endorsement and Concentration in Social Sciences (Eastern Illinois University, 2013)

Masters of Science in Education in Curriculum and Instruction (Eastern Illinois University, 2019)

## WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?

I believe that success is gained when you set goals for yourself and you do your best to achieve them through all of the trials and obstacles that life throws your way.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?

Enjoy where you are at in life. You have the rest of your life to be an adult, enjoy being a kid while you can.

## WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?

I believe that surrounding yourself with positive people who will push you to do your best, help you when you are down, and cheer on your successes is an important factor in living a happy life.

## WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?

The youth of our community serve as my inspiration. Watching them start with basic projects as a Cloverbud, try new things throughout their 4-H years, complete their membership, and go on to be successful young adults keeps me motivated and inspired.

## WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?

I feel that being willing to work alongside your team, having open communication, and being present and showing up for your team are all important in a leadership role.

## WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?

Elements in a community that I would want to call home would have to include helpful community members, opportunities to interact within the community, and a safe and enriching environment to raise my children.

*I believe that surrounding yourself with positive people who will push you to do your best, help you when you are down, and cheer on your successes is an important factor in living a happy life.*



# Congratulations Kasey Kemme!

on being named a  
2024 Top Community Leader Under 40!



**Illinois Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

The staff of University of Illinois Extension in Effingham would like to congratulate Kasey Kemme on being selected as a Top Community Leader Under 40. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication to our community.

1209 N Wenthe Drive | Effingham | 217-347-7773 | [extension.illinois.edu/cefi](https://extension.illinois.edu/cefi)



# Kyle Dasenbrock

GENERAL MANAGER  
PLANTERS PRECISION



## BIRTH YEAR

1989

## WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?

Precision Planting Dealer Advisory Council  
SIU Alumni Association  
Farm Bureau Member  
Teutopolis Knights of Columbus  
St. Francis Parish Member  
Teutopolis High School Fishing Team-Volunteer Boat Captain

## EDUCATION/TRAINING

Bachelors in Marketing & Minor in Business Management from SIUC  
Precision Planting Premier Tech

## WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?

Success, to me, should not only be measured to what one person does, but to what that one person has done to impact others to be successful to reaching milestones as a team. This includes both at home for the family and at work.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?

Find a career path you are passionate about, even if it involves taking a risk to do so. I believe you will find yourself at much greater success in the future. Working as a team with others around you will drive achievements to goals and success much faster than one can do by themselves; however, be the team leader. Never give up.

## WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?

Surrounding myself with mindful people that share the same hard work ethics and support each other not only in the good times but also during the hard times. Most importantly my family, especially my wife and kids, along with friends, and colleagues. Being around the right people make each and every day more enjoyable.

## WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?

I am very fortunate to have so many great role models, including my immediate family, especially my parents Larry & Ruth along with my wife Macy. Growing up watching my parents work

ethic day after day at their jobs and around the house, while raising five kids, taught me at a young age what it takes in life to be successful and to work hard for what you want. Along with my wife, Macy, the amount of trust she has in me on decision-making for our family and watching the way she is raising our children is inspiring.

## WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?

Be willing to listen to others, keeping an understanding on situations from different points of view. Always have an open door to discuss issues or opportunities with others. Stand up and take blame when at fault, do not pass the bucket, will gain others respect and trust. Encouraging everyone to do their best at achieving both personal and work goals with a positive mental attitude.

## WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?

Friendliness, to where people wave and say hi to others in public. Cleanliness: Showing pride in your community by keeping your property and businesses looking respectful. Helpful: Be willing to lend a hand to family, friends, and neighbors when they are in need without being asked. Support local events by being involved and attending community events.

Success, to me, should not only be measured to what one person does, but to what that one person has done to impact others to be successful to reaching milestones as a team.



# Congratulations

## KYLE DASENBROCK

FOR BEING NAMED A TOP COMMUNITY LEADER





# Kylie Moore

TENNIS DIRECTOR & COACH, HEAD BAKER  
COACH KYLIE & SIMPLY SWEETS BAKERY



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1987

## **WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

I am a board member of the (USTA) United State Tennis Association Mid-South Illinois section and president of the Effingham Community Tennis Association.

## **EDUCATION/TRAINING**

I received a full ride scholarship to Marquette University and played 4 years at the collegiate level and majored in Marketing & Advertising. I have 10+ years experience training young athletes, traveling to USTA events/tournaments and assisting them through the college recruiting process. My certifications include 10 & under player development, high performance player development and cardio tennis training.

## **WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

My definition of success is the ability to use your talents and personal/professional journey to make a positive impact and become an inspiration for the people around you.

## **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

My advice would be, no matter the job, to always do your best and take pride in the quality of your work. You are going to make mistakes and possibly go in the "wrong" direction, but if you are able to persevere and learn through the process, it will build something within you that can't be given. You never know what qualities and traits you are creating within yourself through jobs both big and small that can ultimately make a positive impact for your future career(s).

## **WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

I believe that the most important factor for living a happy life is making sure to find balance in your career & personal life. Personally, I find my work and career is something that is so important for me to feel part of a community and gives me a sense of purpose. However, unconditional love and connection with friends and family is what keeps me grounded and stable. When I have the ability to allow both of those things to work together with one another, that is when I find myself the happiest!

## **WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

My inspiration in life has always been my parents. My father, Peter Moore, is a professional tennis coach that has worked at both the professional and club tennis levels. He always taught me what it means to work hard and provide for your family. He is who coached me tennis growing up, and he mentored me as I was starting my tennis coaching career. My mother, Leilani Deem, was my teacher and mentor at home. She homeschooled me through my grade school years, traveled with me to my tennis tournaments, and she had a huge influence on my art and creativity and ultimately helped guide me through my bakery business. Both of my parents had a heavy influence on both of my current careers, and I wouldn't be where I am now without them!

## **WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

The qualities that I feel like are most important in a leadership role is the ability to connect, influence and provide a vision for the people they are around.

## **WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

When I moved to Effingham, the sense of community is what I fell in love with the most. The element that really shined bright for me is everyone's ability to support one another and local businesses. I have never been a part of an area with such unity and willingness to support and work together with the bigger vision of making our community a better place to live in.



***Congratulations Kylie***  
**on being named one of Effingham's Top  
Community Leaders Under 40.**



***Matthew Koester, fiancé; Kylie; EHS Tennis Coach  
Sophia Ivy, daughter***

***We are proud of you and thankful  
to have you on our team.***



# Layna Bond

INSURANCE AGENCY OWNER  
BOND & ASSOCIATES LLC, AMERICAN FAMILY INSURANCE



## BIRTH YEAR

1996

## WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?

Effingham Chamber of Commerce,  
2022-present

## EDUCATION/TRAINING

Galatia High School, Class of 2014

## WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?

Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard. The definition of success really comes down to how much effort you are willing to put in and if you are not willing to work for it, it is hard to reach the top. Throughout my time in agency, success isn't only dependent on me. I have learned that to have success in my career, you can't do it alone. Having the right people by your side is key to not only having individual success but success as a whole.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?

Everything works out how it is supposed to, and you can't let one thing define who you are. My personal path to become an insurance agency owner is not your typical scenario. During my time in college, I realized every experience is what you make of it. If it wasn't for the numerous networking opportunities and valuable friendships, I wouldn't be as successful as I am in my field today. So, make the most of every opportunity and take the chance as you will never know where the open door will lead you.

## WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?

Surround yourself by people who want to see you succeed. It is so important to have the right people in your corner because during hard times you rely on them to help you keep pushing forward. I am a firm believer in the saying, if you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life. I have the privilege of serving others every day and that allows me to make a small difference in our ever-changing world. A happy life is realizing the small moments are what we take for granted but are the moments we will remember forever.

## WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?

My role model would have to be my grandma "Whiplash". I have watched my grandparents run a business their entire life in our community back home. Being involved in the Chamber, Rotary Club, Lion's Club, and serving as 4-H Leaders is something I have watched them do since I was young. They are still to this day very involved in the community. I knew one day when I became a business owner, I wanted to have an impact like them in the community. They are truly compassionate people who live to serve

their community. I knew if I could grow up to be half as involved as them, then I will be helping my community one day at a time. My role model in the insurance world would be Jim Gerstner. I had the privilege to work with Jim when I was a sales associate for a previous agent before I became an agent myself. Jim is the true definition of giving back. I would not be the agent I am without his help on how to run a business or learning how to help customers of all kinds. I will forever be grateful for the knowledge that he has shared with me over the years on how to be a great leader and to do what is right for the client.

## WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?

A qualified leader is compassionate, has a good work ethic, morals, and is resilient. A leader knows when to lend a helping hand and how to be a team player. These characteristics combined allows leaders to face any obstacles to come this way.

## WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?

As an Effingham "outsider", the opportunities to get involved in the community has allowed me to call Effingham my home away from home. I knew what I would put into my involvement in the community is what I would get out of it. The Chamber has allowed me to jump in full force in the community by being an active volunteer on several different committees. A home isn't the location, it is the people who make a place feel like home. Effingham believes in its community and gives a warm welcome feeling to help all new business owners in the area succeed. Thank you, Effingham, for making an "outsider" feel like Effingham is her second home.



PASSIONATE ABOUT PROTECTING DREAMS AND SECURING FUTURES,  
ONE POLICY AT A TIME.


# LAYNA BOND

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to the Effingham community and your commitment to excellence. Your hard work and passion make a lasting impact, and we are grateful for all you do.

**CONGRATULATIONS!**



Layna Bond and Associates LLC  
(217) 347-3060  
lbond@amfam.com

 Nuxoll Photography





# Lee Buehnerkemper

VICE PRESIDENT OF LENDING  
DIETERICH BANK



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1989

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

Dieterich Business Association  
Teutopolis High School Bass Fishing  
Coach

**EDUCATION/TRAINING**

Teutopolis High School, Class of 2008  
Lake Land Community College,  
Associate Degree  
Eastern Illinois University, Finance  
Bachelor's Degree

**WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

Success, to me, is achieving goals and aspirations set by yourself which results in a feeling of pride when accomplished.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

Identify something that drives your motivation and passion in work and life. Expand on this and work won't seem like work and life will be more enjoyable.

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

Surround yourself with meaningful positive relationships in family and friends. Keep striving to reach goals and succeed with these people

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

Many people have inspired me and been role models throughout my life. I would say above all my wife has been an inspiration both professionally and personally. She seems to have always maintained a perfect balance of taking care of our family, having fun and excelling in her profession. Watching her helps bring me back into balance.

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

Integrity, Resilience, and Trust.

**WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

Most importantly a community needs something that brings people together and develops pride in saying you belong there. This can be started with a strong school system, a church, opportunistic employers or recreational opportunities. Once people take pride in their community the rest will follow, and residents will continue to invest in the community and its future.

*Success, to me, is achieving goals and aspirations set by yourself which results in a feeling of pride when accomplished.*



# *Congratulations!*

LEE BUEHNERKEMPER

on being named a Top  
Community Leader Under 40!



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dedication to our  
community and  
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# Lindsay Buddde

PARAPROFESSIONAL  
DIETERICH UNIT #30



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1989

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

Sunshine Pals 4-H Club Leader  
North Clay Fire Protection District  
Firefighter/First Responder  
Caritas Family Solutions Foster Parent  
St. Francis Church Childrens Ministry  
Illinois Farm Bureau State Young Leader  
Committee-District 14

**EDUCATION/TRAINING**

Leadership Training-National I Dare You  
Leadership Award  
SkillPath Administrative Assistants  
Conference  
CPR certification  
First Responder certification  
Beck Seminars

**WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

Success is Progress!

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

Be A Coffee Bean!  
Be the change at home!  
Be the change in your community!  
Be the change in the world!

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

Contentment

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

Naturally, my grandparents played the role of historian, mentor, and role model, all of which are significant and important as grandparents seek to love and nurture a new generation. Spending time with my grandparents instilled values such as a sense of family, strong work ethic, and standing up for what is right! They always had an endless supply of love, patience, and unwavering support.

Although, I can safely say that the most influential and important role model in my life has been my younger brother. I have learned a medley of important lessons from him but none greater than overcoming adversity! I look up to him in so many ways, and I know that I would not nearly be the same person today if I didn't have his support and love!

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

Respect  
Empathy  
Ability to inspire and motivate  
Vision

**WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

Build it well and they will come!  
Civic Engagement- Seek community input from all walks of life- farmers, teachers, business owners, entrepreneurs, etc.  
Economic Opportunity-Access to jobs and resources that ensure families can support themselves therefore contributing to a thriving community. Community building efforts centered around families. Creating a vision for play for all age groups!  
Regardless of where you live, a real community isn't just about the physical buildings. A sense of neighborhood spirit is essential!

Spending time with my grandparents instilled values such as a sense of family, strong work ethic, and standing up for what is right! They always had an endless supply of love, patience, and unwavering support.



# *Congratulations*

## **LINDSAY BUDDE**

**Top Community Leader Under 40**



The Board of Directors and staff of the Effingham County Farm Bureau would like to congratulate Lindsay Budde on being selected as a Top Community Leader Under 40.

***Thank you for all your hard work and dedication to Farm Bureau and our community.***



1102 W. Evergreen Avenue  
PO Box 569, Effingham IL 62401  
manager@effinghamcfb.org  
(217)342-2103



# Megan Lustig

CUSTOMER ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE  
SIEMER MILLING COMPANY



## BIRTH YEAR

1993

## WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?

Parishioner of St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Effingham, IL  
Member of the National Association of Flour Distributors  
Member of the St. Anthony Adult Choir & St. Anthony's Art & Environment Committee  
Member of the Committee to start the Evergreen Bark Park  
Member of local Catholic Prayer Groups  
Enjoying attending St. Anthony Jr. High and High School Baseball games with my children to support my husband in his assistant coaching and JV coaching roles

## EDUCATION/TRAINING

University of Illinois at Springfield -  
Bachelors in Business Administration  
Graduate of St. Anthony Grade School and High School  
Student in the Effingham County CEO Class 2010-2011 school year

## WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?

Success is finding that daily time to pause to count your blessings and be grateful for all of it.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?

Try not to feel overwhelmed by the pressure of "needing" to have your future plans all figured out as quickly and as accurately as possible. Be open to possibilities that weren't on your radar. You never know - being open to an opportunity can open the door to a rewarding career.

## WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?

Balance - weaving together the importance of your faith in and relationship with God, valuing all things family life, placing care in your professional life, and remembering to not lose sight of other interests that bring happiness.

## WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?

My parents. They are two of the most genuine and hard-working people that I know. They care very much about doing the right, kind, and compassionate thing. Their faith ranks high in importance to them, and they are great to talk to when in need of a listening ear and a boost in confidence.

## WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?

Empathy and Humility

## WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?

A community where warmth, support, engagement, and opportunity are second nature.

Success is finding that daily time to pause to count your blessings  
and be grateful for all of it.



congratulations!

*Megan Lustig*



**top community  
leader under 40**

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Teutopolis, IL • Hopkinsville, KY • West Harrison, IN



# Sarah Ferrusen

HR GENERALIST/RECRUITER  
STEVENS INDUSTRIES, INC.



## **BIRTH YEAR**

1994

## **WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

CASA Effingham County and Effingham County Chamber of Commerce

## **EDUCATION/TRAINING**

Bachelor's of Science in Business Management and minor in Marketing from Eastern Illinois University.  
Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Eastern Illinois University

## **WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

Success is the attainment of established objectives and the realization of personal contentment. It encompasses a continuous pursuit of innovation, the exploration of new endeavors, and the enhancement of knowledge and skills.

## **WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

I would advise the youth to pursue their aspirations with determination and make them a reality. It is important to recognize that success and career progression are seldom linear. Embrace the journey and take pleasure in discovering your unique path.

## **WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

Peace as the paramount factor in leading a fulfilling life. Its presence may vary in visibility at different times. Personally, my peace comes from my religious beliefs and faith in Jesus. For others, it may stem from different sources. It is crucial to find peace with one's decisions and to acknowledge that mistakes are inevitable. Accepting these mistakes and finding peace through the lessons is essential.

## **WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

When considering a role model in my career, I must acknowledge Rachel Collins. While it may appear cliché to select my supervisor, she has been instrumental in my professional development. At the outset of my HR career, she dedicated significant time to mentoring me, facilitating my involvement in the Chamber, and imparting a diverse array of skills that I continue to utilize today. Rachel exemplifies a humble leader who shuns the spotlight. She consistently challenges me both professionally and personally, encouraging me to transcend my comfort zone.

## **WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

Active listening is essential to effective leadership. Leaders must listen to understand the true message being conveyed, rather than interpreting it through their own biases. Additionally, empathy is crucial. Without the ability to connect and genuinely hear others, any advice or guidance offered is likely to be disregarded.

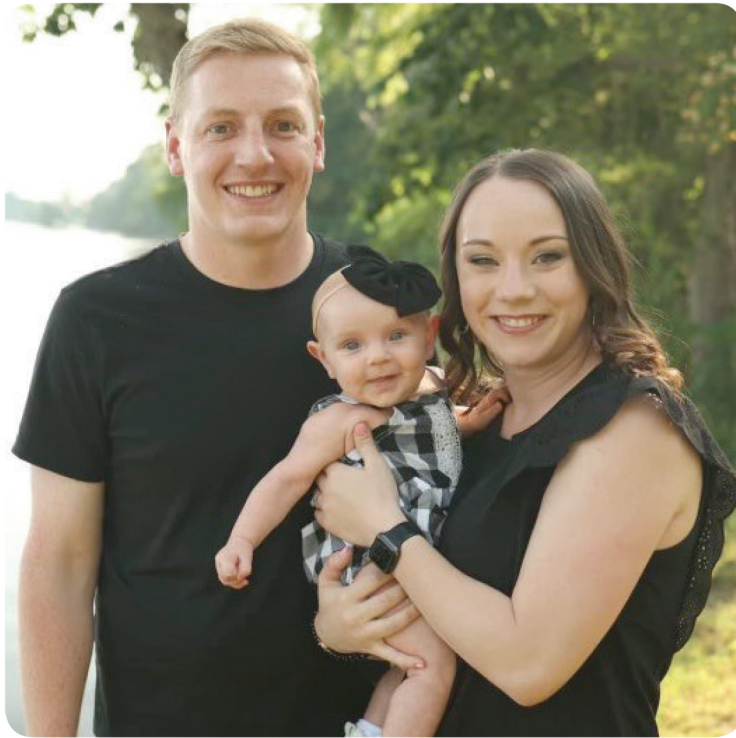
## **WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

To transform a community into a true home, fostering connections is essential. Social and professional bonds create a sense of belonging and unity. A supportive network that stands by you through both triumphs and challenges, celebrates your achievements, and shares common interests is fundamental to cultivating a home-like atmosphere within a community.

*Success is the attainment of established objectives  
and the realization of personal contentment.*

# *Congratulations* **Sarah Zerrusen**

on being named one of Effingham County's  
2024 Top Community Leaders Under 40!



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on our team at Stevens Industries.*



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# Tony Kreke

TEACHER/COACH  
EFFINGHAM ST. ANTHONY HIGH SCHOOL



## BIRTH YEAR

1988

## WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?

St. Anthony High School Baseball Coach  
“Iron Sharpens Iron” - Mens Catholic discipleship group at the high school  
Knights of Columbus

## EDUCATION/TRAINING

Teutopolis High School- 2006  
Lincoln Land Community College-2008  
Eastern Illinois University- 2011

## WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?

I think each person's success is different. To know what your success is, you have to know your “Why” or what I like to call my “mission or creed”. As a husband and father, my mission is to lead my wife and children closer to God and ultimately to heaven. To lead a successful mission, I must first prioritize my own faith. If my priorities are in line with my mission, everything else will fall into place.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?

I work a lot more with the young men in the area through small groups at the school and as a baseball coach. I can see what they battle each day in today's society. Today's culture is all about a “ME” culture. To combat that mentality we try to tell them that if you help enough people along the way, you will eventually help yourself. On the ballfield it's called being a great teammate, but in life it's being a selfless person willing to serve others. In our small group and teams that we coach, we want to model service. I truly believe “boys think about themselves, and men think about themselves less often”. That's the culture we are trying to create inside some of the groups we have at the school.

## WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?

When I look at the most joyful people I know in my own life, they all have the same common factors and that is a love of Christ and love of their family. For me, having a foundation built on faith and family will help align what is most important in my life. Having a family to celebrate the ups and downs with is an important factor. Living a simplistic lifestyle can sometimes be the most rewarding.

## WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?

I am very blessed to be surrounded by great family. My parents, Mike and Linda, have and always will be my role models. They raised 7 children, and now have 21 grandchildren who are all raised in the Catholic faith. Their devotion showed us the importance of following God. They displayed to myself and the rest of our family what true love looks

like. They were happily married for 47 years before my mother passed away in 2017. We grew up on a farm where they both taught their children the value of hard work and responsibility. I also am very fortunate to have my mother and father-in-law deeply rooted in our lives. Their marriage and how they raised their family is very inspiring to me. They are always very supportive of our family and what we strive to become.

## WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?

I think the best leaders have the virtue of humility. I think sometimes humility gets confused with being soft or weak. However, humility is not thinking less of yourself but it's thinking of yourself less often. It is understanding where we fail, accepting it, and learning from those mistakes. The best leaders do not make excuses and they embrace the responsibility for themselves. I also feel that great leaders need to be lifelong learners, finding ways to increase your knowledge and wisdom in areas that are going to challenge you. The world is changing so fast, and we have to learn how to adapt with it.

## WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?

Being able to freely practice their Christian faith is very important, and having many local communities with neighborhoods that are safe and welcoming to younger families. Having successful school districts with great educators will help attract and keep local families from moving away. Also, having many opportunities to start and grow a career is vital to maintaining a strong community.





# *Congratulations to* **TONY KREKE**

## **Top Community Leader Nominee for 2024**

St. Anthony High School proudly congratulates Tony Kreke for being named a Top Community Leader nominee. We thank you for your passion as a Physical Education and Health teacher, Campus Ministry Leader, and Varsity baseball coach, positively impacting our students and the Effingham community.

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**SAINT  
ANTHONY**  
HIGH SCHOOL



# Mallory Weber

THERAPIST/OWNER  
MOSAIC COUNSELING



**BIRTH YEAR**  
1986

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

100 Women Who Care of Effingham County  
PEO  
United Way

**EDUCATION/TRAINING**

Masters in Clinical and School Counseling EIU 2014

**WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SUCCESS?**

I feel that success is living a balanced life. One where I can achieve my personal and professional goals while making a positive impact on others. I want to be able to have time to grow in my professional career as well as be a present wife and mother. I want to have the time to make those lasting memories with my girls, but also

reaching milestones in my career. True success is about growing, learning from experiences, but always staying true to myself and my beliefs.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TODAY'S YOUTH?**

There is no timeline for your life. Everyone meets milestones and goals at different times. Be open to taking risks and stepping outside of your comfort zone. Never stop learning and always be open to new ideas and goals.

**WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LIVING A HAPPY LIFE?**

Along with the work life balance that I hope to achieve, I also want to have memorable experiences. I believe that life is about collecting memories, not just things. Living a happy life to me means being open to adventures and new experiences. I also feel that having supportive family and friends that you trust and love and love you back is the key to happiness.

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

Honestly, my little sister. She has been through her share of heartaches and obstacles. Especially in the recent years. However, if you know her you would never realize this. She is strong and logical in the times you need the most. She is honest and caring and listens no matter what her opinion really is. She is one of the most tenacious and hardworking individuals, and she sets goals that she achieves. She never backs down when she believes in something.

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE?**

Leaders should have empathy. Being understanding and considering the feelings and perspectives of others will help build trust and loyalty within an organization. Leaders need to be clear and effective communicators. Being able to communicate with others gives people the motivation and guidance they need. A good leader should also take responsibility for their actions and decisions, as well as the failures and successes of their organization. Lastly, a good leader needs to be adaptable. They need to be flexible, open to change and able to adjust to new circumstances.

**WHAT ELEMENTS ARE NEEDED IN A COMMUNITY TO MAKE IT A PLACE PEOPLE WILL WANT TO CALL IT HOME?**

For me, finding a community I want to call home needs to most importantly be safe. A sense of security is imperative. Growing up and continuing to live here has offered me the perspective to see Effingham through many stages of my life. We have a small, but mighty community. The members are supportive, helpful and caring. There are many opportunities to build relationships and foster belonging for those that have always lived here as well as newcomers. I can't imagine calling anywhere else home, and I am so thankful to raise my girls in such a caring, supportive community.





## Adam Flack

### Up & Coming Leader

**BIRTH YEAR:** 2006

**SCHOOL:** Effingham High School

**GRADE LEVEL:** 12

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

Student Council; Basketball; Cross Country; Track; National Honor Society; FCA.

#### WHAT LEADERSHIP ADVICE HAS HELPED SHAPE YOU INTO AN UP & COMING LEADER?

The best advice is to always try to at least understand where someone is coming from. People are generally more receptive to those who make them feel understood. You don't have to necessarily agree or disagree with them, but making sure everyone has input and is heard is imperative for a team to work well.

#### WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADER?

Intelligence and passion are essential qualities of a leader. One means nothing without the other. A leader must be smart enough to know what is best for his community, but also passionate enough to act on his plans.

#### WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?

My parents have been my role model. Seeing how they take leadership at work and at home has shown me what it means to be a good leader. The way they juggle their life, their kids' lives, and work, tells me that not all leaders wear suits or make million-dollar decisions. I hope that one day I can replicate the patience and amiability that they display every day, and show others what makes a good leader — just like they did for me.



## Adam Stuckemeyer

### Up & Coming Leader

**BIRTH YEAR:** 2006

**SCHOOL:** Beecher City High School

**GRADE LEVEL:** Senior

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

I am involved in Future Farms of America (FFA) where I serve as the student advisor. I am also in the

Daisy Dolls and Guys 4-H club where I serve as the Vice-President. I am involved in the Amateur Trapshooting Association, where I do not hold an office, but am very active all year long. This past year I was on the Illinois State Skillathon Team, where we placed first in the Nation. This year I am on the Illinois State Quiz Bowl Team, where I will compete in Louisville in November.

#### WHAT LEADERSHIP ADVICE HAS HELPED SHAPE YOU INTO AN UP & COMING LEADER?

"Leaders are not always seen." This is one of the best things I have ever been told as it not only covers how I lead but also how I feel the best leaders show leadership. It is not always important to be hoisted on a pedestal as a leader but to work and help guide all of those around not just those higher up. We are called to help build those organizations and things that we care about. Building these organizations usually does not mean that we are building the organization itself but building the members that are in it, ensuring that the future of the organizations that we hold near and dear to our hearts have a strong foundation and unwavering support system not only for ourselves but for those who will follow in our footsteps.

#### WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADER?

Being humble and putting humility at the top of your list is more important today than ever. Leading people does not mean that you tell them what to do but guide them in the right direction. This is one area that I am continuing to work on as I develop my leadership skills. I think one of the hardest things to do as a leader is listen to the people that you are leading and developing a plan with them instead of for them. Understanding that members of your team are going to have ideas that need to be heard and that they might actually be better than what you had in mind is a mindset that all good leaders should have. The FFA Creed has a line that says "I believe in leadership from ourselves and respect from others." I believe that the best leaders are not always the most liked individuals in an organization, but they are the most respected by their peers and others outside of the organization.

#### WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?

It is hard to narrow it down to one person who has inspired me, but if I had to choose, I would say it is my father. He has held many leadership roles within the community and county. My father has been an elder at our church serving two terms, he has served on school boards and also served on the Effingham County Pork Producers board for many years, all while running and maintaining a herd of purebred Angus cattle and row crop farming with the rest of our family. To say that he uses his leadership skills in many areas of his life would be an understatement.



## Claresa Ruholl

### Up & Coming Leader

**BIRTH YEAR:** 2006

**SCHOOL:** Teutopolis High School

**GRADE LEVEL:** 12

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

Volleyball, Trap, National Honor Society, Volunteers, Science Club, FFA, 4-H

#### WHAT LEADERSHIP ADVICE HAS HELPED SHAPE YOU INTO AN UP & COMING LEADER?

In volleyball, my coaches inspire me to lead by example through hard work and hustle. I have taken his advice off the court and have started applying it to my daily life. Whenever I tackle something new, I work hard and strive for success. As a result, I have become more confident, and I encourage others to work hard alongside me.

#### WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADER?

Effective leaders listen and compromise. By listening to their peers, they validate others' opinions and work together to make decisions that benefit the majority while ensuring everyone feels valued. Another essential quality in a leader is self-accountability. By admitting to mistakes, leaders demonstrate that everyone can learn and grow from them.

#### WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?

The most significant role model in my life is my grandma. Her strong work ethic has taught me the importance of hard work in achieving my goals. Her life experiences have taught me important lessons about family, and her constant encouragement inspires me to pursue my dreams. My grandma's influence has played a crucial role in shaping who I am today.





## EmmaLee Myers

**BIRTH YEAR:** 2006

**SCHOOL:** Saint Anthony High School

**GRADE LEVEL:** 12

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

I am a member of NHS, History Club, and Women of Worth. I am so honored to be a member of NHS, and

I couldn't ask for a better group of students to be a part of it with. Women of Worth is a group of girls that meet every week to discuss our faith. I am a large group senior leader and a small group leader. This will be my first year doing History Club, and I am so excited to serve as an officer!

**WHAT LEADERSHIP ADVICE HAS HELPED SHAPE YOU INTO AN UP & COMING LEADER?**

It would be hard for me to pinpoint a singular phrase or piece of advice that has shaped me as a leader but every day, my parents show me how to live the life of a role model. My mom and dad, who work both together and alone, have shaped the way I look at life. They have taught me how to be independent and to live without having to rely on others, but they have also taught me that it's okay to ask for help when you really need it. I grow in appreciation of their example as I approach adulthood and reality.

## Up & Coming Leader

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADER?**

I have found that the five most important qualities for me are self-discipline, independence, understanding, patience, and kindness. With self-discipline comes scheduling and prioritizing and without those, your entire plan will fall apart. While independence is so important, independence with the ability to work well with others is even more substantial to being a good leader. Understanding those around you and giving everyone the chance to insert their opinion is also important as a leader. Lastly, patience and kindness, while not always easy, are learned along the way and appreciated most by those around you.

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

My inspiration has definitely been my Grandma Judy. She is well educated, strongly opinionated, and one of the most independent people I know. My Grandma amazes me with her ability to balance work, fun trips with her friends and sorority sisters, and spending time with our family. She graduated with both her Bachelor's and her Master's within only 4 years. She has worked for 53 years as a financial advisor and refuses to retire. Like me, my Grandma Judy had to study hard and discipline herself in school to get where she wanted to go. Although I plan on taking a completely different career path, she has set an example of the woman I want to be and has shown me what it takes to make something of yourself.



## Sophia Percy

**BIRTH YEAR:** 2007

**SCHOOL:** Altamont Community High School

**GRADE LEVEL:** 12

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

NHS, FCA, Band, Golf, Basketball, Softball

**WHAT LEADERSHIP ADVICE HAS HELPED SHAPE YOU INTO AN UP & COMING LEADER?**

"Just because you have a bad thought, doesn't mean you have to believe it."

This advice has helped me through thick and thin. It has helped me grow confident in my decisions and have a good attitude about everything. It, most importantly, has helped me give myself grace whenever I mess up, and through that I have learned to give other people more grace, as well.

## Up & Coming Leader

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADER?**

A leader has to be self-aware enough to know that they can always improve more and they don't know everything right off the bat. They need to be willing to listen and learn from others.

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

Having a large age gap between me and my older siblings is a gift that I am eternally grateful for. They are the people I look up to the most, and I know that I can go to them for any advice that I need. My older siblings are, without a doubt, my role models.



## Tanner Will

**BIRTH YEAR:** 2006

**SCHOOL:** Dieterich High School

**GRADE LEVEL:** 12

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

FFA, Trap, Basketball

**WHAT LEADERSHIP ADVICE HAS HELPED SHAPE YOU INTO AN UP & COMING LEADER?**

Always listen to what others have to say and be open to anything.

## Up & Coming Leader

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADER?**

Determined and hard-working, open minded and a good listener.

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

My parents have pushed me and taught me how to respect others and help others out. They showed me to always stand up for others and never be scared of what problem I have to overcome next. They want me to set high goals for myself and push me to achieve them.



## Vincent Vogel

**BIRTH YEAR:** 2007

**SCHOOL:** St. Anthony High School

**GRADE LEVEL:** Senior

**WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE YOU INVOLVED IN?**

Iron Sharpens Iron, Baseball, and History Club

**WHAT LEADERSHIP ADVICE HAS HELPED SHAPE YOU INTO AN UP & COMING LEADER?**

Always perform or complete tasks as if someone is watching.

## Up & Coming Leader

**WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU FEEL ARE MOST IMPORTANT IN A LEADER?**

Honesty, discipline, and conscientiousness are three important qualities in a leader.

**WHO HAS SERVED AS YOUR INSPIRATION OR ROLE MODEL? WHY?**

My Dad is a great role model for myself. He has taught me to always work hard and to do my best no matter how unimportant or large the task is. Along with this he has taught me how to determine who good influences are and people that I can learn from in my daily life.



INDEX

Introductory Letter.....	2	Kyle Dasenbrock .....	28
Brandy Kelley.....	3	Planters Precision .....	29
Alec Stevenson .....	4	Kylie Moore.....	30
Effingham Family Dental .....	5	Effingham Unit 40 .....	31
Alex Steppe.....	6	Layna Bond.....	32
RE/MAX Key Advantage .....	7	Layna Bond and Associates LLC.....	33
Allison Stevens.....	8	Lee Buehnerkemper .....	34
Midland States Bank.....	9	Dieterich Bank.....	35
Anthony Jansen .....	10	Lindsay Budde .....	36
Farnsworth Group .....	11	Effingham County Farm Bureau.....	37
Brooke Hoene .....	12	Megan Lustig.....	38
John L. Lewis Concrete Construction, Inc. ....	13	Siemer Milling Company .....	39
Carissa Snow .....	14	Sarah Zerrusen .....	40
Grunloh Construction Inc. ....	15	Stevens Industries, Inc. ....	41
Emily Flach.....	16	Tony Kreke.....	42
Illinois State Board of Education .....	17	Saint Anthony High School.....	43
Emily Hille .....	18	Mallory Weber .....	44
United Way of Effingham County .....	19	Adam Flack.....	45
Hannah Hutchinson .....	20	Adam Stuckemeyer.....	45
Evergreen Nursing & Rehabilitation Center.....	21	Claresa Ruholl .....	45
Jessica Reeder .....	22	EmmaLee Myers .....	46
Effingham Unit 40 .....	23	Sophia Pearcy .....	46
Kalen Whitney.....	24	Tanner Will.....	46
Whitney Roofing, Inc. ....	25	Vincent Vogel .....	46
Kasey Kemme .....	26	Effingham County Chamber.....	48
University of Illinois Extension.....	27		



**Awards Dinner**

Thursday, November 21, 2024  
at Thelma Keller Convention Center

**Presenting Sponsor**



**Top Community Leader photos by:**

**PIOTROWSKI STUDIOS**

**Art Director:**

Natalie Reidford



C O N G R A T U L A T I O N S

2024

TOP COMMUNITY

*Leaders*

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