

QUAD-CITY TIMES

INSIGHT

THE BUSINESS JOURNAL OF THE QUAD-CITIES

Plus

SELLING THE Q-C

Realtors discuss their journeys, success in the market

DOWNTOWN DYNAMICS

What city leaders say is in the works to keep the heart of the city alive

INSPIRING INTERNS

What beginners think of the Q-C business world



A FIRM FOUNDATION

THE GROUNDBREAKING M&A STRATEGY THAT GREW IMEG INTO A \$383 MILLION COMPANY



FALL 2023

Take Charge. Lead Change.

WOMEN LEAD CHANGE 2023

WLC CONFERENCE: QUAD CITIES
WATERFRONT CONVENTION CENTER, BETTENDORF

Nov. 14

SCHEDULED TO APPEAR

Tactical leadership development, peer-to-peer networking, and more for women leaders and allies



TICKETS: \$225/PERSON

Purchase tickets, view full agenda, and more here:
wlcglobal.org/events/2023-wlc-conference-quad-cities



PRESENTING SPONSOR BANK OF AMERICA 

INSIGHT

THE BUSINESS JOURNAL OF THE QUAD-CITIES

FALL 2023 // VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

Publisher: Debbie Anselm

Editor: Tom Martin

Photographer: Gary Krambeck

Designer: Chelsea Liske

ADVISORY BOARD

Mara Downing, Vice President of Global Brand Management and Corporate Communications
Deere & Co.

Molly Foley, Chief Marketing Officer
IMEG Corp.

Dave Heller, President and CEO
Main Street Baseball

Dave Herrell, President and CEO
Visit Quad-Cities

Kent Pilcher, President and Owner
Estes Construction

Ladrina Wilson, President and CEO
Quad-Cities Chamber of Commerce

Jim Watts, President and CEO
RLA Federal Credit Union

To advertise in Insight, call us at 563-383-2306 or email at advertising@qctimes.com.

To subscribe to Quad-City Insight, visit qctimes.com/insight



 [@insightbusinessmag](https://www.instagram.com/insightbusinessmag)

 www.linkedin.com/company/quad-city-times-insight/

Copyright Quad-City Times 2023. All rights reserved. Reproduction or use of editorial or graphic content without permission is prohibited.



Paul VanDuyne, CEO of IMEG Corp., started as the company's 16th employee. Years later, he has worked his way up the ladder and has grown the company to include more than 2,400 employees.
Gary Krambeck

4 From the Experts

Hear from our resident financial expert, and a word from St. Ambrose University

8 Engineered for excellence

VanDuyne's M&A strategies launch IMEG into national spotlight

20 Mastering the market

Quad-Cities real estate moguls discuss their paths to success

26 The new generation

Interns talk about what draws them in, and makes them want to stay

35 Thriving downtowns

What leaders say will help the community grow

Can the US economy avoid a recession?



MARK GRYWACHESKI

Economy

Mark Grywacheski is an expert in financial markets and economic analysis and is an investment adviser with Quad-Cities Investment Group, Davenport.

Each quarter, *The Wall Street Journal* releases its latest Economic Survey. The survey asks more than 70 participating economists their projections on interest rates, economic growth, unemployment, consumer spending and inflation, among others. Its goal is to provide a broad-based forecast on the direction of the American economy. Earlier this summer, the *Journal* released its survey for the July-September third quarter.

54% of respondents expect the economy will enter a recession within the next 12 months. This is down from the 61% reported in the prior two quarterly surveys. A recession is defined as two consecutive quarters of negative economic growth. In other words, the economy actually contracts and gets smaller. America's last technical recession was in the first half of 2022, when economic growth was reported at -1.6% in the first quarter and -0.6% in the second quarter.

On the positive side, despite concerns of a potential recession, the U.S. labor market remains quite resilient. In June, the national unemployment rate fell from 3.7% to 3.6%, near a 50-year low. So far

this year, the economy has added an average of 278,000 new jobs each month. For economists, a strong labor market bodes well for the argument that a recession can be avoided. Consumer spending drives two-thirds of our nation's economic growth. When jobs are plentiful, as they currently are, consumers tend to spend their money more freely which ultimately fuels the American economy.

But many economists are quick to note the labor market has been gradually weakening. Over the past 12 months, the number of new jobs being added each month has steadily declined. In June, the 209,000 new jobs added was the lowest monthly gain in two and a half years. By the end of this year, according to the *Journal's* Economic Survey, the unemployment rate is expected to rise from its current 3.6% to around 4.1%. By the end of 2024, the rate is expected to jump to around 4.5%.

Whether the U.S. economy ultimately dips back into recession will rely heavily on the durability of the American consumer. High inflation and rising interest rates continue to take a heavy toll on household budgets. Another

consideration is the state of America's key trading partners who consume vast amounts of U.S.-made goods and services. Many face daunting economic challenges of their own.

China, America's largest single-nation trading partner, continues its post-pandemic economic struggles as it tries to recover from its harsh COVID lockdown and quarantine policies. In the second quarter, China's economy – the world's second largest – grew at an annualized rate of just 0.8%. China's unemployment rate for the ages 16-24 rose to 21.3%, a record high. Both consumer and business spending have also weakened.

The Eurozone, defined as the 20 European countries that use the euro as their primary currency, is another large trading partner whose collective economy is also struggling. The Eurozone entered a technical recession when economic growth was reported at -0.1% in both the fourth quarter of 2022 and the first quarter of this year.

The American economy still has a number of hurdles to overcome. But, for now, economists are a little more hopeful a recession can be avoided in the next 12 months.

Disclaimer: Opinions expressed herein are subject to change without notice. Any prices or quotations contained herein are indicative only and do not constitute an offer to buy or sell any securities at any given price. Information has been obtained from sources considered reliable, but we do not guarantee that the material presented is accurate or that it provides a complete description of the securities, markets or developments mentioned. Quad-Cities Investment Group LLC is a registered investment adviser with the U.S. Securities Exchange Commission.

SUSTAINING PEOPLE AND PLANET

We run to advance the lives and livelihoods of our customers through products, solutions, and services that make tasks more efficient and increase daily productivity. The result is increased conservation of natural resources, a positive impact on our customers and their communities, and increased profitability today and for generations to come.

Learn more at [Deere.com/Sustainability](https://www.deere.com/Sustainability)



JOHN DEERE





Beau Dexter
Submitted

St. Ambrose MBA Gives Dexter an Educational Advantage

According to St. Ambrose University alum Beau Dexter '11, '12 MBA, education is essential and promoted regularly by his employer, Genesis/MercyOne. It's because of this that Dexter, who earned his bachelor's degree in business administration from St. Ambrose in 2011, continued his education at his alma mater to get his MBA a year later.

Dexter said he is most thankful to St. Ambrose for the opportunity he was afforded to complete his undergraduate and graduate degrees in the way he did. In every position he's held at Genesis/MercyOne – past and present – education has been vital.

"I often get asked if pursuing advanced education is worth it, and my response is always – you won't regret it," he said.

Dexter started working for Genesis as a member of the grounds crew as a high school sophomore. He mowed grass during the summer and pushed snow during the winter months. Before his first year at St. Ambrose, he moved into a human resources assistant role and then worked as a human resources coordinator while working on his bachelor's degree.

"I wanted to advance my career at Genesis. I had a leader at the time who was a great mentor to me, and she promoted

continuing education," said Dexter, who worked part-time at Genesis (now Genesis/MercyOne after merging with MercyOne health system in 2023) while completing his undergraduate degree.

"I am thankful I pursued my MBA and obtained it when I did. Regardless, if you want to be done in one year or three years – you can go at your pace with a team of supporters to help you along the way. The professors really care about their students, and many are previous leaders in business who teach from their own real-world experiences. Additionally, the most rewarding part of the program came from the diversity of courses I took. Each course helped me to have a more well-rounded approach to challenges or ideas in the workplace, from marketing to business ethics, etc. These courses prepared me to adjust to obstacles in my career."

While working full-time, Dexter took three classes at a time in the evenings to complete his MBA in just one year. "The nice part about St. Ambrose is the plan to obtain your education can be customized to meet your needs and schedule," Dexter said. Although it was challenging to balance work with a full class load, he had great professors whose real-life work experience helped "to relate and make the process easier."

After graduating, he was promoted to human resources director, a role he worked for from 2013–2018 before becoming primary care director.

On the career fast track, he was again promoted in 2022 to executive director, and earlier this year, following the merger, Dexter became vice president of operations for MercyOne Medical Group.

He said he took the role as part of the partnership this past March and enjoys the opportunity to work directly with physicians, advanced practice providers, and the operations team to deliver care to the community.

"I am forever grateful to Genesis for the opportunities and support available to me. Working in HR was a great opportunity for me to learn and grow. It helped to develop my communication skills and work collaboratively with all my colleagues. It's a great position in which I get to observe firsthand how our amazing caregivers provide care for the community," he said.

Dexter's ability to thrive in various positions within Genesis/MercyOne is attributed to the skills, knowledge, and expertise acquired during his time at St. Ambrose. His gratitude and commitment to education have been unwavering, serving as a testament to the lasting significance of a well-rounded academic foundation.



**St AMBROSE
UNIVERSITY**

Patricia VanBruwaene
College of Business

Master your career in business **here.**

Where **flexibility** meets **focus**.

The St. Ambrose University Master of Business Administration program offers an outcome-oriented and personalized curriculum organized with the busy professional in mind.

FLEXIBLE

St. Ambrose MBA students have the flexibility to attend evening classes and online courses, allowing students to hone their business acumen in a flexible and focused manner.

FOCUSED

Become an expert in your current/future field by choosing a concentration of study in the fields of:

- Leadership
- Human Resource Management
- Marketing Management
- General Business

ACCREDITED

The St. Ambrose H.L. McLaughlin MBA program is nationally accredited by the Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) and St. Ambrose is fully accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.



SEE YOURSELF AT ST. AMBROSE.

Scan to learn more about our business programs.
sau.edu/discoverMBA



VanDuyne builds IMEG into engineering powerhouse with M&A tactics

GRETCHEN TESKE

gteske@qctimes.com

KJWW Engineering Consultants hired Paul VanDuyne in 1976. His part-time job as a draftsman paid \$5 an hour and made him the 16th employee at the firm.

Fast forward to 2003, he was named the firm's vice president of engineering. By 2004 he was named the president. Asked if he ever dreamed that in five decades a little engineering company based in Rock Island, Illinois, would grow to include more than 2,400 employees at 82 locations, his answer was simple.

"Not ever," he said. "We were just the small engineering company in town."

KJWW eventually merged with TTG Engineers out of California to form what is now known as IMEG. The engineering consultation firm is headquartered in Rock Island at 623 26th Avenue. Before it rose to national recognition with a No. 57 ranking with Engineering News Record and more than \$383M in annual revenue in seven years, the engineers at KJWW were taking whatever work they could find.

VanDuyne said Beling Engineering Consultants was the leading firm in town, and KJWW received any work they could not get to. KJWW was only working on certain types of projects, mainly educational, industrial and commercial.

The goal was to be as big as Beling, which had about 60 people at the time. Growing the company by the hundreds and expanding into new markets was nowhere on his radar.

"That was the last thing I thought about at that point," he said.

But, the company slowly grew organically and by 2008 was up to 500 people. As the recession hit, the company scaled back to about 450 people and stayed that size until 2015.

"To me, that was pretty huge," he said. "That felt like a huge company at that point."

In 2014, VanDuyne began eyeing retirement and set his sights on hanging up the cleats in the new year after nearly 40 years in the business. When he was about a year and a half away, he was invited to attend a Strategic Coach session in Toronto.

Initially, he was not keen on the idea, considering he planned to retire soon. But

after going, he realized there was more work to be done.

"Going to Strategic Coach, I realized that, you know, age is just a number and it depends upon what you do with that number," he said. "Sometimes you basically form your life by that number, and sometimes you just ignore that number and you do whatever the heck you want to do."

So, that's what he did.

"I really elected to kind of do the latter," he said. "I said, 'You know, there's still a bit of life in this old body, so let's try and do something different.'"

While attending various events in Canada, VanDuyne ran into a CEO who grew his company to include nearly 2,000 people. After talking with him, VanDuyne set his sights on accomplishing a goal far bigger than the 450-person firm he already had back home.

"I said, 'You know. Why couldn't IMEG, or KJWW at the time, why couldn't we do the same type of thing?' he said.

Before long, VanDuyne met up with the CEO of TTG Engineers in California. The firm had about 350 people with additional offices in Phoenix and was looking to migrate to the Midwest. At the same

A professional portrait of Paul Van Duyne, CEO of IMEC Corp. He is an older man with short, light-colored hair, smiling slightly. He is wearing a dark navy blue suit jacket over a light blue and white vertically striped button-down shirt. He is seated, with his hands clasped in his lap. The background is a dark, neutral studio setting. The photo is framed by a white border on the left and bottom, and a red border on the top and right.

IMEC Corp. CEO
Paul Van Duyne poses
for a portrait in the
Quad-City Times studio.
Gary Krambeck

time, VanDuyne was looking for ways to migrate his company to the West Coast.

After speaking with TTG President and CEO Zareh Astourian, the pair decided to join the companies together and formed what is now known as IMEG.

"We would literally have an 800-person company and have what we want," VanDuyne recalled. "We'd have offices on the West Coast and they'd have offices on the Midwest."

The two companies completed a merger of equals, meaning no cash was exchanged. Instead, the companies swapped stock shares. VanDuyne said the move made major headlines at the time because it was the only successful merger of its kind. To this day, that remains true.

"I was really excited about it. It really was something that I don't think I ever had doubts about it," VanDuyne said.

The real challenge, he said, came in figuring out how to merge the two cultures, considering they were operating on different sides of the nation. VanDuyne said it was important to him not to change the cultures but instead blend them together in a way that brought out the best in both.

The bulk of time between 2015 and 2017 was spent mainly on that concept, he said. As time went on and IMEG acquired more



Antoine Lai, senior civil designer I, and **Patrick Eikenberry**, vice president of civil engineering, meet in The Link at IMEG's headquarters. *IMEG*

companies, it became clear there needed to be a team dedicated to this strategy.

Dan Huntington has been with IMEG since 1997. He first came on board as a structural engineer and worked in that role for a large part of his career before transitioning into his current role as vice principal overseeing the M&A Synergy Team with a focus on onboarding and firm integration.

Merger and acquisition is a business strategy that IMEG has built a legacy around. A merger implies that two companies come together to form a new legal name, like KJWW and TTG. Acquisitions, the bulk of IMEG's business deals, means another firm is purchased outright. Huntington said the creation of the M&A synergy team came about in early 2018 after two major acquisitions.

"There were two very well-known firms that joined us within a month of each other," he said.

Those firms were McClure Engineering and Missman Inc., both based in the Quad-Cities. Each had about 80 people working for them in the Quad-Cities and across Illinois.

"When 160 staff join you, all within 30 days, it highlights this is far too much to be doing in addition to our day jobs," Huntington said.

With the new acquisition came new challenges. Because everyone was local, Huntington said, IMEG employees could see the impact of not having a group dedicated to merging the cultures together. To balance that, a team of 10 full-time employees

was put together as the M&A Team to ensure firms could service current clients, and staff, and help them transition to the new practices at IMEG.

"We are all experts in IMEG and experts in M&A and experts in the new firm that's joining us," he said.

Former Missman CEO Pat Eikenberry said he was immediately on board with the idea of an acquisition by IMEG. Based on his decades-long experience in the engineering field, he knew VanDuyne for some time and was impressed with the growth strategy IMEG was implementing.

"When he suggested that maybe Missmen join IMEG, it was an opportunity for us," he said. "We were approaching 100 people at the time, and to go to the next level ... was a big step, but what it brought to us was a lot more diversity, not only in people and geographic locations but also the types of projects we could work on. And it was an easy, logical step for us."

Speaking from experience, Eikenberry said he felt the transition into IMEG was

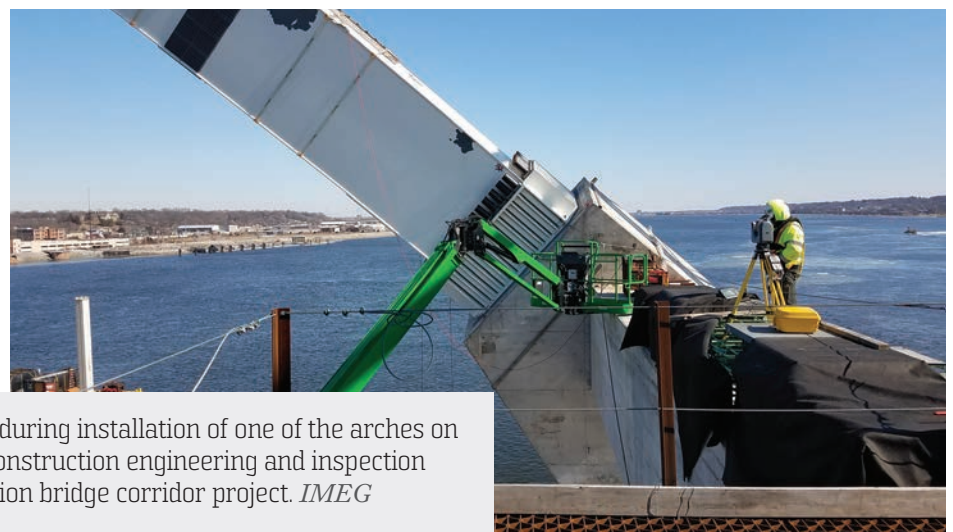
smooth for his crew, especially with the help of the M&A team. Now that he has graduated to the role of vice president of civil engineering, he sees the value of this team in a whole new light.

"They're in this M&A group for one to three years until they know everything IMEG and and once they are functioning and they're comfortable, then they come to my group," he said. "In essence, they're doing the same thing they did before. They just got a bigger bench strength and we've got some combined back-of-house services now that they don't have to worry about."

That extra support group is what sets IMEG apart and what ensures the acquisition will succeed, Eikenberry said. Change can be difficult, but having a dedicated staff to walk new employees through it eliminates a little of the stress that comes with joining a new company.

"There's always questions about change, and engineers aren't real good with change sometimes," he said. "But honestly, I think the M&A synergy team, that's our secret sauce. You will see in a lot of merger acquisitions ... a dip in productivity and in that period of time for adjustment. We've really taken that dip out of it by using this group there and hit the ground running."

This team was also instrumental for Robin Greenleaf when her firm first joined the fold. Now, Greenleaf is Vice President of Architectural Relations and Strategic Partnerships and an executive principal with IMEG.



An IMEG employee takes a measurement during installation of one of the arches on the Interstate 74 Bridge. IMEG provided construction engineering and inspection services for several portions of the \$1.4 billion bridge corridor project. *IMEG*



WE'RE A
2022
TOP-RATED
LIFETIME DEALER



We were Voted #1
Now 12 years in a Row!

#1 New Car Dealership
#1 Auto Repair | #1 Tire Store



309-764-6700
CourtesyCarCity.com

NEW
LASIK AND
CATARACT
SURGEON



DR. DAVENPORT

Dr. Connor Davenport is fellowship-trained and specializes in LASIK and laser-assisted cataract surgery.

New patients are welcome. Schedule your appointment today.

(563) 323-2020

(309) 793-2020

ESAIECARE.COM



EYE SURGEONS
ASSOCIATES

Medical • Surgical • Optical

Providing Your Best Vision For Life

Celebrating **40** Years

YOU'RE INVITED!

humility
HOMES & SERVICES
COMMUNITY IS US
Unity Brunch

Sunday | Oct. 1, 2023
10 AM - 1 PM
Tanglewood Hills Pavilion
4250 Middle Rd Bettendorf, Iowa 52722

BY JOINING US AT THE UNITY BRUNCH, YOU BECOME AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR MISSION, DRIVING POSITIVE CHANGE AND BUILDING A FUTURE WHERE HOMELESSNESS IS RARE, BRIEF, AND ONE-TIME IN THE GREATER QUAD CITIES.

RSVP by Sept. 15, 2023 at (563) 326-1330
Ext. 114 or email
contact@humilityhomes.org



Use the QR code to purchase your tickets or visit
www.HumilityHomes.org/UnityBrunch



Prior to joining, Greenleaf had a 35-year career as the CEO and founder of Architectural Engineers, Inc. in Boston. The firm was entirely mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and design with a strong foothold in higher education and government facilities.

The company began in Boston in 1985 and remained there for its entire existence, employing more than 30 people. During a meeting with stock-holding partners, Greenleaf and the team began discussions about positioning the firm for an internal transition, or an external acquisition. The partners agreed it was time to explore what options were out there, and Greenleaf knew just where to turn.

"IMEG was my personal No. 1 choice," she said.

The Midwest firm had been on her radar for some time and was pulling off impressive projects across the country. One in particular

was based in Denver and was submitted to the Engineering Excellence Awards run by the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC). Greenleaf was the chair at the time — the first woman to hold that position.

The project was a water campus redevelopment for Denver Water and featured on-site wastewater treatment, including an innovative on-site treatment system in the lobby and an on-site zero carbon emissions goal. Instead of burning fossil fuels, IMEG used air-to-water low ambient air source heat pumps and water-to-water magnetic heat recovery chillers.

The project won three awards including the ACEC National Engineering Excellence Grand Conceptor Award. Right away, Greenleaf knew IMEG was one to watch.

"My first reaction is this is a company that does the kinds of projects that we

love to do," she said. "It had all the bells and whistles that make engineers happy."

Following the win, Greenleaf reached out to IMEG about a possible acquisition. Initially, she held virtual meetings with VanDuyne and once the pair felt her firm would be a good fit, things moved ahead.

"He's very straightforward and welcoming," she said. "Any questions that we had, we felt like we were given straightforward answers to."

VanDuyne said initial meetings are a big part of the onboarding process for a new acquisition. Every company receives a corporate welcome from VanDuyne, where he meets the new employees, answers their questions, and listens to concerns.

"That company previously knew who their president was, so if a decision was made, they could look at him, or her, and say, 'I know where this is coming from.'" he said. "Ultimately, I think that's important for anybody that joins us. Everybody gets to spend about four hours with me, and like me or don't like me, they at least know who I am. At least they know the president who they're working for."

Running a small company, Greenleaf said her team worked as fast and hard as they could on projects, but there was an avoidable backlog of future work ahead of them. Sometimes the frustrations came in the form of lack of resources, software or hardware-related problems, and being short-staffed.

"One of the things that made IMEG very attractive was we asked a lot of questions about the software, the hardware, the people, and it just felt like by being acquired by IMEG, I would be able to give that to our staff and when the time came to tell them what we were doing, that was the main reason," she said. "And you know, they were all feeling the same frustrations at not being able to do as much as we felt like we were capable of."

Huntington said he often hears from acquired companies that the shared resources are what win new employees over. From continuing education to internal learning and development, IMEG's commitment



Ellie Randleman, IMEG's receptionist, works at her desk in the lobby of IMEG's headquarters in Rock Island.
IMEG



Matt Bowman, senior mechanical designer 2, and **Kaylee Golden**, electrical design technician, review site work.
IMEG

IMEG

\$383M

in annual revenue

82

offices

#57

ranking with
Engineering News Record

to growing its talent base from within stands out to newly acquired workers.

"What we hear from the staff who didn't get a vote on whether this happens or not, they're generally anxious, initially, then they become excited about our benefits and our additional resources are quite a bit better," he said. "The staff seem to appreciate that we have a model that says we really want you to continue to be empowered locally in a market that works well for you."

When a firm is acquired, the talent stays within that particular firm, as does the leadership. Huntington said IMEG trusts the local leadership knows their team and how it operates, and it keeps them there to help it flourish.

Moving from a firm of about 30 to one of a few thousand may sound concerning to some, but not for Greenleaf. After college, she worked for a large company in the Bay Area in California. Joining IMEG felt familiar, she said.

"The idea of working for a big company was very exciting," she said. "(It was a) great way to kind of close out my career and be able to hopefully make a difference on a bigger scale."

In about six months, her firm had officially been acquired by IMEG. Greenleaf said she initially had concerns about how quickly the process went and what the external opinion would be, but she soon realized those were nothing to worry about.

"I was concerned about my staff. I was concerned about selling my company in the middle of a year where I was in a very visible position nationally already, and I didn't know how people would react to that," she said. "That turned out to be a bunch of stuff I made up in my head. Nobody, really nobody, even blinked at that because M&A (mergers and acquisitions) is just so active that ... I wasn't the only person

that I knew that was acquired that year."

When it came time to telling staff, she said, they were an easy sell.

"The main reaction we got was people said, 'If you feel like this is what's best for the company, we trust you,'" she said.

Architectural Engineers, Inc. officially joined IMEG on Jan. 1, 2022, and did not lose any staff members. In fact, the Boston team grew to include more than 40 people and recently moved into a new office space.

In addition to a larger Boston office, Greenleaf's team has a larger pool of resources to choose from. IMEG has completed numerous acquisitions up and down the East Coast over the last 18 months, and they all communicate well, she said.

"I've gotten to know people from all over the country and what they do and where to go with if I need help with something," she said. "It's a big company, and we're very spread out, but we're very connected and that feels really almost easy in a way."

Specifically on the East Coast, the office leads hold conference calls every Monday morning to share developments, and opportunities and coordinate ideas with one another. Looking back, Greenleaf said she's still confident her decision to join IEMG was the best one for her company, and it's a sentiment shared by many others.

Connecting every office and understanding how each one works is a big part of what Huntington and his team do every day, he said. Weekly meetings are part of that, as well as office visits.

"It's fun. It is so neat to see the different cultures and environments in each location," he said.

One of the big challenges with having offices around the country is that each

comes with its own quirks. Instead of trying to change it, IMEG leaders adapt and embrace what makes each office unique, he said.

In the Vail office, it's not unusual for everyone to work from home if "fresh powder" hits the ground the night before. In Montana, most of the offices are private, and everyone primarily works with the door closed.

"They all have their dogs with them," Huntington said with a laugh. "That's their culture and it works for them. For our team, it's really fun to see what makes each local culture work, and layer on IMEG's culture to that."

Growing the company is a constant at IMEG. Huntington said leaders are mainly looking for firms that have a service they do not offer or exist in a region the company is not yet in. A reputation for excellence and a good culture match are also at the top of the list.

IMEG has no restrictions when it comes to the size of a firm, he said. Firms as small as five and as large as 180 have been acquired. What it comes down to, he said, is service diversity and location. While this helps IMEG expand its reach, it also helps the clients it serves.

"Our clients no longer have to have multiple consultants on the project. They can have fewer because IMEG can do all of their needs," he said.

Another key component is because IMEG is privately owned, all offices "sink and swim together." By spreading out offices, the firm does not need to ride the peaks and valleys of the different economies.

"It means a lot to us to have diversity of our revenue," he said. "Having that revenue diversity has been so helpful for us both in good times and in times like 2020 when COVID hit and there was a general slowdown throughout most of the country."

IMEG was able to ride the wave and not let go of any staff, still offer raises and contribute to retirement funds, he said. Another aspect that makes IMEG unique, VanDuyne said, is that it is employee owned through two different mechanisms.

In 2017 the company formed an ESOP (employee stock ownership fund), which is 35% of the company. Typically companies make ESOP 100% of the company, but VanDuyne said by lowering the percentage IMEG puts 6% of everyone's salary into the ESOP on their behalf.

Grow your business with DuTrac.



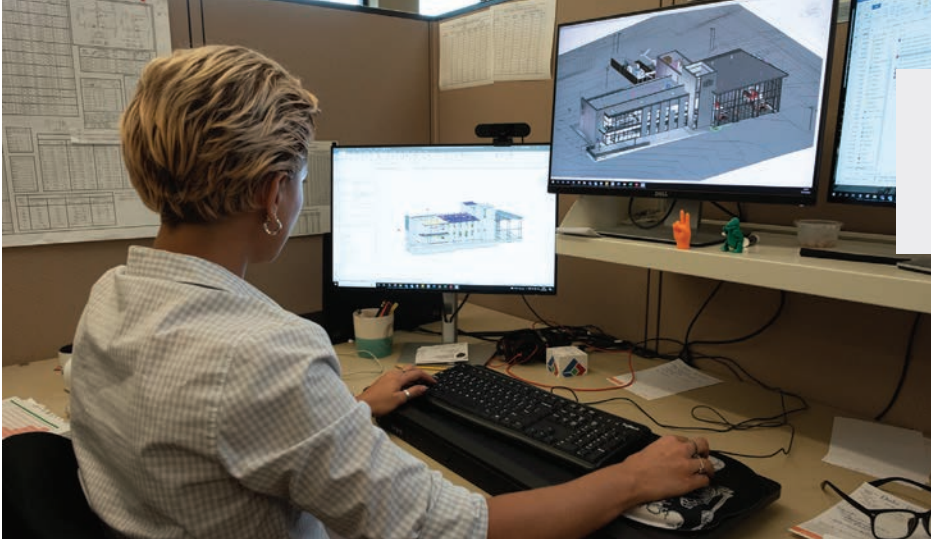
Small business is the lifeblood of any community. Continue down the path of profitability with DuTrac's tailored business tools and services.

- Investment property loans
- Commercial real estate loans
- Lines of credit
- Equipment loans
- Business checking and savings
- Business credit cards
- Merchant credit card processing

Learn more at [DuTrac.org](https://www.dutracs.org).



It's all possible with DuTrac!



Claudia Mederos, a graduate engineer at IMEG, adds details to the structural design of a client project using building information modeling software. *IMEG*

"They're fully vested right from the very beginning. Everybody gets that investment in the ESOP and IMEG stock, so everybody's an owner in the company," he said. "But then we have individual shares of stock and we have over 500 shareholders, but people can buy individual shares of stock."

VanDuyne said being an owner of a company has a completely different feel than being an employee, and after acquiring 34 companies and amassing a team of more than 2,400 employees, that

element is crucial. Typically, mergers in the engineering industry have a success rate of about 40%. IMEG has more than doubled that.

"If we take a look at our success rate, it's actually 100%. That's amazing," he said. "And I've been challenged on that."

VanDuyne said if he is meeting with a company that is thinking about joining, he lays out all 34 companies IMEG has acquired.

"And I'll say pick two or three that you want to talk to and you can just call them

up and talk to them and see what it was like," he said. "Now if I had an unsuccessful one that would be a pretty foolish thing to do. But they're not. They're successful and they're successful because we're purposeful on how we do it."

The growth at IMEG has received national attention, with the firm earning the 2023 Most Prolific and Proficient Acquirer Award. Given by management consultant firm Morrissey Goodale, the award is "designed to recognize and honor the best buyers in the AE and Environmental Industry."

IMEG has been on a steady incline for years and VanDuyne said there is no reason to put on the brakes. Currently, the company has a value of close to \$400 million. By 2030, the goal is to increase the value to exceed \$1 billion.

"We want to more than double in size over the next seven years, and so everything

For your smile. For your health. For your community.

Your employees get more than great dental and vision benefits when you choose Delta Dental of Iowa — they also make a difference for others.

Visit SharingHealthySmiles.com for employer plans and see how we invest in your community.



888-337-5160 | deltadentalia.com

 **DELTA DENTAL**[®]

that we're currently doing, we do with the litmus test," he said.

IMEG creates a revenue target and works consistently to reach it. Once they do, another target is set. In his opinion, that is the secret to growing consistently is having a plan on where to go once a specific goal is met.

"It really is interesting the number of companies I see that get to a certain size, but then hit a ceiling. I think the reason they hit that ceiling is because they really didn't plan on what to (do once they) get there," he said. "I think that's very common for companies to be that way."

Through the years as IMEG has grown from 35 people to 75 then into hundreds and thousands, it has had to reinvent itself, he said. Eikenberry said he went through this process with the company as well.

"The big jumps for me were getting over 100 people, then getting over 500 people and then you know once you get that machine well oiled, it seems to move a lot more smoothly," he said.

A big component of the continued success, he said, is the implementation and follow through of a strategic plan.

"There's a lot of companies that will create a strategic plan and it looks beautiful on the bookshelf, and they really never go back to benchmark themselves against it," he said. "We are always benchmarking ourselves against it both at the executive level and at the board level."

From an employee perspective, Eikenberry said working for a company that is committed to growth creates a special sense of place. To be in the room during meetings and see that there is not only a plan of action but a path forward, creates a sense of loyalty.

"It's more than the sense of belonging.

It's a sense of comfort to know that you've got everybody pulling on the rope in the same direction," he said. "You never want to be completely comfortable, but you always want to feel that the team is all moving in the same direction, and that's what IMEG does. There's a lot of cohesion."

That cohesion is paying off in the form of big projects. IMEG is building its bridge team considerably in South Dakota specifically, and is working on projects for NASA and Tesla, he said.

Eikenberry said these are projects he would have never been able to work on if his firm had not been acquired. Not only did Missman not have the pull, it did not have the diverse connection IMEG has to be able to land such work.

"As a civil group, we would have never found NASA or Tesla, but one of our mechanical engineers and one of our structural engineers might have found them and they said, 'Hey, we could use this service,'" he said. "We actually support other teams and normally we wouldn't have found something like that."

Greenleaf reported a similar experience when joining IMEG. Since her Boston-based firm was acquired, the resource and talent pool is much wider than it has ever been. Her two-year anniversary as an IMEG employee is quickly approaching and Greenleaf has no regrets about trusting Van Duyne's, "small engineering company" in Rock Island.

"I really am hard-pressed to find a downside to what we did," she said. "I've talked to a bunch of my counterparts, especially the East Coast acquisitions, and everybody's happy. Everybody feels like we've joined a special place and I think that's very unusual."

IMEG ACQUISITION HISTORY

- 1961** KJWW founded in Rock Island, IL
- 2015** KJWW merges with TTG Engineers
- 2016** FES (Facility Engineering Services) Group
- 2017** The company rebrands as IMEG
JanCom Technologies
Taylor RyMar
Missman, Inc.
McClure
- 2018** BLW Security Group
MKK Consulting Engineers
LKP Engineers
- 2019** Monroe & Newell Engineers, Inc.
Territorial-Landworks, Inc.
Cassell
Desai/Nasr Consulting Engineers
Nishkian
- 2020** Fredrick, Fredrick & Heller Engineer (FF&H)
Whitney & Associates
Process Results
Cardno Structural Engineering
Clark Engineering
- 2021** PEDCO
MSA Engineering Consultants
Mendenhall Smith
Architectural Engineers, Inc.
C&H Engineering and Surveying, Inc
Sitton Energy Solutions
- 2022** The Harman Group
North Line GIS
McVeigh & Mangum Engineering
christopher consultants
Engineering division of Veregy, formerly Dynamix Engineering
Barker Structural
Schmidt Consulting Group, Inc.
Bruce E. Brooks & Associates
- 2023** Lilker Associates
Cameron Engineering

Robin Greenleaf at the International Federation of Consulting Engineers' first Global Leadership Forum Summit in Geneva, Switzerland, in April 2023. *IMEG*





INTERNET WITHOUT LIMITS

**INCLUDES DATA SECURITY
AND BUSINESS Wi-Fi**

Mediacom Business Internet is the speed your business needs. With more bandwidth on both upload and download, your business has no limitations on where it can go. All speeds include embedded data security protection plus Wi-Fi for both guests and employees – with no data caps or long-term commitment. Your business internet experience will be everything it should be and more.

**MEDIACOMSM
BUSINESS**

CALL TODAY 800-479-2091

© 2023 Mediacom Communications Corporation. All Rights Reserved.



37th Annual YMCA Turkey Trot

Presented by McCarthy-Bush

The BEST Thanksgiving

Tradition in the QCA!

1-mile 5k 5-mile

www.YMCAIMV.org



Sign your flock up today!



EMPLOYEES FLY HIGHEST WITH THE Y!



The Y @ Work!

Contact your local Y
and ask about our corporate
membership program

Together, let's invest in a healthier,
happier, stronger workforce!



Recycle the Runway tickets on sale now!

Recycle the Runway: **Rethinking Expression tickets are on sale now!** Think ball gowns, black tie (or white tie!), and Met Gala inspired! We want **YOU** to dress to express and celebrate sustainability with us!



Scan QR Code for Tickets



***Date:** November 1st, 2023 **Cocktail hour:** 5:30*

***Time:** 6:30PM-9PM*

***Location:** Waterfront Convention Center
2021 State St. Bettendorf, IA 52722*

***Website:** www.dressforsuccessqc.org*

Last day to purchase tickets is Wednesday, October 25th!





Listing for a lifetime:

Ruhl family celebrates five generations of ownership, business in Quad-Cities real estate

Caroline Ruhl is the fourth generation to lead local real estate company Ruhl&Ruhl Realtors, a residential brokerage and home services company. Her son, **Chris Beason** is the fifth-generation leader of the company. Ruhl&Ruhl Realtors has been serving eastern Iowa, and northwestern Illinois since 1862. *Gary Krambeck*

GRETCHEN TESKE
gteske@qctimes.com

Keeping a family-owned business afloat can be a challenge, but not for the Ruhls. For the past 161 years, their real estate business has stood the test of time. And they have five generations of family-led leadership to prove it.

The family's rich history in real estate began in 1862 with Ruhl&Ruhl Realtors in a small corner store in west Davenport. By 1899, John H. Ruhl acquired an insurance agency, and his son John joined the business in 1919, putting an emphasis on real estate.

By 1920, C. Arthur Ruhl, the second-generation owner, joined the team with a focus on insurance, and in 1950 Charles A. Ruhl joined, representing the third generation, according to the company's website.

In 1982, Ruhl & Ruhl Insurance and Ruhl&Ruhl Realtors split off to become two separate companies. Two years prior to that in 1980, Caroline Ruhl, daughter of Charles, got her start in the business. But despite the family connection, real estate was not an encouraged profession.

"My father wanted the brothers to be in real estate, but I was not supposed to," she said.

Instead, she found a job in Dallas, doing relocation for Rockwell International. From there she found work in international personnel, and relocation and finally worked

her way up the ladder to become the manager of employment and management development for Ebby Halliday, a Texas-based real-estate firm named after the founder. Halliday's firm is now the largest real estate company in Texas.

Although Ruhl enjoyed the role she was in, she felt her calling was elsewhere.

"I really thought what those people were doing in selling the Dallas-Ft. Worth area and trying to attract people to come to their area while I was trying to sell the company and the positions, I felt their job looked like more fun," she said. "I had always thought it would be fun to own my own business, so that was my aspiration. I loved corporate America, but I decided I would rather own my own business."

Ruhl then relocated back to Davenport, started in sales, and then set up a relocation office with Ruhl&Ruhl. Even though she was ready to start her new career, the economy was not making it easy.

"The early 80s here, we had a huge recession with the farm crisis. Lots of people were leaving the area, so that was a very challenging time to be in the business," she said. "It was like the last person out, turn off the lights."

Homes were depreciating at 1% a month and in the Quad-Cities specifically, an estimated 20,000 manufacturing jobs were lost, according to PBS. Over in Waterloo, 14% of the population left and homes were left abandoned. Ruhl said selling homes in the Quad-Cities was a challenge, too.

"It felt like a black cloud whenever you walked into somebody's house," she said. "Now when we walk in, they're pleasantly surprised their house is worth more than they think it is. But back then, they all thought it was worth more than it was."

Ruhl&Ruhl was able to weather the economy, and the relocation business kept it afloat, she said. Once the market turned around, the real estate side bounced back, the relocation office moved to Bettendorf.

Ruhl continued to manage and grow that portion of the company until 1989 when she became the CEO, and the fourth generation to lead the company. Being a woman in business was not easy, she said. There were many barriers to break, and especially because she was a woman, eyes were on her. She used this opportunity to rise to the occasion and beat the expectations of the time.

"Because you're a woman, they pay more attention to you because you stand out," she said. "They were pleasantly surprised."

While leading the company by day, Ruhl was also raising two sons: John and Chris Beason. The latter joined the family business after college, representing the fifth generation of family ownership.

Beason said his path into real estate felt natural because it was always a topic of conversation.

"Growing up in the family business, it was at the dinner table and at family events. There was always conversation

about real estate, so it was sort of ingrained in me growing up," he said. "It came naturally to me, but I wasn't sure what aspect of real estate interested me."

After graduating from college, Beason's grandfather, Charles A. Ruhl Sr., mentored him. The pair shared a close bond until Ruhl's death in 2014. Prior to that, his grandfather identified him as the one who would take over the company next.

Initially, he felt the pressure of leading the company, but that feeling wore off quickly. Ruhl&Ruhl is the second-oldest real estate firm in the United States, and Beason wants to continue the growth until they are in first.

"I never had to be talked into it. It's more of a duty, but it's also an honor," he said. "After four generations, you can't just let it go."

Ruhl said when her son first came to her and said he wanted to join the company, she was happy to hear it, but it wasn't going to be that easy. If Beason was going to earn a leadership position, he would have to prove he had what it took.

"It wasn't an entitlement that he would

rise to the leadership position that he's in, but I was thrilled that he was coming into the business," she said. "But he had to work his way up."

Beason graduated from college in 2007, armed with a real estate degree. But much like his mother's first steps into the industry, there was a recession looming that made it difficult to get started.

Ruhl instead used her connections to help Beason land jobs in other markets and essentially get his feet wet before coming back to Davenport. Beason eventually joined Ruhl&Ruhl in 2009 as a sales associate, marking the fifth generation.

"She sent me to get checked out by other people, too," he said. "She wasn't looking at me just as her son. She wanted to get an independent opinion."

Eventually, Beason rose through the ranks and was named company president in 2018. Ruhl said while she was proud of her son and was happy to see him succeed, she was a little concerned about the amount of responsibility he would have to take on.

"Once you get to this point at the leadership level, you have 400 families

depending on us," she said. "We have to make sure we create a safe, profitable place for people to work. You lose some sleep at night just making sure you're doing the right things."

But, Beason has proved himself and is now respected in the industry, she said. Beason said getting to follow in his mother's footsteps is an honor.

"On a national scale, we are constantly getting recognition on how we are doing things," he said. "(She's) built that. The Ruhl&Ruhl that we have on the residential side is not what it was in the '80s."

Beason said he has big shoes to fill but is grateful to have such a legacy to carry on. Moving forward, his motivation is to ensure the company continues to grow, and he will do that by following the lessons he has learned from his mother over the years.

"Most importantly (I have learned) how to treat people, and that people matter. You get back what you put into relationships and into your community," he said. "She's very giving of her time and resources and does it without blinking an eye on giving to others."

TOP LAWYERS

IL QUAD CITIES AREA

BASED UPON A SURVEY OF THEIR PEERS



These **LEADING LAWYERS** have been recommended by their peers to be among the **TOP LAWYERS** in Illinois.

Reynolds M. Everett Jr.	Barash & Everett LLC	Galva	309.932.2001	Agriculture; Trust/Will/Estate
Paul L. Mangieri	Barash & Everett LLC	Galesburg	309.341.6010	Commercial Lit; Crim Def: Felonies/Misdemeanors; PI: General; PI: Transportation; Work Comp
Justin M. Raver	Barash & Everett LLC	Kewanee	309.852.5555	Agriculture; Bankruptcy: Individual; Close/Private Held; Gov/Muni/Lobby/Admin; Trust/Will/Estate
John F. Doak	Katz Nowinski PC	Moline	309.797.3000	Employment: Employee
Michael E. Massie	Massie & Quick LLC	Galva	309.932.2168	Agriculture; Close/Private Held Business; Real Estate: Residential
James A. Nepple	Stanley Lande & Hunter PC	Muscatine	563.264.5000	Close/Private Held Bus; Employee Benefits; Tax: Business; Tax Law: Individual; Trust/Will/Estate
David L. Cunningham	Winstein Kavensky & Cunningham	Rock Island	309.794.1515	Criminal Defense: DUI; Criminal Defense: Felonies/Misdemeanors; Family; Labor: Union
Christine A. Keys	Winstein Kavensky & Cunningham	Rock Island	309.794.1515	Personal Injury: General; Workers' Compensation
John Malvik	Winstein Kavensky & Cunningham	Rock Island	309.794.1515	Labor: Union; Personal Injury: General; Workers' Compensation
Robert T. Rosenstiel	Winstein Kavensky & Cunningham	Rock Island	309.794.1515	Personal Injury: General; Workers' Compensation
John A. Singer	Winstein Kavensky & Cunningham	Rock Island	309.794.1515	Employment: Employee; Family; Trust/Will/Estate
Howard E. Zimmerle	Zimmerle Law	Moline	309.581.5336	Personal Injury: General; Workers' Compensation

These **EMERGING LAWYERS** have been identified by their peers to be among the **TOP LAWYERS** in Illinois who are age 40 or younger OR who have been admitted to the practice of law for 10 or fewer years.

Leslie M. Day	Barash & Everett LLC	Galesburg	309.341.6010	Bankruptcy: Individual; Family; Real Estate: Residential
---------------	----------------------	-----------	--------------	--

Leading LawyersSM
Find a better lawyer, fasterSM

emerging lawyersSM
on a fast track to the topSM

A lawyer CANNOT buy the distinction of Leading or Emerging Lawyer. The distinction was earned by being among those lawyers most often recommended by their peers. For a full description of our research process, a complete list of all Leading or Emerging Lawyers, and to view profiles of the lawyers listed on this page, go to

www.LeadingLawyers.com

A Division of Law Bulletin Media—est. 1854



QC, THAT'S WHERE?

THAT'S WHERE AN INVESTMENT

IN THE CHAMBER MEANS AN

INVESTMENT IN YOUR FUTURE.



QC, that's where we are stronger together and excited about the future. It's where the team at the Quad Cities Chamber is working to create a more dynamic region and a stronger economy where all can thrive. Together, we're building a place that people want to live. In turn, that helps attract and retain Quad Citizens along with new business investment and jobs. All of these play a role in making the Quad Cities a top-tier Midwest community to live. It's where we are investing in you and we need you to invest in us -- there's never been a better time to invest in the future of your business and your community, as a member of the Quad Cities Chamber.



QUADCITIESCHAMBER.COM

Learning through transitions:

Ted and Tori Leuck balance each other in the real estate market

GRETCHEN TESKE
gteske@qctimes.com

Starting and sustaining a business can be tough, but according to Ted and Tori Leuck, it's all about the commitment to learning.

The husband-and-wife duo were married earlier this year but have both been in the real estate game for years. The pair are Realtors with Ruhl&Ruhl and co-operate the Leuck Group. Ted started his career in 2015 after studying communications in college. Instead of working for a large company, he started thinking about going into business for himself.

"There were several opportunities to get involved in businesses with that communications degree that I could not get behind," he said. "There wasn't a mission statement that I read that really made sense to me. I felt like another cog in the machine at other companies, whereas being at Ruhl&Ruhl as a real estate agent, I was my own mission statement."

For Tori, the transition to real estate was not as smooth. When she met Ted in 2018, she was working as a chef for Von Maur in the corporate office. Although she loved her job, she saw real estate as a chance to get out in the community and make a difference in a new way.

"Working in food service, you're still helping the public and giving and that's what I liked about it," she said. "Just seeing Ted every single day working hard and getting to meet all these other people and getting so much out of it, I just thought why not step my foot in there, too."

Ted said he was excited to have her join the fold because it would allow her the chance to flex her artistic muscles in a new way, specifically with marketing. Tori still owns and operates Thicc Kitchen, a home-based baking and catering business.

After watching how she handles the marketing by herself and has grown the business, Ted felt she would be the perfect person to help with his "blind spots" when it came to real estate.

"She's great at marketing, and I'm good at the people side of things," he said. "She really helped me out there."

In 2020, Tori passed all the tests through Ruhl&Ruhl and became a registered agent. A week later, COVID-19 shut down the majority of businesses around her, including her job at Von Maur.

"It happened at the right moment," she said. "I think back to it and I don't know when I would have made that jump to quit working as a chef and do real estate full-time."

Making the adjustment from being in a kitchen to being in an office was a challenge, she said. In the kitchen, she was working for and with the public, but real estate thrust her into a whole new atmosphere.

"This is a whole different ballgame. You really, really make connections with people, and you don't want to disappoint them," she said. "That was a lot for me to learn that sector, too."

Having to learn each other's strengths and weaknesses was another challenge for the pair. Ted said when he started the business eight years ago, he was doing everything by himself. Now, with his wife by his side, there's an extra person to take some of the pressure off.



Ted and Tori Lueck are a husband and wife real estate team with Ruhl&Ruhl Realtors. *Gary Krambeck*

Tori describes herself as the "man behind the curtain" and takes on the market and data entry side of things. In turn, Ted handles showings and communicating with clients. The trade-off works well for each of them and has taught them lessons along the way.

For Tori, the biggest one is patience, she said with a laugh. The pair are a bit of a yin and yang, she said, where she is a planner and Ted has a go-with-the-flow attitude. Learning to embrace that has challenged her, but it's also produced a positive outcome: appreciation for one another.

"Opening yourself up to somebody else is always nice, especially when that person is there for you," Ted said.

Looking into the future, the pair said real estate will always be part of their lives. For the Leucks, it offers an opportunity to learn, grow, and create a sustainable future together.

"We have our own hands in different real estate pockets," Tori said. "I learn so much every single day. Not just about real estate but about people, the community we live in, and different laws and taxes. I learn so much that a normal person doesn't, so why would I give that up?"



Second generation broker Sara DeWulf embarks on new journey in real estate

Sara DeWulf began her real estate career in 2010 and has since been taking the industry by storm. *Gary Krambeck*

GRETCHEN TESKE
gteske@qctimes.com

Sara DeWulf grew up around the real estate world but wasn't sold on the career for herself.

After college, though, she began to change her mind. A talk with her dad helped her find a new direction that changed the course of her life.

"I was going to St. Ambrose and my major was psychology, but I really didn't want to keep going to school in order to get a decent job," she said, adding that advanced degrees would have been necessary. "I was done with school and my dad said, 'Why don't you try real estate?' So I did."

After earning her real estate license and passing all the required tests, her journey kicked off in 2010 by working alongside her dad, Brian Smith. As a broker for Mel Foster, Smith helped his daughter get her career started. They spent a decade working side-by-side.

"We were listing partners for 10 years, and we would represent buyers on our own," she said. "He passed away three years ago, so I have been on my own ever since then."

Smith referred to the pair as the "Quad-City Father-Daughter Team" and often promoted their listings on his Facebook page. The lessons she picked up during their decade of partnership remain immeasurably valuable.

"Of course he's missed every day, but when I think back on 10 years of riding in the car with him and listening to all of the conversations with other agents, because he was managing about 42 other agents in that time, I learned so much in that 10 years," she said. "It was cool to be able to learn from him and now be the second generation."

Watching her dad's career as a kid, DeWulf said he made it look much easier than it actually was. Having to learn all the forms, procedures and protocols was a big challenge, considering she was only 23.

"It's the biggest investment in most people's lives, so it was a little scary and intimidating when I was in my early 20s," she said of helping buy and sell homes. "And the market has changed significantly since then. It's been kind of amazing to see the difference from 2010 to now."

When she first started, there were more houses than buyers. Now, the opposite is true.

"You could negotiate, and houses would sit on the market. It wasn't abnormal for houses to be on the market for 60, 90 (days), six months even, depending on the property," she said. "Then when COVID hit, we were starting to already have an inventory problem."

Like the rest of the world, DeWulf said she didn't know what to expect from a global pandemic. But as more people began working from home and interest rates dropped, the market blew up.

"It's just a simple supply-and-demand issue that we have now," she said. "Even though rates are higher, I anticipated it to slow down, but it has not."

Despite the challenges, DeWulf has proven herself over the years. She is a multi-million dollar earner and in the top 1% of Realtors in the Quad-City area, according to her online bio.

RealTrends listed her among the top 10 best agents in Iowa. Nationally, DeWulf is ranked 195 out of 1.5 million Realtors in the United States. The secret to her success,

she said, is to never turn down work.

"My average price point has gone up over the years," she said. "I have always said 'yes' to everyone, whether it's a \$60,000 sale or \$1 million."

Everyone has family and friends, she said, and news of good service travels fast. When she first started, most of her clientele were friends looking to buy their first homes or investment properties.

Now that most have families of their own, they have likely moved a few times and are looking for a permanent home, she said. Having roots in the area has been a big help for her career.

"Being born and raised here, I think, has an advantage, just from the sheer amount of people you meet," she said.

Armed with experience, knowledge, and connections, DeWulf has decided to branch out on her own. The decision was one she mulled over for several years.

"My dad and I, our plan was always to open our own brokerage," she said. "When he passed away, it was like, 'OK. Let's figure this out for myself.'"

For the past few years, DeWulf worked under Mel Foster Co. until she felt ready to try her own model. In June, she opened her own brokerage, Buy Sell Build QC - Real Broker, LLC.

"It was a business decision I thought really long and hard about for nine months, listening to every podcast, every YouTube video, learning the good, the bad and the ugly," she said. "We're just getting started, but it's nice to have a nice breath of fresh air."

Real Broker is a nationwide brokerage that allows its realtors to work from anywhere. Right now, there are about 11,000 agents across the country. DeWulf said she was drawn to the brand because it offers new advancements in technology, incentives, and a wide variety of resources for her and her team to access.

"It's an all-around exciting new fit for the Quad-Cities," she said.



DO MORE RECORD-SETTING SALES.

From forging new relationships to crushing last year's numbers, business goals come in all different shapes and sizes. That's why we stand behind you with all the solutions and personal service you need to stay in touch with your money. **Do Business Your Way.**

TBK  BANK

[TBKBank.com](https://www.TBKBank.com)

Business Checking | Business Loans | Treasury Services | Specialty Lending

TBK Bank, SSB, Member FDIC.



A St. Ambrose student, **Anna Possehl** is spending her summer interning with the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce. Part of Possehl's job responsibilities includes organizing events for InternQC, the Chamber's social program to connect area interns with one another. *Gary Krambeck*

Interns see the value in the Quad-Cities business community

GRETCHEN TESKE
gteske@qctimes.com

Carlo Rodriguez is from Texas, and Julien Sanchez is from Florida. Normally, their paths would not cross. But thanks to an internship at John Deere, the pair have formed a friendship in Illinois.

Rodriguez studies economics at Texas A&M, and Julien Sanchez computer science at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Neither ever visited the Midwest before, and were in for quite a shock when their planes landed.

"It's definitely a different vibe from Miami, or even Atlanta," Sanchez said. "It was a little more laid back than I expected."

Rodriguez agreed, saying it was a new and surprising experience, but overall, it's been a good surprise.

"It's a different experience than what I'm used to. I've never been to the Midwest in general," Rodriguez said. "When you're trying something new, you get opportunities to get outside of your comfort zone."

The reason for coming to the Midwest was summed up in one word by both interns: Deere.

"It's just the scalability and scope of John Deere that attracted me to come here," Sanchez said.

Only a few months into his internship, Sanchez already sees himself as part of the team and would consider a job with Deere post-graduation, he said. What made the difference for him was the opportunity to not just watch, but to learn.

"It's taught me a lot more of the basics of optimization and the scope of how things can be implemented," he said. "Usually you come to a company and things are already better, so they have

you doing grunt work. When I came to John Deere, they put me straight into the action and I really appreciated it."

While businesses work to introduce interns to the professional world, the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce wants to connect them with the community. Through the InternQC program, events are planned specifically for interns to interact with one another, make connections of their own, and establish ties to the community.

Once interns are signed up by their employer, they are eligible to attend events hosted by the Chamber all summer long. The Chamber's own intern, Anna Possehl, is taking on the responsibility of assisting with the program this summer.

The Davenport native and Assumption High School graduate will graduate from St. Ambrose University this winter with a double major in marketing and international business. For Possehl,



GREAT SPACES

Renovate and go from good enough to great. Partner with Estes to determine your space needs today while planning for future growth.

Estes can phase work to keep you operating and create a construction communications plan to keep employees and customers up to date on progress.



QUAD CITIES
DES MOINES
CEDAR RAPIDS

estesconstruction.com | 563.322.7301



who has family in the area, staying in the Quad-Cities for the summer was a no-brainer.

"I love the Quad-Cities," she said. "I believe that this place has a lot of character, great people, great local businesses, and I feel like the city has a lot of opportunities here."

Welcoming interns in at the Quad Cities International Airport is its own intern, Josh Grobart. Originally from the Chicago suburbs and a recent graduate from Purdue University in Indiana, Grobart started his internship with the airport in June.

His program is a year-long, which will allow him time to learn the industry and basic ins and outs of the airport. Choosing a smaller regional airport was important to him because it allows for a wide variety of experiences, he said. At a larger airport,

Josh Grobart, a student at Purdue University in Lafayette, IN, is spending his summer as an intern at the Quad Cities International Airport. *Gary Krambeck*

QC MEDIA PARTNERS

You've worked hard to get your business to this point. With so many digital tactics, don't leave your next steps to guesswork. At **QC Media Partners**, we use data and insights to create the right strategies and tactics to deliver the results you need.

Discover what it means to have **QC Media Partners** in your corner!

The right Agency at the right time.



QCMEDIAPARTNERS.COM

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT
AUDIENCE TARGETING
PAY PER CLICK

THE RIGHT STRATEGY

BRAND DEVELOPMENT
CONTENT CREATION



LESS CUTTING ~~EDGE~~ MORE CUTTING EDGE



Smaller Incisions. Less Pain. Quicker Recovery.

At Genesis, our advanced robotic technology offers patients a faster recovery to get back to their life sooner. Our experienced surgeons have performed more 6,000 minimally invasive procedures in urology, general surgery, gynecology, orthopedics, and now lung biopsy.

www.genesishealth.com/robot



McKenna Sexton DO poses for a portrait outside Genesis Medical Center in Davenport. *Todd Mizener*

he might get stuck in one place. In the Quad-Cities, Grobart says he can spread his wings and learn a little bit of everything.

"This being my first real professional experience in the airport management industry, I'm at the bottom of the totem pole," he said. "Every day I'm learning something new. It's all about asking questions and being able to take in advice."

Part of that comes in the form of socialization, he said. Grobart said he has taken advantage of the InternQC program to get to know other people in the area. Knowing there is a whole group that is going through a similar situation helps remove some of the stress of having to start from scratch.

When he isn't at the airport, Grobart said he enjoys the community. This year he attended the John Deere Classic with his brother and is already planning to go back next year.

"There's a lot of different types of activities to do," he said. "It's really a community-based atmosphere."

For McKenna Sexton DO, the choice was not about choosing the Quad-Cities but choosing Genesis Health System in Davenport. She works as a resident in family medicine at the hospital.

Originally from West Branch, she earned her Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree from Des Moines University. As a DO, Sexton said she can do everything a medical doctor can, but as a DO she has training to use her hands to help with specific ailments like fibromyalgia or chronic pain.

During her fourth year of medical school, she got started in The Match process, which pairs students with residency programs. Students apply for different programs and then complete an interview process if they hear back. After, students rank their choices and submit them back to the program.

Staff at the resident hospital also rank the prospective students. If they come back as a match, the student is placed into the program upon their graduation. For Sexton and her husband Troy, also a resident at Genesis, Davenport was their top choice.

"Ultimately, it was the people here," she said. "They really care about you and what you want, and it's an unopposed residency program."

The unopposed program means there is only one program for the entire hospital. Instead of having to choose a specific medical sector to work in, Sexton and her husband are able to work with every specialist in the hospital one-on-one to learn what they may or may not want to focus on in their careers.

Sexton said those programs are few and far between, which is another reason Genesis stood out. The other reason was the diverse population makes for a unique experience that's hard to find elsewhere.

"A lot of people in our program, they end up staying in the Quad-Cities after residency, but even for people who move away, just because of how diverse the population is, it really prepares you for anywhere that you go," she said.

Larger hospitals may not allow her the same opportunities to try a variety of specialties. At Genesis, she not only gets to try new things, but she said she has been able to work with leadership to create a program that will specifically work for her.

Sexton said she has a particular interest in obstetrics and wanted to explore the option of a fellowship program. Genesis does not offer one, but after speaking with hospital leadership, they immediately got the ball rolling to help her

"They were all very supportive of that and are actively working to start a fellowship program here. Administration at the hospital is on board, and I think that is something that is really rare, to be able to go to a program (director) and say, 'This is what I want to do' and be surrounded by people (that say) we are going to do all that we can to make this happen," she said.

Sexton and her husband will both complete their residency programs in 2025 and have signed contracts to stay on at Genesis. Both see the value of fostering and developing the relationships they have started, she said.

"It just makes communication a lot easier, but in doing a fellowship here and then being with the OB's that have already been so supportive, it will be nice to stay and continue to work with them," she said. "Being with all of the people here and knowing just how supportive and helpful everyone is, we have become a second family here."

As parents, Sexton and her husband see the value in raising their toddler here as well. The community has great resources, family activities, and affordable housing options that make the Quad-Cities feel like home just one year after arriving.

"This is a really good place to be. The community is really supportive of families," she said. "I still feel like I'm finding things all the time that I didn't know were here."

Spreading that love for the region and helping other interns acclimate is Possehl's personal goal for the summer. The Chamber reflects that effort, wanting to get people out of their comfort zones and

Book your next Holiday Party
AT THE STARDUST!

- Catering Available
- Bar on Location
- Room for Dancing & Festivities



563.345.3878
 218 Iowa St., Davenport, IA
www.stardustdavenport.com



**NOT ALL
 BUSINESSES ARE
 BETTER.**

BBB Accredited Businesses have pledged to operate with integrity, honor promises, and tell the truth. Makes you wonder why all businesses aren't BBB Accredited, right?



**THE SIGN OF A
 BETTER
 BUSINESS.**
 BBB.org

Contact the local Better Business Bureau with interest in Accreditation:
 563.355.1705
deana@dm.bbb.org

The Cigar Social
 CIGAR LOUNGE
 Davenport, Iowa



The Cigar Social
 5161 Utica Ridge Road, Davenport
 563-551-6242

thecigarsocialqc@gmail.com • thecigarsocialqc.com • @thecigarsocial.qc

MILAN
 BLACKTOP, INC

est. 1989

Serving the

Commercial

Entire

Residential

Quad-Cities

**Quality Work at
 Affordable Prices**

16325 Rt. 67, Milan, IL
(309) 787-6099

community-minded. financially solid.



For over 29 years, Quad City Bank & Trust has invested in more than just its clients' financial goals - we're committed to making a difference in the lives of everyone who calls the Quad Cities home. We're neighbors, friends and family, and it's because of you that we strive to be more than just a bank and the **People you can bank on®**.

qcbt.bank 563.388.QCBT



INTERNSHIPS AT A GLANCE

Annual student internship salaries typically range between

\$21,000 and \$44,000

The average student internship salary in the United States is

\$31,256

The average hourly rate for student interns is

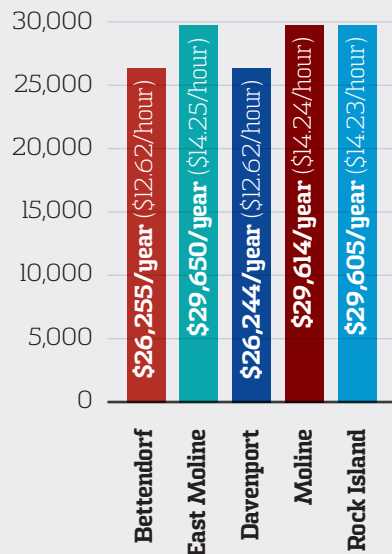
\$15.03 per hour

Student internship salaries at **Microsoft** are the highest of any company.

All above data from Zippia

<https://www.zippia.com/student-internship-jobs/salary/>

Average student internship salaries per city:



help them build connections with interns from other companies, said James Porter, vice president of talent and inclusion for the Chamber.

"Our area is very diverse, and it's full of culture," he said. "At InternQC, that's what we're trying to display."

The InternQC initiative has been a Chamber staple for some time and was created based on employer feedback, Porter said. The program kicked off this year on June 15 with a meet-and-greet at the TBK Bank Sports Complex.

The night started with a rundown of what the program was about, then a round of ice-breakers for the 230 interns from 15 different companies. Every year that number increases, Porter said, and it does not surprise him at all.

"I think once more and more companies hear about what we're doing, it's a great way to have their interns ... see what we have to offer," he said. "With interns, you're not obligated to stay with the company, so I think InternQC gives them a chance to build some lasting and meaningful relationships that get them connected to

the Quad-Cities and the region."

Deere interns Sanchez and Rodriguez are prime examples. Through the various events, they were able to connect and form a bond. Rodriguez said he previously held a fellowship with Microsoft where he was one of five interns. It wasn't until the last day he met the other four.

"In reality, having 150 interns in the Quad-Cities is way better than having just a few," he said.

Sanchez agreed, saying, "I feel it makes the Quad-Cities more fun in general. I feel like if it was just five of us in the Quad-Cities, it would be tough."

Possehl reflected that sentiment, adding that starting fresh is not easy. Knowing there are other people in similar situations, however, can help ease some of the anxiety of being a new person in a new place.

"I think it's just a great program to get to know interns all around the area and not just staying around your own little company bubble," she said. "I think that the main thing about InternQC is getting to know people your age who are also in the same boat as you."

Building connections and feeling more comfortable in the region will hopefully spur some interns to accept full-time jobs, Porter said. The more comfortable and familiar someone is in their environment, the more likely they are to stay.

"I think the benefit is the interns get a chance to get away from the work side of it, and see what the community has to offer," he said. "As different companies face worker shortages, I think it adds that value."

Possehl said the value of the internship is noticed by students, too. An internship is required prior to her graduation from St. Ambrose, she said, but she would have pursued one anyway.

"I would definitely say it's a foot in the door," she said. "I think a lot of students really value getting an internship because it's extremely important in making sure you get the first step in your success."

Personally, she feels she has learned new skills that will benefit her post-graduation. At school, she's able to learn book smarts, but the internship is giving her experience, and that is just as important, she said.

Once her time with the Chamber is up and she graduates in December, Possehl plans to stay in the Quad-Cities. Not only has it been home her whole life, but she now has connections she's made herself she wants to continue to foster.

For Ryan Jeo, a student at the University of Minnesota, an opportunity is all he was after. In 2021, during his sophomore year of studying chemical engineering, he began applying for internships.

The pandemic was still hot on people's minds and internships were hard to find. Jeo estimates he applied for about 150, but only two companies got back to him.

Of those companies, the one he ended up choosing was Arconic in Bettendorf. The opportunity to work with metals piqued his interest, and the opportunity to expand his skills sounded good, too.

Fellow intern Miles Menster, a Bloomfield native, is an electrical engineering student at the University of Iowa. During an engineering fair, he met with Arconic employees and discussed sustainability and what employees at Arconic do every day. He had never thought about

manufacturing before, but that conversation piqued his interest.

In June, he began his internship and immediately got to work. It included programming, and other tasks he would have if he were a full-time Arconic employee, a big surprise to him.

"I was not expecting this at all," he said. "I was really glad I got to do a lot more hands-on stuff and get the industry experience I was hoping for. The amount of knowledge I have gained so far in this internship, I have been telling people it's comparable to a semester of classes in college."

Menster said training and college are not interchangeable, but they complement each other well. Jeo reported much of the same, saying his experiences have been very different throughout the years.

When he first came to the plant, there was a lot of hand-holding, he said. His background is not in materials, so he needed added guidance. Before long, he gained the confidence and skills to work on things on his own. Now, he's working mainly by himself.

"I appreciate that they trust me at this point," he said. "It's always nice to be able to tackle problems on my own first, and then go to my mentor."

Arconic is at the top of his list for future career endeavors, but Jeo has not ruled out going for his Ph.D., either. Menster has not made up his mind yet either, but the amount of activities and like-minded people he has run into along the way is pushing him to stay.

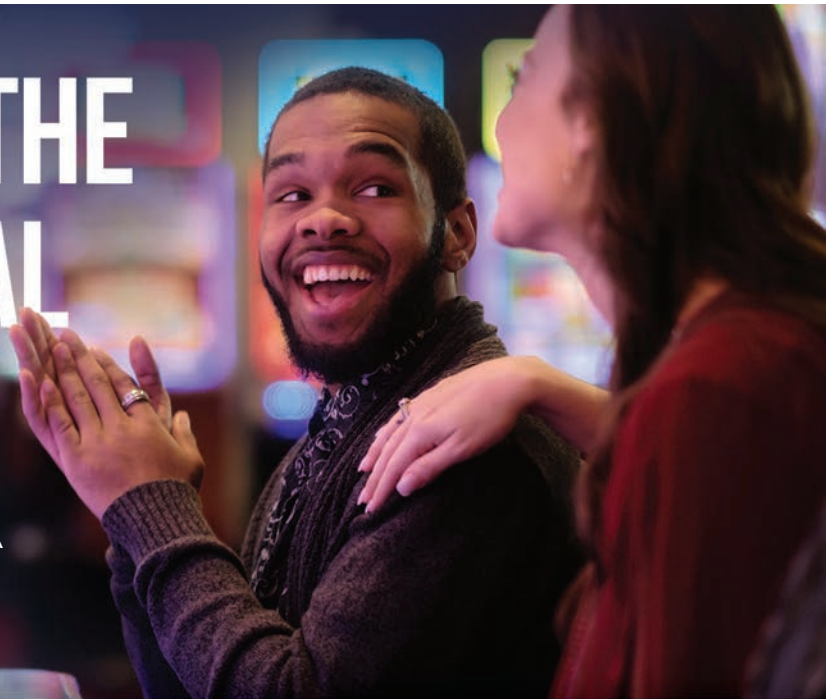
"With the InternQC program, it showed us a whole bunch of different things we can do," he said. "I think it's really awesome because it's good to talk to people and communicate anyway, but having those connections can lead to more connections down the road."

Jeo agreed, saying coming from the Twin Cities in Minnesota, the Quad-Cities is a change of pace, but one he likes.

"Coming from a big city, it was definitely a change of environment that took some getting used to," he said. "I think at first it felt really quiet and it was difficult to get accommodated to, but now I appreciate the quietness of the area."

ESCAPE TO THE EXCEPTIONAL

- 24 HOUR CASINO WITH OVER 800 SLOT MACHINES
- 3 GREAT DINING OPTIONS
- ELEGANT HOTEL RESORT & SPA
- LIVE ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY



 RHYTHM CITY
CASINO RESORT

AN ELITE CASINO RESORTS PROPERTY

7077 Elmore Avenue · Davenport, IA 52807
Call us at: 563.328.8000 or 844.852.4FUN
Visit us at: www.rhythmcitycasino.com
Follow us on social media:    

Members of the community gathered for the announcement of a grant award from the State of Illinois for a major facelift to Arts Alley, Tuesday, May 24, 2022, in Downtown Rock Island. *Alex Gant*



'Driving our own future:'

What downtown leaders say will spur growth in the Quad-Cities

GRETCHEN TESKE
gteske@qctimes.com

Cities' downtowns often are nicknamed the 'heart of the city.' In the Quad-Cities, that's often true.

Each downtown functions in its own way — with unique businesses, landmarks, challenges and solutions. How to keep the downtown thriving is the main objective for many city leaders, and the formula for success is different, depending on the municipality.



(Top) Ascentra Credit Union Board of Directors Chairperson Larry W. Ridenour cuts the ribbon celebrating the completion of the new Ascentra Credit Union Home Office located at 2019 Grant Street in Bettendorf. *Kevin E. Schmidt*

(Bottom) Tax increment financing helped develop a new building for the Midwest Division headquarters of TBK Bank in Bettendorf. *Jessica Gallagher*

BETTENDORF AND THE NEW BRIDGE

With the interstate cutting right through the downtown, Bettendorf is in a unique position. Economic Development Director Jeff Reiter said the community started a downtown master plan in 2009 and updated it in 2016. It's getting a refresh this year.

"We are really focusing on the commercial, retail and entertainment options for downtown," Reiter said.

Interest in developing the downtown area has grown in recent years, but that has not always been the case. The completion of the new I-74 bridge opened up inquiries into possible ways to invest.

Prior to and during the construction period, city officials had to find existing property owners or investors who were willing to assume a level of risk by developing in a downtown that was mostly a vision, he said. From about 2010-2018, the area was in a holding pattern as potential investors waited to see what would evolve.

Others were more willing to take the risk by buying property and land, knowing the bridge would be a catalyst for growth. Developer Frank Levy built The Bridges, a \$22 million apartment complex completed in 2018.

"He really was an example of seeing the forest through the trees," Reiter said.

The development of the 132-unit complex at 1501 State St., paid off in a big way and was a, "game changer" for the area, Reiter said. Soon after, multi-million dollar developments came in the form of Ascentra Credit Union and TBK Bank building new offices in the heart of downtown.

These created a domino effect of other businesses looking to expand Bettendorf's offerings, Reiter said. In early 2020, Riverside Grille moved downtown and into the former Ascentra Building. In late 2021, Adventurous Brewing moved into 1040 State Street.

"A lot of these projects have shown that our downtown is vibrant, it is growing, and it's a place that people want to be," he said.

Deciding what downtown needs is not a particularly difficult challenge. Looking across the country proves that towns need amenities to draw people in and make them exciting, he said.

"A river community like ours, I don't think it's any secret to look around and see the options available," he said. "Downtowns are a very interesting dynamic because there's so many factors at play."

One success story Reiter highlighted is the Shameless Chocoholic at 2244 State St., the former Action TV.

In February of this year, the store closed its Moline location and opened in Bettendorf in March. The new space offers more room for production and hands-on learning, owner Rebecca Burns said at the time.

In the new downtown Bettendorf store, customers can buy their favorite treats and learn how to make them. On Saturdays, Shameless Chocoholic will offer a rotation of classes, including tasting, education and hands-on creation.

"Seeing that reinvestment downtown is a great new thing," Reiter said.

And, he's hoping the development is just ramping up. The city is actively looking into the West Bridge District, north of Leach Park. The city owns the property that has been used for bridge construction/demolition for the past several years, he said.

In the future, the city would like to put the site to better use and give Leach Park a new life.

"Our goal over the next few years is to try to marry that property that we own with a developer who could build something exciting at the base of this new bridge," he said. "There's a lot of land along the riverfront."

The city is eyeing the land on the other side of the bridge, too. Reiter said the city is hopeful it can work with property owners east of the Isle Casino, where 40 acres of development land sits undisturbed. With downtown housing occupancy nearing 100%, Reiter said, more residential units are on the list of potential projects that would work well in that area.

DAVENPORT SHIFTS FOCUS TO DAYTIME TRAFFIC

Balance is the name of the game in Davenport.

Working to find that balance and continue the growth of the downtown is the Downtown Davenport Partnership (DDP) — a nonprofit that covers 52 square blocks in the heart of the city. Since 1976, DDP has been the SMID — Self Supporting Municipal Improvement District, for the town. The goal of the non-profit is to lead and advocate for downtown economic development, planning and vitality.

"The idea that place matters and that investing in place is deeply rooted in Davenport," said Kyle Carter, executive director of the Downtown Davenport Partnership.

Carter said in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders came together to launch a master plan that lays out all the big ideas for Davenport. Everything from inclusion to leaning into residential growth and expanding both small and locally-owned businesses has been outlined.

"While doing that, we're making sure we have a beautiful space and physical environment to do it in," he said.

The DDP has a full staff, but the ideas and inspiration come from those who are investing in the area.

"This comes from our own people. Our district is governed and funded by the business (owners) that live and work here," he said. "At the end of the day, it's very much our own people driving our own future."

And, he said, they have been doing so for years. Change and development do not happen overnight.

"People forget quickly what it used to be, or how it used to be," he said.

A project he highlighted was the expansion of Redband Coffee into downtown. In 2012, the shop opened at the corner of 4th and Iowa Streets in the former Crescent Cleaners building.

The building was "pretty rough," he said, and for the most part, people have forgotten that. But, that's a good thing, Carter said.

The goal of the DDP is to continuously improve the area and create positive feelings around downtown. In the works now are lighted archways over the alleys on E. 2nd Street and on Emerson Alley that will tie in the history of Motor Row and Bucktown.

"That's the fun stuff. That's place-making," he said. "Its physical improvements and doing things that are inspired by the history and the authenticity of your space."

A big example of that are the murals that popped up in downtown over the summer, namely on Third Street. DDP provided the funding for The Quad City Arts Metro Arts youth program to create a circus-themed mural on the corner of Iowa and Third Streets. The design is in honor of long-time Quad-City

BUSINESS LOANS & LEASES

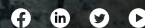
Contact us today for competitive pricing, experienced lenders, and quick loan decisions from a local lender, providing community banking since 1890.



SCAN TO MEET
OUR COMMERCIAL
LENDING TEAM

BankORION

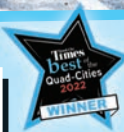
Member
FDIC
Lender



www.bankorion.com



Thank you



for voting us a favorite
insurance agency in the Quad-Cities!
Consistently voted among the best.



563-323-9233

Auto-Owners
INSURANCE

LIFE • HOME • CAR • BUSINESS



Marisa Lopez fills in the light bulb sketch with yellow paint at the intersection of Iowa Street and Third Street, Tuesday, June 20, 2023, in Davenport. The mural is titled "Hellow Quad Cities" and is inspired by the William Wundrum Parkway sign.
Elizabeth Pruitt

Times columnist Bill Wundram who died Feb. 14, 2023, at the age of 98.

Another key element of place-making is walkability. In 2017, the DDP entered an agreement with the city to share the costs of street upgrades like brick banding, trash cans, flowers, and benches.

"Those are very expensive, very complicated engineering projects," he said. "We're going to tackle some of the nuts and bolts out there, as well as the bigger beautification projects."

One area where balance has worked well is 2nd Street. Office space, retail and residential all blend and work together. In January 2022, the Urbane 210 apartments opened with 56 units at 210 E. 2nd Street. Later that year popular T-shirt shop Raygun moved into the first floor and Oh So Sweet by Tiphannie joined the building in early 2023 after relocating from another retail space downtown.

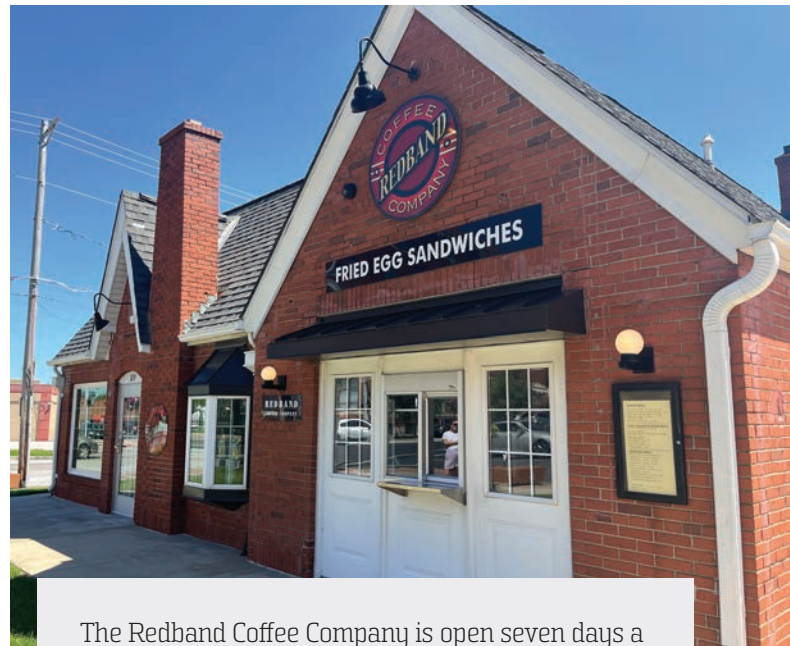
Across the street, the owners of Barrel House and Blue Spruce Bakery transformed their buildings and welcomed three new neighbors in May. In 221 E. 2nd Street, sandwiched between the Bucktown Center for the Arts and Theo and Co., are two storefronts that house three new businesses.

On the corner of 2nd and Iowa Streets, construction is continuing on the Last Picture House, a two-story, 8,700-square-foot building that will hold two indoor movie screens, a cocktail bar and social lounge, and a rooftop bar with an outdoor viewing screen. It is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

"We want the entire downtown to function as highly as that," Carter said.

In the master plan, talks about small office space are high on the list, which will help spark more retail and entertainment, he said.

"Downtown Davenport has a real niche when it comes to Class B office space," he said. "The truth is, most offices are smaller anyway now, so that's a real opportunity."



The Redband Coffee Company is open seven days a week in downtown Davenport at 329 E. 4th Street.

Gretchen Teske

During the day, foot traffic generally declines and activity picks up after 5 p.m. Fifteen years ago, it was the opposite.

"As excited as I am to see that vitality in the evening hours, we need to see more of that during the day, and the only way to do that is to get more retail, office and commercial users," he said.

The way to do that, he said, is to execute the plan already in action.

"The formula for success remains the same," he said. "All of this needs to blend together with the city's larger plans."

ROCK ISLAND LOOKS TO ACTIVATE DOWNTOWN

Downtown Rock Island has no shortage of opportunity, according to Miles Brainard, community economic development director for the city. In an effort to jumpstart that development, the city council approved the formation of a Special Service District, SSA, in December.

The SSA works similar to a TIF District in that businesses in the designated geographic area pay an increased tax. The proceeds from that tax then go toward improvements that will benefit the area.

Property owners in the SSA pay an additional 1.15% tax on their assessed value, generating about \$315,000 a year. The money can be used for a plethora of projects, including beautification.

"The idea there is we want it to be an attractive, well maintained space," he said.

Creating a diverse, engaging space is where the main focus lies. Brainard said it's not about narrowing in on any one idea, but being open to everything. Place-making, with improvements to the environment, like sidewalks, streets and lighting will give the space a, "refresh physically," he said.

That refresh helps create a welcoming environment that will help with Rock Island's plan to increase the number of festivals and events, like farmer's markets. Brainard said this will help bring people in, and the existing businesses will help keep them there.

"The hope would be that they would also be looking at some of the nearby restaurants for lunch and grab a drink in the evening," he said. "Basically, a ripple effect kind of approach."

The approach is pretty standard, he said, but regular programming helps build excitement and familiarity with the space.

"We don't look at it as anything other than the typical tried and true approach to downtown revitalization," he said. "What we're looking to have is a healthy mix of different types of business."



A members of the community scans a QR code on display for the announcement of a grant award from the State of Illinois for a major facelift to Arts Alley, Tuesday, May 24, 2022, in Downtown Rock Island. *Alex Gant*

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE!

Don't miss the chance to promote your brand at our Five Nights of Fright.

Email Sara Morby at smorby@figgeartmuseum.org for more information.

THE FIGGE'S FIVE NIGHTS OF FRIGHT

GET TICKETS NOW AT
WWW.FIGGEARTMUSEUM.ORG

OCTOBER

- 25 WED HALLOWEEN TRIVIA
- 26 THURS FREE FILM SCREENING
- 27 FRI DARK DELIGHTS DINNER & MOVIE
- 28 SAT MYSTERIA: A NIGHT OF SECRETS & ART
- 29 SUN FREE TRICKS & TREATS @ THE FIGGE



FIGGE

To achieve that, the city works with many different partners to collaborate, attract and maintain the existing businesses. Brainard said the city does not cold call businesses to recruit them, but instead tries to create an environment that will attract and pull business in.

"We want them to come to us with what we have available, and then we take it from there," he said.

A prime example is the Shops on 2nd, an incubator space run by the Development Association of Rock Island. The storefront is split into sections to allow businesses to get their start before branching out and purchasing, or renting, a full space of their own.

In March, the clothing store Brick and Motor opened at 1629 2nd Avenue. Sisters Haley Walker and Lauren Corwin started the business as a mobile clothing boutique in July 2018.

The pair traveled within a three-hour radius of the Quad-Cities selling their items at farmers' markets and other community events. Later that year, DARI members approached the pair about setting up shop for the winter in the Shops on Second.

The sisters had so much success, DARI offered up their office for a pop-up location. DARI used the office during the week, and on Fridays and Saturdays, Walker and Corwin turned it into a boutique. The storefront became so popular, the pair decided to make it their permanent retail home with a grand opening on Saturday, March 4.

"That was really a collaborative effort involving the city and the economic partners, and goes to show what our slow and steady approach to business attraction and retention looks like," Brainard said.

The incubator space is full, but that could change, he said. Until then, the opportunities are endless in downtown Rock Island.

"Throughout the downtown, we have plenty of spaces available with plenty of potential," he said.

MOLINE SWITCHES GEARS FROM ATTRACTION TO RETENTION

Downtown Moline has established itself as a great place to visit, but Renew Moline CEO Alexandra Elias said the next goal is to establish it as a great place to live.

"We have the building blocks for sure, we just need to fill it in," she said.

Landmarks like Vibrant Arena at The Mark and the John Deere Pavilion bring in thousands of visitors yearly. But people only visit for special occasions.

"Those are attracting people, but we want to give them other reasons to be here and other reasons to stay," she said. "We have the infrastructure. We just need the people."

Specifically for pedestrians and bikers, the area is very accessible with the installment of the new I-74 bridge. Increasing foot traffic has been on their radar for some time, she said. Approximately two years ago the Urban Land Institute visited, and noted River Drive and 5th Avenue are both active with foot traffic, but there are not a lot of connectors to keep people moving further into the city.

"That's become our focus," she said.

Prior to working in Moline, Elias worked with the city of San Diego's downtown redevelopment agency. By adding in

Wednesday Special



**8 oz. Bistro Filet
served with
Hasselback
potato
\$16.00**

**\$1 glasses of Wine
4-6pm**

**Wednesdays and
Thursday**

(ask your server for selections)



(309) 524-5380
910 Bend Blvd., East Moline



**Heating
Cooling
Plumbing
Electrical**

**Residential
Commercial
Industrial**

Serving the Quad Cities Since 1952!

309-788-4573

SPECIAL EVENTS AT MODERN WOODMEN PARK

CEREMONIES | RECEPTIONS | REHEARSAL DINNERS



FOR MORE
INFORMATION CONTACT:
TAYLOR@RIVERBANDITS.COM
(563) 324-3000



NOW BOOKING FOR 2024 AND 2025!
209 S GAINES ST | DAVENPORT, IA

residential units, the downtown was able to grow exponentially, but it took a few decades.

Slow and steady is the name of the game, with Renew Moline already working on a residential dwelling project. Last year, Renew was donated RiverStone Group's former headquarters at 1701 5th Ave. The donation includes the 35,064-square-foot building and a parking lot directly north of the building.

RiverStone Group used the building from the late 1980s to 2019 to house about 50 employees. Prior to, it was a J.C. Penney store. Work is still continuing on the project, but Renew has its eye on another big landmark in Moline.

Right off the bridge sits a red brick warehouse known as the Spiegel Building. It was built between 1928 and 1930 as the Eagle Signal Building, according to Renew's website.

The building has four floors with about 8,300 square feet on each floor. The ground floor has an extra 4,000 square feet, increasing it to 12,300 square feet.

The city of Moline purchased the building for \$303,000 in 2016 from Tom Spiegel. Elias said there are plenty of "lofty ideas" about what the building could look like in the future, but one that continues to resurface is the idea of a food hall on the first floor.

The food hall would be set up similar to a food court in a shopping mall, with multiple restaurants surrounding the space, allowing customers to choose from a variety of options. Right now, Renew is looking into the various markets it could tap into, and food may be the gateway.

The overall population in Rock Island County is declining,

Elias said, but there has been a 20% growth in the immigrant population since 2010.

"All the people that come from all the different places in the world bring with them their culture," she said. "People are just interested. A very easy and safe way to learn about a culture is to try its food."

Other ideas for the rest of the building include a business incubator space, a commercial kitchen and even a rooftop restaurant. With the new bridge making it easier for pedestrians to connect to both sides of the river, Elias feels this is a surefire way to cook up success.

"We think that creating very special places like that will continue to attract people," she said.

Just behind the Spiegel building is a 7-acre property that houses BridgePointe 485, a property of Heritage Church. First known as the Montgomery Elevator Company, and later KONE, the church acquired it in 2017 with the goal of re-purposing it for community use.

After renovating about 28,000 square feet, the church sold the building and all the acreage to the City of Moline for about \$3.1 million. Plans for the space are still in the works, Elias said.

The city is in the process of hiring a consultant to perform a "riverfront master plan" that will extend up to 7th Avenue. World class firms have responded to requests for proposals, she said, creating a buzz around the potential it holds.

"I think there will be a special focus on that BridgePointe property," she said.



Brandon Nees's mural is seen on the Spiegel Building Wednesday, Oct. 21, 2020, in Moline. Renew Moline and the City of Moline selected local artist Brandon Nees to create a mural installation at the Spiegel Building on River Drive in downtown Moline. Through a competitive process, Brandon Nees's proposal was chosen from among twenty-eight submissions. The purpose of the Spiegel mural project is to beautify and draw attention to the building, a City-owned asset and important piece of the historic fabric of downtown. The Spiegel building is also at the center of the redevelopment area created by the I-74 bridge project. The public art project is designed to both encourage dialogue about the future development of the area and create curiosity and interest in the building by imagining the "possibility". *Meg McLaughlin*



Relationships.
Integrity.
Action.

Insured by NCUA



Take The **Keys**
To Financial
Freedom



Earn up to
2.00% APY³
and **ATM Fee Refunds³**
with **Smart Checking**



riafcu.com

Earn Up To:

\$300	\$300
in Dividends ³	in ATM Refunds ³

No Minimum Balance • No Monthly Fees

3. APY=Annual Percentage Yield. APYs accurate as of 09/01/2018; the last dividend declaration date. Rates may change after account is opened. If qualifications are met each monthly qualification cycle: (1) Domestic ATM fees incurred during qualification cycle will be reimbursed up to \$25 and credited to account on the last day of monthly statement cycle; (2) balances up to \$15,000 receive APY of 2.00%; and (3) balances over \$15,000 earn 0.10% APY on portion of balance over \$15,000, resulting in 2.00% to 0.19% APY depending on the balance. If qualifications are not met, all balances earn 0.05% APY. Qualifying transactions must post to and settle account during monthly qualification cycle. Transactions may take one or more banking days from the date transaction was made to post to and settle an account. ATM-processed transactions do not count towards qualifying debit card transactions. Monthly Qualification Cycle means a period beginning one business day prior to the first day of the current statement cycle through one business day prior to the close of the current statement cycle. Transfers between accounts do not count as qualifying transactions. Fees may reduce earnings on the account. All Checking Accounts are subject to approval. Must meet qualifications. Must be a member to open a checking account. Some restrictions apply. Deposits are insured up to \$250,000 in insurance by NCUA. Deposits insured up to an additional \$250,000 by Excess Share Insurance, for a total insured amount of \$500,000. Qualifications required to earn rewards include: (1) 12 debit card purchases posted and settled; (2) enrollment in eStatement notice; and (3) one automatic payment (ACH) or direct deposit posted and settled.
6. Deposits are insured up to \$500,000 with up to \$250,000 in insurance by NCUA and up to \$250,000 in insurance by Excess Share Insurance.

Leaders in **engineering** and **innovation.**

IMEG has built a global reputation for engineering high-performance buildings and infrastructure using forward-thinking solutions.

We believe that together we create positive outcomes for people, communities, and our planet.

LET'S GET YOU THERE.

- QC Headquartered
- 80 Locations Nationwide
- 2,400 Team Members / 200 Local
- Full-Service Engineering & Surveying
- Building Design & Infrastructure
- Consulting & Advisory Services

