

SI NOW HAPPENING



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TOP NEWS OF THE MONTH

AT THE CROSSROADS: SI ECLIPSE 2024

It's less than 70 days away! The total solar eclipse's path of totality will cross Southern Illinois for the second time in less than seven years. Simply put, a total eclipse of the Sun is considered by many one of the most beautiful sights you will ever see in the sky. As many of us experienced in August 2017, it's an odd feeling when the sky suddenly darkens, and the Sun's corona shines in the sky. No photograph can capture the stunning beauty of a total solar eclipse, you must see it for yourself.

Thousands are expected to visit Southern Illinois in hopes to catch this awe-inspiring event, which also is expected to be a boost on the local economy. "The eclipse brings with it a substantial increase in visitor revenues through direct tourism spending. Visitor spending helps to decrease resident taxes and increase funding for new events and attractions," said VisitSI executive director Ashlee Spiller. "The opportunity to experience this naturally occurring phenomenon twice in 7 years puts Southern Illinois in a very unique position. We are excited to showcase the beauty of our region, as well as the cordiality of our communities, so that those who visit for this event will start planning their return trip in the future." Hope for clear skies and get ready for April 8, 2024!

“

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ASHLEE SPILLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, VISITSI

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A WIN FOR ONE IS A WIN FOR ALL OF SOUTHERN ILLINOIS !



by Dr. Deb Barnett



I often comment that 2023 was the year that kept on giving, and 2024 is shaping up to be just as exciting for Southern Illinois! **Congratulations to Jefferson County Development Corporation on the recent news of its 2023 Business Facilities Magazine Impact Awards recognition.** This award for Mt. Vernon's Manner Polymers project is a great example of teamwork as Executive Director Tony Iriti collaborated with multiple local and state partners including the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Intersect Illinois, the City of Mt. Vernon, Man-Tra-Con and others to bring this project and its 60 jobs to Southern Illinois. Although Illinois announced many exciting projects throughout the state in 2023, the Manner Polymers project was the only one to receive 2023 Business Facilities recognition. **Now, that's something to be proud of!**

Southern Illinois is not only on the map but is also emerging as a sought-after location for companies looking to centralize operations with access to unique transportation assets and a highly skilled workforce. We celebrate the region's 2023 successes and look forward to a great 2024!



Image: Business Facilities Magazine

For a recap of 2023 highlights and year-end reflections, check out this [Small Town Big Business](#) podcast episode recorded at ETHOs in Marion with our friend and co-host Jennifer Olson.



WhySI?

WLC Management Firm, LLC

When Scott Stout had an opportunity to take ownership of five nursing and rehabilitation care communities in Southern Illinois back in 2017, he knew he had to jump at the chance. With the ownership of the homes, Stout needed a management company to oversee the daily operations at the facilities. That's when WLC Management Firm, LLC was born. What started with five facilities in Southern Illinois in 2017, has now grown to 18 facilities stretching from Decatur to Carmi and from Du Quoin to Harrisburg. WLC Management is one of the fastest growing companies in Southern Illinois, aiming to bring the highest quality care to the residents at their facilities. [READ MORE...](#)



Business Growth & Development

When you think of the rivers that run through Southern Illinois, the Mississippi or Ohio probably come to mind, but it's the Kaskaskia River that currently holds the top spot as the area's busiest inland port. The Kaskaskia Regional Port District (KRPD) operates multiple terminals on both the Kaskaskia and Mississippi Rivers. In addition to the waterways, KRPD has existing infrastructure with access to two Class I (CN and UP) railroads and a road network that supports shipping and receiving. KRPD is aggressive in supporting local companies, ensuring they have the resources necessary to expand and grow. New businesses are also pursued when the needs of the company match the assets of the region and port. The results speak for themselves. [READ MORE...](#)



Aerial view of Jerry F. Costello Lock and Dam near the mouth of the Kaskaskia River in Randolph County.

For information on business opportunities in Southern Illinois, visit <https://southernillinoisnow.org/do-business-here/>

Education & Workforce Development

Have you heard? Vienna has a new cafe in town, and it is much more than your typical cafe! Arrowleaf cut the ribbon on [Clyffe Cafe](#) last month and fully opened its doors on January 29th. The cafe is part of a Supported Employment (SE) program, an approach to vocational rehabilitation for people with serious mental illnesses and individuals with disabilities. It emphasizes helping them obtain competitive work in the community and providing the support necessary to ensure their success in the workplace. SE programs help consumers find jobs that pay competitive wages in integrated settings in the community, often with other people who don't necessarily have disabilities. Clyffe Cafe is a nearly 2000 square foot full-service restaurant. Arrowleaf will continue to use an additional 2000 square feet for classrooms, community day services, office space, and supported employment programming. Morgan Banks, the site coordinator for Clyffe Cafe, has over 10 years of experience providing direct support services with Arrowleaf along with more than 10 years in restaurant management. Be sure to check out Clyffe Cafe's full menu on their [Facebook Group!](#)



Marketing the Region

The second ever NOW! Magazine is slated for release this spring. The publication aims to tell Southern Illinois' collective story by shedding light on all of the amazing things happening in our great region. From the world-class outdoor recreational opportunities, friendly people, and southern hospitality, to the business assets such as a well-trained workforce, abundance of highways, and education opportunities, we have a lot to be proud of! Look for the next issue to be released in May 2024. Until then, check out the [current issue online](#) or request hard copies for distribution at your business at info@southernillinoisnow.org.

NOW
COMING
MAY
2024



AROUND THE REGION

FEBRUARY EVENTS

- 2-4** Southern Illinois Boat & Fishing Show - Marion
- 12** Abraham Lincoln's Birthday
- 14** Valentine's Day
- 17** SIU Men's Basketball Galentine's Day Event ([promo code](#))
- 23-24** Home & Outdoor Expo - Mt. Vernon
- 29** Black History Month

LOOKING AHEAD

- MAR 8-9** Wine & Food Pairing Weekend - Shawnee Hills Wine Trail
- MAR 23-24** Maple Syrup Festival - Makanda
- MAR 31** Easter Sunday
- APR 8** Total Solar Eclipse



Check out the Southern Illinois Crossroads Eclipse Festival hosted by SIU Carbondale in partnership with NASA at eclipse.siu.edu.

FIELD TRIP FRIDAYS - ENTER TO WIN!

Congratulations to Katie Keller of Murphysboro who is this month's contest winner! Our January *Field Trip Friday* location was the [Mt. Vernon Outland Airport](#) and Katie wins a dinner at the airport's Bonnie Cafe! If you haven't been to the airport lately, be sure to check out this Southern Illinois gem that was named the 2023 Large General Aviation Airport of the Year!

During a recent *Field Trip Friday*, we visited a local manufacturer that is sure to energize you.

Can you guess where we visited in January? This location announced a major expansion in 2023 and looks to continue growing in Southern Illinois. Enter the correct answer on our [contest entry form](#) and you'll be added to the drawing for this month's prize, a Southern Illinois Eats gift card!



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