

SI NOW HAPPENING

OCTOBER
2024



LIVE HERE. WORK HERE. DO BUSINESS HERE.



MAKERS ON THE MOVE! CELEBRATING MANUFACTURING MONTH

The Illinois Manufacturers' Association (IMA) and the Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center (IMEC) are on the road again in October to celebrate manufacturers throughout the state. Illinois manufacturers provide excellence day in and day out, and it's time to celebrate their success!

Makers on the Move Southern Illinois Stops Thursday, October 10, 2024

8:00-8:30 AM - Gilster-Mary Lee Corporation,
1037 State St., Chester

10:00 AM-12:00 PM - Com-Pac International,
800 West Industrial Park Road, Carbondale

1:00-1:30 PM - Continental Tire the Americas,
LLC, 11525 N IL Hwy 142, Mount Vernon
(Invitation Only)

2:00-2:20 PM - Rend Lake College, 321
Potomac, Mt. Vernon

The **Makers on the Move: Illinois Manufacturing Month Celebration** is a great time to support our region's growing manufacturing sector with stops in Chester, Carbondale, and Mt. Vernon on Thursday, October 10th as part of the eight-day bus tour.

At each stop, you'll have an opportunity to SIGN THE BUS and network with other attendees. At the Carbondale stop, the press conference to be held at Com-Pac International is one you will not want to miss!

Help make the Southern Illinois stops the best on the tour. **Join us at a stop on the Makers on the Move Bus Tour by registering at www.makersonthemove.org.**



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

by Dr. Deb Barnett



In September, SI Now hit the road (or the Contour flight from Marion to Chicago) to join colleagues from Southern Illinois and throughout the state for the **Illinois Economic Development Association's Site Selector Forum**. With just under an hour from takeoff to landing, our Southern Illinois team arrived in the windy city for a **full day of hearing from and engaging with site selectors who work with companies seeking to expand or relocate their business to Illinois**. Although site selection is primarily about finding 'product' in the form of land or existing buildings for a company to consider for their next project, it's also about relationships.

SI Now prioritizes connecting with key decision makers to share about the region's assets including our **skilled workforce, central location, low cost of living, high quality of place, supportive business community, and R4 Advantage** (rivers, rail, roads, and runways) that make Southern Illinois a prime business location. In October, site selectors are coming to us, and **we can't wait to show off Southern Illinois**. On that note, as you're out and about in the region, I urge you to **be an ambassador for Southern Illinois**. You never know who might be in your midst!



ADVANCING SOUTHERN ILLINOIS

PRIORITY ONE: BUSINESS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Eldorado-based Compressed Energy Solutions (CES) recently cut the ribbon on a unique project that rethinks renewable energy. Owner Chris Schimp and CES have been capturing methane, or natural gas, which builds up in abandoned coal mines, for years. With a tap on the Texas Eastern Transmission Pipeline which runs right through Saline County, CES has been selling this naturally occurring energy source all over the United States.

With the demand for natural gas increasing, Schimp thought it was the perfect time to explore new ways to capture methane beyond just abandoned coal mines. That's where the idea for his project, **Saline Biogas Digesters**, came about. Sitting atop a small hill between Harrisburg and Southeastern Illinois College, CES has two one-million-gallon concrete tanks, which are filled with manure from cows and pigs. Heated to 98° to simulate a stomach, microorganisms break down the manure and release methane. Typically, on a farm, this occurs in a lagoon system, and the methane is simply lost into the atmosphere, which is 30 times more potent as a greenhouse gas compared to carbon dioxide. In this facility, **CES is able to capture the methane before it's released, piping it into the Texas Eastern Transmission Pipeline to be used as natural gas in homes and businesses throughout the country.**

Once the manure is used, it's then given back to farmers to be spread over fields and used as fertilizer. The transport of the manure to and from the facility is all done using a fleet of semi-trucks that have been converted to run on the captured natural gas.



READ MORE IN THE THE NEXT ISSUE OF NOW! DUE OUT IN NOVEMBER 2024

Regional Development

by Nick Holdinghausen



October is national Manufacturing Month. Southern Illinois boasts a robust manufacturing sector, with **281 manufacturers** calling the region home. Your first thoughts might immediately go to some of the area's larger manufacturers like AISIN, Continental Tire, or Gilster-Mary Lee, but Southern Illinois is home to dozens of small to medium sized manufacturers that are often quietly producing products that are used around the globe.

From products used to clean up oil spills, to custom plastic packaging, to commercial explosives, it's made right here in Southern Illinois. As of Q1 2024, **manufacturing employs 13,980 people in Southern Illinois, marking the highest number of people in this sector in nearly six years.** In fact, **the region has added over 330 manufacturing jobs in the last 12 months, making it one of the fastest growing industries in Southern Illinois,** just below healthcare. Manufacturing has long been seen as one of the keys for developing and keeping a healthy middle class across the United States.

In Southern Illinois, the **average annual wage for a manufacturing employee is \$61,651, which is 20-percent higher than the average wage for all industries in the region.** Southern Illinois' central location, which provides close proximity to suppliers and customers will continue to be an asset that for manufacturers in the area. **We should be proud of all that's made in the area and if you know someone that is working for one of the area's manufacturers, be sure to thank them this month!**

Marketing the Region

Get READY! The Fall 2024 NOW! Magazine will be coming to your community very soon. This latest issue features stories on Southern Illinois' agriculture roots and how our community colleges are working to train the farmers of the future. Also, this issue's R4 Advantage feature focuses on rail. Southern Illinois has 5 of the 6 Class I railways crisscrossing the region. While railcars are still often filled with coal, other commodities like grain, fertilizer, lumber, and even beet juice are some of the things moving down the tracks.

The cover of the upcoming magazine (as seen to the right) is truly a work of art. Photographer Paul Elledge, who resides in Jefferson County, has appeared worldwide in galleries and museums, and has been published in such publications as Audubon, Fast Company, Life, Men's Health, People, Rolling Stone, Time, and Wired, among others. Arthur Agency and Jackson Street Publishing have designed a beautiful magazine, and we can't wait to get it in your hands soon!



Education and Workforce Development

Gilster-Mary Lee earns the first ever Spectrum Certified® designation in the country!

Gilster-Mary Lee's commitment to developing a strong workforce, including providing meaningful employment opportunities for individuals with Autism and other Neurodiversities, was recognized on October 1, 2024, when the company was presented its certification by Stannum Core Solutions, a leading agency specializing in neurodiverse workforce strategies. The celebration coincided with the kick-off to both National Disability Employment Awareness Month and Manufacturing Month, displaying an exceptional combination of the two. The ceremony was held at the Gilster-Mary Lee Pasta Plant in Steeleville, IL, one of two locations where the inclusive employment solution has been implemented.

“

We are very honored to receive the first Spectrum Certified® recognition. We have worked hard to make our plants a welcoming place for neurodiverse individuals...They are valued members of our team, and have a positive impact on our business and their fellow employees.

”



**TOM WELGE
PRESIDENT
GILSTER-MARY LEE CORP.**

**Congratulations to Gilster-Mary Lee!
You make Southern Illinois proud!**

WhySI

Building Community: Lisa Knight - Coleman Tri-County Services



Helping others, whether through spiritual guidance or simple acts of kindness, is at the heart of everything I do. In my role at Coleman Tri-County Services, I have worked closely with countless individuals across Southern Illinois, ensuring they receive the essential services and support they need to thrive in their communities. My work at CTS allows me to pay forward the kindness I've been shown throughout my life—often when I needed it most. I believe everyone needs a helping hand at times, and while we can't assist everyone, we can make a significant difference for those within our reach. Through my efforts at CTS, I strive to uplift those in need and strengthen our community one person at a time.

[READ MORE...](#)

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS' TOURISM ECONOMY SHOWS MORE GROWTH IN 2023

\$891 Million

Whether it's a relaxing weekend getaway in the Shawnee National Forest, a bike ride on the tunnel hill trail, or an adventurous kayaking trip among the cypress knees on the Cache River. Tourism is flourishing and has become a significant contributor to the Southern Illinois economy with visitors spending over \$891 million in 2023 right here in the region. (Tourism Economics) That is \$35 million higher than 2022 - a 4-percent increase.

Tourism also resulted in 5,806 jobs in Southern Illinois and contributed \$57 million directly and indirectly in local taxes to the region.

#SINowYouKnow



Photo Courtesy of Southermost Illinois Tourism Bureau