

## Citizens National Bank: The Heart of the Community

Communities are much more than a diverse group of humans living in the same area. True communities form because of the connections these humans create. Established on August 5, 1940, Citizens National Bank of Albion acts as a catalyst for establishing connections throughout Albion and allows each member in this close-knit community to pursue the American Dream. CNB is the cornerstone of this community because of the essential services they provide, the contributions they make, and the historic impact they have generated in this community.

The popular saying “money does not grow on trees” displays the scarcity of cash for most families in modern America. Acquiring a loan is a crucial solution to this problem. Community banks like CNB provide loans to members of the community. These loans enable fundamental purchases such as home, business, and vehicle finances. Without a community bank, citizens would have a difficult time financing these purchases. CNB also offers outstanding customer service so that each customer who uses their services is supported throughout every step of their financial journey. Citizens National Bank of Albion is a bank owned by people of this community that offers services which allow people to succeed financially, all while giving back in any way they can.

The contributions that CNB makes lead to a flourishing and united community. CNB sponsors local sports, charities, and community events. I have personally felt the effects of many of these sponsorships. Recently, the high school started a golf team. The bank played a huge role in supplying us with golf balls and tees. As I tried a sport for the first time, I felt comforted by the fact that businesses in my community were supporting this newly established team. The contributions that the bank makes are not only monetary. Oftentimes, workers from the bank

come in and teach students lessons about the financial world. Each time CNB gives back to the community the bond of this tightly connected community grows stronger.

Throughout the years, the bank has been a large contributor to our thriving community. After the Great Depression, several local entrepreneurs recognized the need for a local bank. Without a community bank, the residents had to travel to take out loans, withdraw and deposit money, and open accounts. The creation of this bank helped the local economy crawl out of the hole that the Great Depression generated. Since the 40's, Citizens National Bank of Albion has grown with this community and still continues to put the local residents first.

In conclusion, Citizens National Bank of Albion is the cornerstone of this community because of the essential services they provide, the contributions they make, and the historic impact they have generated in this community. Having a community bank is a privilege that the citizens of Albion should not take for granted. Located on 10th West Elm Street, this brick building may not look as elegant as the courthouse but the true heart of our community lies within its walls.

## Imagineer

How can imagination be used in a community? Imagination is seen in many, young and old, and is expressed differently in each person. It makes new ideas and designs used for many different purposes. TJ Marche is the base of imagination in the community of Albion, Illinois. TJ Marche has a great history and a variety of products that make it the center of the community.

TJ Marche can be looked at as the center of the community by looking at the history of the business. The business began when Cheryl Taylor and Mary Jenks birthed the idea within an existing Sears and Roebuck catalog store in 1981. Initially, the business was called CT Shirts. At its official grand opening celebration in 1982, the business name officially became TJ Marche. TJ Marche got its name from both first and last names of the ladies who started it. The “T” and “che” is for Cheryl Taylor and the “J” and “Mar” is for Mary Jenks. Mary and Cheryl were very important to the community, demonstrated through how much they did in and out of the store. Mary Jenks was the president of the Albion Chamber of Commerce and the Edwards County Senior Citizens Board. She planned and organized the decorations for the Edwards County High School (ECHS) Dinner Theatre for more than ten years. Cheryl Taylor watched over the store by selling and making the community’s orders, public or private, as well as being an ever willing hand to help in community projects. Mary Jenks and Cheryl Taylor did so much for the community. In 2019, Kelley Alexander, who helped with the production of TJ Marche products for many years, purchased the business. She works hard to keep the history of this store. TJ Marche’s history shows how it is the center of the community.

I believe that TJ Marche is the center of the community because this store makes designs for groups and organizations and public or private events in the community. A few examples of these events are ECHS Dinner Theater, the Edwards County Fair, Pork Day USA, former City of

Albion logos, and many more. TJ Marche is a very important part of the community because it produces many different products for events that make the community unique. These products can range from shirts and hats to awards and trophies. The products this business produces includes screen printed apparel and other textiles, trophies, custom vinyl signs, and, for a short period of time, jewelry. Some of these events are ECHS Homecoming with the class shirts or the pink out night for the ECHS volleyball team in which a part of the money from the sales go to breast cancer research. TJ Marche supports many of the community's business and school events and teams either through making merchandise or making contributions. My belief is TJ Marche is the center of the community because it creates merchandise for community businesses and events.

In summary, I believe TJ Marche is the center of the community because of their involvement in community events and projects through creating designs and merchandise. TJ Marche is the center of the community through its history, productions, and the imagination that the store uses.

## The Critical Role of Jenny Hortin Design

When it comes to a community, businesses help provide services to the community. There are also smaller businesses that help those businesses with their designs for their labels. Those smaller businesses are graphic design businesses. One of those graphic design businesses is Jenny Hortin Design.

The creator of Jenny Hortin Design, Jenny Hortin, is a graduate of Indiana State University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. She is a graphic designer whose experience ranges from designing pet packaging, collaborating with engineers on electrical and hydroelectric books, to becoming a part of an Award Winning Ad Agency. Hortin was a creative services manager in that agency for twelve years where she designed award winning projects. Jenny also worked as an Account Executive for a couple of larger commercial printers. Another job Hortin did was sell offsets and digital printings for nine years, and she has been a Freelance Graphic Designer since 2011.

Jenny Hortin supported the Edwards County Paint Out. The Edwards County Welcome to Albion sign was sponsored by Jenny Hortin, and she designed an Albion historic landmarks coloring book. She has also designed business labels and folders; an example is Hayley's Jams & Jellies. Jenny was also the designer for the Edwards County High School sports fall pocket calendar.

Nowadays Jenny Hortin is the sole proprietor of Jenny Hortin Design and started a community service project in Albion, Illinois called The Prairie Press. She has also served as a board member and secretary for the American Advertising Federation of Greater Evansville. Hortin also has a side hustle in selling vintage clothing. Her office is located in Albion, IL on the square in a building that was built in 1891. Her goal for the building is to restore the upstairs and

make it into an art gallery and gathering of arts centers in the historic building. Hortin also designed the address design for the historical building in town square. She has helped create the Lifeline Social Media Assets that were used for a multitude of promotions and brand awareness. Hortin helped in the design for the Brew Crew T-shirts and the Clabber Girl Direct Mail. With ProMark Building Solutions, she helped design the logo design, signage logos, stationery package, and the tri-fold brochure.

In conclusion, Jenny Hortin has an important role in the creating and designing of logos, prints, and other promotional material for businesses. Graphic designers like her have an important role in making a business look put together and interesting.

### The Importance of Nale's Funeral Home

Whenever you think of Albion, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Perhaps it is the brick roads and the court house. Maybe it is one of the companies run by one of our many community members. Alright, maybe we don't have *that* many community members. Nonetheless, we all have an idea about what community means. Something most don't think about, however, is our funeral homes. Why would they? Well, even if it is morbid, everyone ends up there. Although it is far from a cheery thought, Nale's Funeral Home is there for the community.

One of the most important parts of a community organization is it being in the community. Many may not know, but Nale's Funeral Home was first founded in Albion. In 1921, E.A. and Bessie Nale first established the funeral home. Ever since, it has been a family business gifted to each new generation. Not to mention, the home has seen many of the changes that have happened in the town; they have also made their own changes that fit the new changes of the community. They use modern equipment and offer a homely feel for everyone who enters their doors.

Nale's Funeral Home wants to make you feel as if you were home with the many services they offer. It is extremely well known that grief and loss are hard; however, they strive to ease the pain. They offer obvious services such as funeral services, memorial services, burial, and cremation. Just those services alone are what makes them a funeral home, but they do much more. Death is hard to understand, so that is why they offer grief support and resources. They also help with pre-arrangements that have a prepayment system, so when the time comes, life is less hard for the survivors. Want to send flowers to show sympathy? You can with their flower

sending system ,and they come straight from our very own The Watering Can. Nale's Funeral Home offers many services that make loss feel less like losing.

Loss is something everyone has experienced. However, people may not know what to do in these situations. Now, in a small town like Albion, we may know many people that live in town or in surrounding areas. Many of us may know farming techniques, the McDonald's hours, or even know that our neighbor was born in the fifties. Something that we may not know is how to treat death. Luckily, Nale's is always there to give something to the community. They offer lots of information and advice on how to navigate death. On their website, it offers things ranging from funeral etiquette to how to talk to children about death. It even mentions what not to say to the bereaved and potential gift ideas. Life and death are hard, but there are people in the community who help.

Helping and caring for others is what makes a community, a community. As stated before, many people think of different things when told to imagine our community. While a funeral home is far from the first thing thought, it should still be kept in mind. Anyone and everyone living in or near Albion has gone through loss and there were people there for them. Chances are that some of those people were at Nale's Funeral Home. It is an amazingly beautiful thing to see an organization giving back to their people and offering help. That is why Nale's Funeral Home is the center of our community.



## The Importance of Country Home Processing

Have you ever eaten meat from Albion? If you have, there is a good chance that it came from Country Home Processing. This business is a family owned business that cares for the community and the people in it. They work hard to show that there is good in the community and they help out the people and the farmers.

Country Home Processing has been in business for four years. It is owned by Mr. Curtis Kelsey, and his family helps him. He also has some employees that are from high school; he gives them good hours and good pay. I have never heard an employee complain about working. Country Home Processing helps out our community by having jobs for people. They help out the schools in Edwards County. They also give the school money for student of the month, last month they gave fifty dollars towards the student of the month.

Country Home Processing is a good business for our community. It is about five minutes from the square in Albion. When you go to Country Home Processing, they have a selection of meats, seasonings, and other foods. The main items they sell are their ground beef and steaks. People have always said that the meat is great, and my family and I have never had any complaints about the meat. The meat is always fresh, and they work hard to keep everything clean in the store where they make the meat. Country Home Processing always has kind and hard working employees. They are always willing to help out around the town and 4-H.

Mr. Curtis Kelsey and family live on a farm and have cattle. A lot of other farmers have cattle, and cattle can make the farmers money. Country Home Processing slaughter cattle; they will have farmers bring in cattle and will pay the farmers for the cow. When a farmer brings in the cattle, it is good money. It also helps out the younger people in Edwards County. The son of Curtis Kelsey has raised his cattle and he used them at 4-H. He takes them to the auction at 4-H,

then takes his cattle to Country Home Processing to get slaughtered. When he takes them to Country Home Processing they will pay him or other people to bring them cattle to be slaughtered.

In the end, Country Home Processing is a great family owned business. They do a lot for the school and community. If we didn't have Country Home Processing, this community wouldn't be what it is today. Country Home Processing works hard to help the community and everyone in it. The farmers, adults, and kids that have cattle are pleased with the prices at Country Home Processing. When people in this community go to Country Home Processing, they are pleased with the service and the hard work that the business shows. The community loves how they work hard to make everyone happy.

## The Importance of Country Financial

Imagine this scenario: You come home and notice a fire in your barn. It is nice to know you do not have to worry about your assets since you are insured through Country Financial. I think Country Financial is the center of my community because of the endless hours Steve, Tracy, and Evan Thomson put into protecting their own clients, building an investment that is dependable, and developing a great business overall that shows up and donates to events happening in and around our surrounding communities.

Country Financial, located in West Salem, has been a member of the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce for seven years. A new office was built in 2020 and is located at 103 West North Street on the square. The modern and larger office has helped accommodate their growing clients and needs. To run a successful business, the number one priority to making it run smoothly are the hard working employees. Steve, the advisor, and Tracy and Evan, customer representatives, have worked for many years as they have spent countless hours building a business where clients can depend on them. Also, Evan is a member of the Chamber through his business of Thomson Woodworking, and he has been a member for a couple of years. Another way to help accommodate their clients is through forms of advertising. They do most of their advertising through Facebook and sponsors.

Think about what matters most to you. Your home, automobiles, and other assets need to be protected through insurance. Country Financial in West Salem can give you that protection. Some of the services that are offered through Country Financial include: life, home, auto, farm, health, and business insurance. Steve also offers a variety of investments products and services that can help you reach your financial goal. They include retirement funds, IRA's, and managed

accounts. Steve also provides insurance needs with multiple clients in a total of twenty-two different states.

Being a member of the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce, Country Financial is involved throughout the community continuously. They were one of the main sponsors for the Artisan's Festival as they purchased art paintings at the Paint Out uptown and sponsored other smaller events and fundraisers in the county. Another one of the main sponsorships they donated money to was the Eclipse on the Bricks back in April and the Purse Binga at the Edwards County Fair in July. Besides donating to other organizations related with the Chamber of Commerce, they also donate to Little League teams, first responders, helping heroes, a golf event in Evansville, and providing food for the teachers on Parent Teacher Conference days. Also, they have a customer appreciation cookout annually where they purchase all of the food and refreshments for their clients to enjoy.

Overall, Country Financial is a dependable business with an advisor and representatives that are willing to help their clients from all insurance needs and financial investments. In conclusion, I think Country Financial in West Salem is a well known business that helps and supports other businesses to build our community as a whole while providing clients with their insurance needs.

## The Importance of Wabash General Hospital

Wabash General Hospital has played a central role in my community for many years. They are a hospital that is safe and loyal to their patients. Everyone has an illness or injury at some point in his or her life. People from any age in our community feel the positive effects of Wabash General Hospital by providing essential medical services, which includes but is not limited to medical emergencies, specialty treatment, and surgeries. This reduces the residents of Albion and the surrounding areas to travel a far trip for medical emergencies and even hospital visits. Wabash General Hospital always serves our community from performing everyday checkups, sponsorships, or performing demanding operations on patients in our community.

Most individuals in our community require monthly check ups and everyday visits with Wabash General Hospital. This helps prevent sickness and disease that would otherwise not be caught. The highly trained doctors and health care providers that work at Wabash General Hospital do an immaculate job of finding anything that could be possibly wrong with their patients. Diagnosing the issues of the patients, no matter how severe, continues to show how this hospital is the center of our community. All of the employees at Wabash General Hospital have always helped to better our community and lives all around us.

Beyond healthcare, this hospital's operations contribute to the local economy such as spending their money on things they need such as medical supplies, schools, and food. Although this hospital is focused on healthcare, it also helps many other businesses and jobs in the community by buying supplies from local businesses, which helps businesses grow larger in size. In addition to buying things locally, this hospital creates jobs that help pay people in the community. This hospital also helps schools by having vans that go to the school and sponsorships for the school sports teams in the community. When the doctors, nurses, front desk

staff, and other medical staff get paid, they spend their money on other businesses in town to keep them up and running. The hospital doesn't just help people stay healthy; it helps to keep the whole town economically healthy as well.

Our hospital also acts as a safety net for the community, which keeps the people's minds at ease knowing that they have reliable medical assistance so close to home. This particular sense of security can make the area more appealing to new families as well as new businesses that are looking to find a safe home in Albion. When people feel safe in a community, they are more likely to stay and invest in that community. The hospital's impact goes far beyond just physical relief but long term stability for all people in the community.

As you can see from previous paragraphs, Wabash General Hospital has a very strong hold on my community as well as the surrounding communities in many ways, shapes, and forms. Wabash General Hospital is more than just a place for physical care; they also keep our community healthy and strong as well.

## The Importance of Riggs FamilyCare Pharmacy

Small businesses make up a small town, and with the support of the local people, businesses can flourish. Every business in Albion, Illinois has an important role in the community. One of the businesses that supports this town the most is Rigg FamilyCare Pharmacy. They support the people of this town and the surrounding area by providing medication through prescriptions and walk-ins while receiving personalized care.

Rigg FamilyCare Pharmacy is locally owned and operated. These care providers go above and beyond for the people they serve. They make sure to give correct medication and answers to those in need. Rigg's works well with local health care centers to ensure all medication is properly dispersed. All interactions are quick and efficient. Many people depend on Riggs pharmacy for their medication because it is easily accessible and reliable. When the community is provided with high- quality medication, the town stays healthier. They have a great selection of over-the-counter medicines to fulfill instant needs. It is crucial to have access to prescription medications. According to the NIH, over two-thirds of United States adults use at least one medication, and 63% of prescriptions are filled at community pharmacies rather than mail-order.

Having a local pharmacy to serve the community is convenient for locals. From 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, Rigg FamilyCare Pharmacy is open to serve its customers with short wait times and a more personalized service experience. Rigg Pharmacy can provide patient education so that individuals leave understanding their prescriptions and needs related to their sickness. By getting to know patients and acknowledging their needs, adapted services and recommendations can be offered by Riggs Pharmacy. The pharmacy has reasonable pricing making it more affordable to acquire the medication the community needs. Not only are people's

needs provided but also their wants. Vitamins and other medication used to help keep the body healthy by choice is offered as well. Although having prescription medication is exceptional, so is having a personal choice of different medications to stay healthy.

Rigg Pharmacy extends its support beyond its address; it monetarily supports community sports, school sports, and Albion's local economy. Eric Rigg and his family can be seen at ball games or in the stands as they support the children of the Edwards County community. Being involved in the community shows this pharmacy is well trusted as are the care providers. By attending extra-curricular activities, it shows how much this pharmacy truly cares about the relationships with the people in the community. Rigg's pharmacy is dedicated to the people in this community, and it shows through the kindness of the providers. Our community is lucky to have a pharmacy so focused and centered on making relationships so everyone can receive the care they deserve.

Rigg FamilyCare Pharmacy delivers beyond the role of dispensing medications; at Rigg Pharmacy, you are a customer who receives personalized care, assistance, and education. Albion, Illinois is fortunate to have access to a local pharmacy that loves and supports the community and is readily available to serve the people.



## The Watering Can

Stephanie Skeem once said, "Flowers don't tell, they show." Many special occasions and milestones in a person's life are a perfect opportunity to gift flowers to a loved one. Holidays, anniversaries, weddings, and deaths are some examples of these occasions that might call for flowers. Whether it's an exciting celebration or a bittersweet passing, the Watering Can provides for our small-town community in a very special way.

At the Watering Can, they use a wide variety of vibrant flowers to meet the needs of the community. For Valentine's Day, a bouquet of flowers might include red roses and baby's breath whereas flowers for a wedding might include flowers that have more muted colors rather than bright ones. At the Watering Can, they make floral arrangements for both of those occasions and so many more. Anybody who has given or received flowers through the Watering Can can attest to the fact that the flower arrangements are beautiful and perfect for any special day. The staff is very knowledgeable about making floral arrangements. Not only are the flowers beautiful, but they also last a long time due to their very high quality.

The flowers are excellent, as is the customer service. The staff at the Watering Can is exceptionally friendly and willing to help answer any questions and meet any needs for the people of Edwards County. They are able to help you find exactly what you are looking for and are very talented and creative. No matter what the situation is, they are able to come up with the perfect idea and execute it quickly and efficiently.

One of the main ways the Watering Can is the center of the Edwards County community is through their involvement in community service. They sponsor and participate in many events in Albion and the surrounding areas. The staff at the Watering Can is extremely proud and supportive of our small-town community. Any business that is central to our community should

show their involvement in the community, and the Watering Can is excellent at showing our town how much they care.

Not only is the Watering Can the center of our community figuratively, but also literally. Located on Main Street in the center of town, most citizens of Albion drive past it almost every day. Its location makes it easy for anybody who lives in Albion to get there quickly. They also do deliveries for anybody who is unable to come pick their order up, which can be incredibly convenient when you have a busy schedule or something else going on when the order is ready.

The Watering Can is the center of the Albion and Edwards County communities because they truly show how much they care about everyone. In their store, they offer such a wide variety of flowers, gifts, and decor, and they show their dedication to the town and community of Albion in everything they do, as they have done for over ten years.

## The Importance of JW Equipment

There are many Chamber of Commerce businesses that affect my community. They are all beneficial to the surrounding towns and communities of Southern Illinois. The business that I chose is JW Equipment. This business is family owned and operated, it's local and supports farmers, and most importantly is a cornerstone of our community.

JW Equipment is owned by Jarod Weaver. He has a wife and three children. They each play a role in the business and to make successful. Carissa, his wife, takes care of all the book work, accounting, and office work. She runs all social media and takes pictures of tractors. Peyton, his oldest son, assists in buying and selling tractors in the office and helps Carissa from time to time. Jaron the middle child is in charge of the cleaning that goes to keeping these tractors clean time and time again. He works on tractors that come in that need repair, cleans cabs, and polishes and waxes them when it's needed every so often. Ashlyn, Jarod's daughter, keeps the office and kitchen clean. Recently she has begun to learn the bookkeeping of JW Equipment.

JW Equipment is located just outside of Albion, Illinois halfway between Albion and Grayville. It's right off highway route 130. This business supports local farmers and other implement dealerships. If something needs to be repaired that can be done in a shop, it is sent to Albion Equipment, John Deere, and Herchel Johnson. Those three other businesses profit off of JW Equipment and the business that is provided for them. Local farmers buy tractors and other farm equipment from JW Equipment as well. JW Equipment has affordable prices representing the tractor market that can be purchased by many. Without these local farmers having powerful and well running equipment, they would not be able to run their farms and take grain to the

elevator to make money. JW Equipment provides all types of equipment for the farmers. It ranges from tractors, combines, and many other implements needed to get the job done.

JW Equipment is the cornerstone of our agriculture community for many reasons. Providing these tractors to farmers and agricultural businessmen helps make the world go round. With these farmers being able to profit off their crops, wheat is then turned into flour or bread that eventually goes into the supermarkets. The soybeans are turned into motor oil that goes into cars that are driven everyday. The corn is made into cattle feed so that cattle farmers can raise cows to have beef and other foods that are also sold to profit off of and so that people of our community can eat. These are just a few of the many ways that JW Equipment is a cornerstone of our community.

JW Equipment is very beneficial to our community and is a very strong business economically. With JW Equipment being family owned, supporting local farmers, and being a cornerstone to the community, it makes other business profitable. That's how JW Equipment is the center of our community.

## The Smokin' Pig: The Center of My Community

Merriam-Webster defines a community as "a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living together within a larger society;" however, a sense of community is so much more than just people living in the same place. A community makes you feel at home in your everyday life. Small towns have the best sense of community as everyone knows each other, making people feel a sense of comfort. Many businesses, including the Smokin' Pig in Grayville, give people in our community the sense of comfort they seek.

The Smokin' Pig, run by Drew Bunting, originated as a food truck in Olney, Illinois. Drew started with a minimal menu for the food truck serving just a couple of main dishes focused mainly on pork. Over the years, the food truck expanded its menu, and he bought a newer larger food truck. Eventually, when the Westwood saloon in Grayville shut down due to the coronavirus, Drew and his dad Richard seized the opportunity. They decided to rent out the building and start a full-fledged restaurant. The Smokin' Pig's menu continued to expand with their business adding new items to this day and trying to do everything they can to please their customers; they have daily specials throughout the week including wings, brisket, tomahawk steaks and even all you can eat fish.

I currently work at the Smokin' Pig and have for roughly a year and a half; therefore, I know what truly makes this business special. The Smokin' Pig is not only the center of our community, but it is also a small community in itself. All of the employees love working there for wonderful bosses like Richard and Drew, and they also enjoy working together and keeping each other company during the busy work day. Some of my current friends I met while working there are some of the best friends I could ever want. There is not only a community made up of the employees of The Smokin' Pig, but also a community formed between the employees and the

customers, especially regulars. The restaurant's waitresses love talking to all of the customers who come in and out of the restaurant being that their customers are from all over the world. The Smokin' Pig has customers from everywhere since it is built into the Grayville/I-64 KOA. Some campers travel from all over that come to eat at The Smokin' Pig. This not only gives the customers a fun experience every time they walk through the front door but the employees too.

The employees, the customers, and the community that The Smokin' Pig is a part of make it a true hub for our community. Great customers call for great food made by wonderful employees. The employees take their time to make sure every order is made with great care. Not only is the food great at The Smokin' Pig but so are the memories made. That is what truly makes The Smokin' Pig the center of my community.

## How is Wabash General Hospital the Center of My Community?

Whether it be through misfortune or blessing, someone's life is turned upside down everyday. Life is unexpected and holds many different challenges and twists. A place that helps people when they go through something in life, whether it be trivial or tragic, is Wabash General Hospital. They always have staff who are ready to help anyone who might need it, so they can keep living their life to the fullest.

The history of Wabash General Hospital can be traced back to the spring of 1951 when it opened. (WGH) was located in Mount Carmel, Illinois, and the hospital housed a total of fifty-two beds for patients. After only three years, Wabash General Hospital WGH would receive full accreditation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Over the next few years until 1975, WGH would remain reliable to its patients, as it received renovations such as exterior and roof repairs, a cafeteria restoration, and even a coronary care room. By 1980, however, the building needed to be rebuilt, as it did not meet regulations. It would take a few years to be fully rebuilt, but by 2000, it was complete. Since then, WGH gained Advanced Life Support (ALS) certification in 2002, which allowed a licensed EMT-Paramedic to lead the ALS team and provide a higher level of emergency care. In 2003, it also earned designation as a critical access hospital. In 2005, WGH built an orthopedic surgery department onto the existing building. Over the following years to now, WGH would expand their partnerships with other hospitals by allowing them to have access to different services that were not previously available. They would also receive many awards for their service and work environment, which proves that they are a good hospital that cares for their patients.

The Wabash General Hospital itself isn't the only thing that makes WGH the center of the community; The staff who work there all contribute to the community as well. Each member of

WGH is kind and ready to help, whether they are in their workspace or not. When they are working, they are very organized and professional, and they tell you everything you need to know, such as what your condition is, how they can help fix it, and they even listen to all of your questions and answer them to their best ability.

Another way that WGH is the center of our community is through town-events and events hosted by Edwards County High School (ECHS). They are always there both to help with the events or watch for any injuries that may occur in them. A great example of this is ECHS football where there are always WGH staff members standing by in case of an emergency on the field. I was unlucky enough to be in an accident during the first game of the season, where I broke my right ankle in three places, but I was taken care of by WGH members. I was taken to the WGH, where I was immediately ready to be taken care of and looked after. Within an hour, I was able to have surgery performed, where they fixed my ankle. Without WGH, I might not have been lucky enough to receive proper treatment.

WGH can be seen as the center of our community due to their loyalty to their patients, excellent award-winning service, and the staff members' contribution to the community outside of the hospital. They are a critical part of everyday living, as they assist people from all kinds of places and continue to improve people's lives.



## The Center of My Community: Colyer Coffee House

On a crisp Saturday morning in October, walking on the bricks with a hot fall festival latte feels like paradise. The people you pass on the street always smile and wave, because they purchased their own cup of happiness as well. Colyer Coffee House plays a very important role in Edwards County. They continue to serve their community no matter the circumstances. Colyer Coffee House brightens the whole community with their loving baristas, unique menu, historic background, and community involvement.

When you enter Colyer Coffee House, you are always greeted with a smile. The baristas ask you how your day has been and try their best to make it a little bit better with a drink especially made with love. They are also always willing to work with individual accommodations. For example, Colyer Coffee House has added sugar free syrups to their menu to accommodate people with sugar intolerances, diabetics, and people on a diet. Colyer Coffee House baristas make it especially known that they are never expecting a tip from the customer. Talking to a cheerful barista will always brighten my day.

When it comes to the menu, Colyer Coffee House takes it to a whole new level. They always have a seasonal menu with their own specialty drinks. More often than not, they make their own homemade specialty syrups for their seasonal menu. The rich, aromatic espresso blends well with their unique syrup combinations that are always served piping hot or as a lovely refresher. Their menu also offers a wide variety for children. A blue raspberry lemonade with edible glitter never fails to excite the little ones. Colyer Coffee House also serves half scoops of ice cream, which is the perfect size for a tasty treat. Their freshly-baked goodies make a perfect snack to go along with the perfect cup of coffee.

When it comes to Edwards County, we take our history seriously. Colyer Coffee House has only been open since 2016, but the building was built back in the early 1900's. It has transferred ownership many times while it has also been a doctor's office and an apartment. Along with the original hardwood floors and huge open windows, Colyer Coffee House has managed to savor the unique Albion bricks that line the sidewalk leading to their bakery. Sadly, Colyer Coffee House experienced a fire in the last six months. The owners are striving to salvage the building to keep the history alive as they continue reconstruction. The history of Colyer Coffee House will continue.

Colyer Coffee House takes great pleasure in community involvement. They host their Hot Chocolate 5K every year. This allows community members to enjoy each other's company, drink hot chocolate, and have fun. Colyer Coffee House also sponsors and donates to many school functions and fundraisers. For example, they give the Spanish Club deals to put on the Lions Card every year. Like no other coffee shop, Colyer Coffee House hosts seasonal tasting events in addition to the Albion Area Chamber of Commerce's Girls Night Out. This allows for people to taste a sampler platter of the seasonal menu as well as learn about the coffee shop itself. I have attended multiple tastings myself and have always enjoyed the evening with the baristas. Colyer Coffee House has always been very generous when it comes to our community.

Overall, Colyer Coffee House is the center of our community. They serve with a smile, offer a special menu like no other, continue to cherish their building's history in Albion, and play an active role in our community. I am proud to say that Colyer Coffee House is an important part of my community.

## The Center of Our Community: TJ Marche

The different small businesses in our county help the community grow. Edwards County has bloomed with many facilities over the past few years, while others have been operating for multiple years. Supporting these small businesses is an important role for the community members. The companies in Edwards County continuously support the schools, children, and other businesses by making it important for the citizens to give back. TJ Marche is one of the companies that has helped our community. The store allows the school, and the fair, and makes fan gear.

The effort made by TJ Marche to help the school can go unseen by members throughout the community. Over the summer, I got to experience the behind-the-scenes process of everything the store creates. Our crew helped lay the lettering and designs down that can now be seen on the gym floor. TJ Marche was part of the process for the new gym floor, but the banners also came through the store. The store does even more for the school throughout the school year. Homecoming is a busy season at the store. All four high school classes get their t-shirts produced by TJ Marche. Kelly Alexander, the owner, also allows students to show school spirit. She always thinks of new and trendy ideas that teenagers and adults love. New glitter and puff shirts have been a big hit in the store. In the short time school has been in session, TJ Marche has been hectic.

Not only is homecoming season a busy time, but fair season is as well. During the fair, TJ Marche provides many banners and logos that individuals pass by. Many of the banners containing sponsors' names are made through TJ Marche. Every trophy passed out at the motocross is made by hand at the store, which takes patience to complete. The shop produces the queen shirts ordered from all the girls' supporters. Even after the queen is crowned, TJ Marche

helps make signs for the new queen. TJ Marche also produces many signs for individual sponsors. For example, this past summer, Citizens National Bank had its logo made to be placed on feed buckets. Many businesses get together to support the fair, but TJ Marche helps bring the many necessities of the fair week to life.

Sports are a big part of our community. The sports teams allow children to grow their opportunities and friend groups. Not only are sporting events a blessing for the children, but they also give the elders something to attend. Members of our community support all the sports during their different seasons. Many of the coaches team up with TJ Marche to make fan gear. TJ Marche creates a design that is approved by the coach and opens an online store, which gives the fans multiple styles of clothes to choose. They can choose a t-shirt, long sleeve, crewneck, hoodie, and other items to represent the team at games. The store even offers personalizations such as names and numbers. The designs look sleek and eye-catching. Without the store, getting the gear the local teams and fans need would be a challenge.

The opportunity given, over the summer, to work for TJ Marche was a blessing. I chose this store because I did not know how much they did for the community. Seeing the finished products and clothes, especially in public, is astonishing. Similar to TJ Marche, other businesses in the community do more than what meets the eye. Each facility has its history and the different services it provides for our town. Community members need to support these small businesses so they can keep running.

## The Importance of Farm Bureau

Do you know who is one of two nonprofit organizations left in this small town of Albion, Illinois? The Farm Bureau has been involved in our community since 1916 and definitely stands out for being the center business of Albion. This business benefits our town in many unique ways such as educating children and supporting local extra-curricular activities, but my hometown would not thrive without the aid of our Farm Bureau.

Farm Bureau hosts many outdoor activities for the children of our community. For example, third through fifth graders are granted the wonderful opportunity to enjoy a day in the woods. The Farm Bureau allows children to gain knowledge dealing with lessons on animal habitats, bird calls, or environmental pollution. To give another example, they developed safety day, which consists of a day exploring how to become safe around agriculture related topics. I was fortunate enough to assist the Farm Bureau speakers with the animal safety presentation this past week. Seeing the children excited to learn about agriculture brightens the day of every Farm Bureau sponsor. Without the aid of our Farm Bureau and Mackenzie Brake, our Ag in the Classroom coordinator, the children of this hometown would not experience the nature that agriculture can offer.

Farm Bureau always has something to offer when it comes to extra-curricular activity support. To name a few, scholarships, 4-H grant programs, and the drivers education lessons would disappear without the assistance of our Farm Bureau. This business sponsors scholarships for students going to college right after high school or even receiving medical degrees as adults. Farm Bureau gives students a chance to understand the true meaning behind 4-H by using the 4-H grant program. This program allows students to understand their supervised agriculture experience (SAE) when participating in a 4-H club, which of course is sponsored by Farm

Bureau. Last but not least, the drivers education program that deals with safety around farm equipment benefits this community without a doubt. By living in a community full of corn and bean fields, farm equipment is always on the roads. Teaching first year drivers the safety when driving around farm equipment allows for a safer hometown overall. Without all these wonderful Farm Bureau sponsors, our hometown would not be nearly as successful as it is today.

Have you ever considered what would happen if our Farm Bureau suddenly quit their participation in our community? Farm Bureau is the voice of agriculture; without the listening ears of the Farm Bureau board members, our community would not have the strong agriculture based heart it currently has been blessed to have at this moment in time. Thinking back to all the rural issues in our community, the Farm Bureau was the only business capable of assisting those farmers or livestock owners and all their needs. As previously mentioned, the Farm Bureau supports this community in many unique ways. This community would not thrive without the assistance of Edwards County Farm Bureau.

Overall, it is extremely obvious that our hometown is fortunate enough to have a proactive Farm Bureau. We are blessed to have them in our community. Our Farm Bureau makes up forty percent of the twelve hundred household families that are involved in this organization in Edwards County. Our children are educated, and the Farm Bureau supports extra-curricular activities throughout the entire year. Edwards County would not be the same without our Farm Bureau to shine in the center of our wonderful community. Rebecca Perry once said, "Agriculture is the economic force of Edwards County." I believe we should keep that in our front focus on who truly stands strong in holding the title of being the center of our Edwards County community.

### The Positive Impact of the Edwards County Farm Bureau

Within the area of Edwards County, there are dozens of businesses that hold significant value in the community. Between the food resources, well-known manufacturers, and the agricultural resources, Edwards County holds endless amounts of potential and diversity within businesses despite the small size of the county itself. One business that I personally believe holds a strong place in our community is the Edwards County Farm Bureau. The Farm Bureau stands out through their origin, their customer service, and their overall significance and value in Edwards County.

The Edwards County Farm Bureau, located on South 5th Street in the heart of Albion, Illinois, is known for being a reliable and supportive resource for farmers and agricultural personnel in the area. They offer many different services to people who may need it and keep agriculturally-involved people in our county up-to-date and informed on information going on in our area. With their purpose revolving around rewarding the people who proudly represent our county, they are always looking for ways to give back to farmers and other agriculturally-involved people who provide for everyone else on a daily basis. Another way that the Edwards County Farm Bureau gives back to the community is through the wonderful customer service they give.

The customer service that the Farm Bureau has to offer has never left me, or anybody that I know, lost or disappointed. Any time that I have personally had to call the Farm Bureau, or go in and talk to them, their customer service has always surpassed my expectations. Between the supportive and helpful employees and the resources they willingly give to their clients or people interested in their work, the service you receive from the Farm Bureau will outdo itself every time. My grandmother currently has a membership at the Farm Bureau, and she can vouch

for this business from the service she receives, resulting in her support for the values they have, and the gestures that they give for others. Similar to the Farm Bureau's motives, she also believes in giving back to the people who first provided for us, and she believes the Farm Bureau does an excellent job at giving them what they deserve.

The Edwards County Farm Bureau not only does an amazing job at giving back to farmers, but they also strive to help students and young adults interested in pursuing a career in agriculture. The Farm Bureau is known for the scholarships they offer to senior students attending ECHS by giving students financial support if they wish to pursue something as rewarding and beneficial to the community as an agricultural-based job would do. The resources they offer to people, no matter if they are involved or not, truly reveals their key motive in the community: always giving back to the people who deserve these gestures the most.

All in all, the Edwards County Farm Bureau holds a significant role in the heart of Edwards County and the community that surrounds it. No matter the circumstances, or who is looking for help, the Farm Bureau will never hesitate to lend a helping hand, and that is what sets their business apart from so many others in the community. To anybody looking for a well-driven, well-organized business in the Edwards County area with agricultural resources, look no further than the Edwards County Farm Bureau.



## The Importance of the Edwards County Health Office

The community helps bring people together and give them people to go to when they have a problem. Business also helps bring the community together in many ways. There are many important businesses in Edward County that help the community grow. The Edward County Health Office is the center of the community in a medical way, which helps people in times of need. The health office is important to the community because they are the center of the community, they help people, and life would be very different without the health office.

Edwards County Health Office is that center of the community because lots of people go there to get looked at and to be healthy. The health office can give shots, check ups, and they have a lab. They look at people of all ages and ethnicities. Many families go to the health office to get their shots for school that are mandatory. I have received all of my shots for school through the health office and would not want to go anywhere else. They are very important to the community, and without them, people would have to travel to go get minor medical treatments.

The health office helps people in many ways. For example, they called the cops to help a lady get in her car after locking herself out. They have helped me by letting me get all my shots there and not traveling thirty minutes away. They are always very kind even if they are very busy and stressed out. They are very organized and people normally get in at their scheduled time.

Without the health office, the older people will have to drive a farther distance to get their check ups and other important medical care. People would have to change doctors and would not be that close with their medical people. We would not be as close with the community in the medical field because the people would have to see people from other places. Many people like to see people from their community when they are having to get seen. They are very flexible and help make sure everyone has time to go to the health office. This will help people stay at peace,

such as kids having to get shot. It would be harder for people if the health office was not in Edwards County.

In conclusion, the Edwards County Health Office is the center of the community because they help people with their medical care. It would be very different without them in the community. It helps bring the community together and strengthens it by helping people stay healthy. Without them, people would have to change their nurses and travel farther away. The health office is helpful to bring everyone together in their own ways. To finish, the health office is very important, and people should tell the people involved thank you.

## The Importance of The Smokin' Pig

Every community consists of businesses that keep it alive throughout the years. Although Edwards County has multiple, amazing businesses, there is one that stands out the most to me personally. The Smokin' Pig located in Grayville has made a noticeable impact on the community. The Smokin' Pig's atmosphere, service, and menu makes it special in the community.

The Smokin' Pig first opened as a food truck. Drew Bunting first opened the food truck in 2017. The food truck had a limited menu compared to the restaurant menu available currently. The food truck was very popular and often sold out of all menu items regularly. They traveled around Southern Illinois and Southern Indiana and soon became a local favorite. Due to the food truck's success, Drew collaborated with Richard Bunting to open the restaurant we all know to this day. The restaurant has an old Western setting that is welcoming and comforting to the consumers in our community. It blends in well with the western theme of the campground which includes mini golf, a miniature shooting range, and ice cream shop. The restaurant has become a gathering place for our community and has become a daily stop for quite a few of our citizens.

The positive, fun atmosphere that the Smokin' Pig radiates also comes from the excitement of the employees working there. As a previous employee of the restaurant, I know we have some of the friendliest and diligent employees in the community. The staff has become like a family, and their service makes customers feel at home. All staff members work together to keep the restaurant tidy and ensure every customer enjoys themselves. Richard Bunting, the manager, regularly can be found in the dining room conversing with customers and gathering feedback on their experience. The TLC Channel has even filmed an episode of one of their regular reality shows at The Smokin' Pig. My sister and I both were lucky enough to be working

that day, and it was an exciting opportunity to see the detail involved in the filming process. Promotions and advertising like that have helped the restaurant broaden its popularity in our community.

Throughout the last couple of years, the Smokin' Pig gained a lot of popularity from the food the restaurant serves. While ranked nationally, the pulled pork has become extremely popular in our community and others. The restaurant offers a variety of meals from barbeque to seafood. The menu includes appetizers, lunch specials, dinners, side dishes, and desserts. Food truck items are also available at the restaurant like a "Piggy Mac" or a gyro. Some fan favorite items include the trashcan nachos, shrimp tacos, and skillet cookie. All individual food items and larger meals have reasonable pricing in addition to the quality. The Smokin' Pig has a great variety of foods for any type of meal anyone in the community is looking to enjoy.

In this area, we are lucky to have multiple businesses to dine in, but The Smokin' Pig is definitely a favorite of mine that has noticeably helped sculpt our community. I encourage anyone who hasn't been to visit the restaurant and sample barbeque and other menu items for a wonderful meal.