

Kankakee County among leading metros statewide in jobs created

Kankakee County saw strong jobs growth and a sharp decline in unemployment over the past year, according to numbers released Oct. 23, 2014 by the Illinois Department of Employment Security.

According to the report, the Kankakee-Bradley metropolitan statistical area experienced a three percent drop in unemployment, 10.7 to 7.7 percent from September, 2013 to September, 2014.

Over that same time period, the Kankakee-Bradley MSA added 600 jobs, which represents the third greatest increase statewide.

"We are very encouraged, but not surprised by these numbers," noted Kankakee County Economic Alliance president/CEO Mike Van Mill. "Daily, we speak with and assist local

companies that are investing and expanding in Kankakee County. Our industrial base understands well our area's advantages—proximity to market, cost competitiveness, a ready workforce and rich business services. All indications are that these growth trends will continue, and likely accelerate, in Kankakee County."

Unemployment fell in all Illinois metros for the sixth consecutive month, with Kankakee-Bradley unemployment at its lowest level since 2007.

The Economic Alliance of Kankakee County is a public-private partnership that works to create jobs and expand the economic base by improving the local business climate. For more information, visit kankakeecountyed.org or call 1-815-935-1177.

Kankakee County 40 Under Forty



Photos courtesy of KCCC

The Kankakee County Chamber of Commerce and the Kankakee County Young Professionals have chosen the 2014 class of the Kankakee County 40 Under Forty. The 40 Under Forty program was started to identify people under the age of 40 who are in the community working hard to drive the economy and demonstrate dynamic leadership. A meet and greet for members of the 2013 and 2014 40 Under Forty was held Thursday, Oct. 30 at the Ale House Pub and Eatery in Bradley. Among those present were (above) this year's honorees Ryan Magruder and LeAnne Provost. Other honorees are Trevor Alcorn, Kyle Benoit, Dan Billingsley, Justin Caldwell, Michael Costanza, Todd Creek, Mike Cripe, Cierra Davis, Robert Davis, Abbey Ferenzi, Jamie Freelund, Gary Freelund, Aaron Fuerst, Mike Gall, Stacy Gall, Chad Kalecki, Amanda Lopez, Tim McGrath, Edward Meier, Adam Meyer, Sarah Mickler, Kim Piggush, Neil Piggush, Brian Prairie, Melissa Regnier, Jim Rowe, Rebecca Schatz, Natalie Seaton, Abigail Simeur, Matt Smith, Desnee Thompson, Rich Van Till, Kati Vaughn, Danielle Walters, Staci Wilkens, Sarah Winkel, Ronnie Wilcox and Bill Yohnka. The 2014 honorees will be celebrated at a reception hosted by the KCCC and the KCYP on Thursday, Nov. 20 at the Majestic Theatre in Kankakee. The event will begin at 5:30 p.m. with the awards at 6:30 p.m. Cost is \$30 per person which includes appetizers. RSVP by Nov. 7 to 40UnderForty@KankakeeCountyCHamber.com.

Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society founded in 1975

by Vic Johnson

The founding of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society by Adrien M. Richard, village historian; Professor Emeritus Linford Marquart, Olivet Nazarene College; and Father George Auger, C.S.V., associate pastor at Maternity BVM church, came during the same year the Bourbonnais community, possessed of sturdy French Canadian roots, celebrated those events that determined the course of village history.

Some 140 years earlier, a small settlement of French pioneers, in what was then Will County, had adopted the name of its post office, Bourbonnais Grove, as the name of their village.

By 1875, the prospering community had grown to about 600 residents, was home to a girls' academy, schooled by Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame and a boys' school and college, organized and taught by priests and brothers of the Clerics of St. Viator.

In 1875, just one year short of the United States Centennial, a committee of village leaders petitioned the state to incorporate Bourbonnais Grove as the village of Bourbonnais.

And so, in 1975, a centennial spectacular titled "Hooray Bourbonnais" would be held on three consecutive evenings to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the incorporation of Bourbonnais.

According to a promotional flyer, the script for "Hooray Bourbonnais" was written by Bob Higgins, a Chicago writer, and produced by show chairman Mary Ann Kirsch and her

committee.

In a promotional flyer for the show, Kirsch wrote: "A year ago, a centennial pageant was just a seed of thought in a few minds. Today, after a year's gestation we have 'Hooray Bourbonnais', not a pageant but a story. What made this 'seed' grow and blossom into what we see today on a stage in lovely Chalfant Hall can best be described as a labor of love."

And later: "...If in watching 'Hooray Bourbonnais' these beloved ancestors come alive and touch you as they did us with their dignity and strength, if you laugh a little with them, cry a little remembering, then a little of these people will continue to live on in you, making the labors of love of the community, cast and crew all worth while."

The two-and-a-half hour show featured original songs written by local talent and more than 1,000 pictures projected bigger than life. There would be, said Kirsch, "history live on stage, and the talent will be ours."

The dramatization of community history in "Hooray Bourbonnais" 39 years ago would inspire Richard to complete a long-planned book, "The Village: A Story of Bourbonnais".

A renewed interest in the village's past gave stimulus to an increase in Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society membership. Society members aided by like-minded citizens became influential mediators in the successful effort to save the historic Letourneau home. This achievement made it possible for the society to establish two village landmarks, the George R. Letourneau Home Museum and the Adrien M. Richard Heritage Preserve, both on Stratford Dr. E., Bourbonnais.



This picture was taken in the George R. Letourneau home on Saturday, April 4, 1987, the day the Adrien M. Richard Heritage Preserve was dedicated. Those pictured are (standing, l. to r.) Ken Ponton, who was president of the Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society; Charles Stinson, who was president of the Kankakee County Historical Society; Tom Lindsay, who wrote the "Up 'til Now" column for the Kankakee Sunday Journal; Jack Klasey, who had co-authored **Of the People: A Popular History of Kankakee County**; Mary Ann Kirsch, who was a feature writer for the Bourbonnais **Herald**, who wrote several articles on the history of Letourneau and his house; Vic Johnson, who was working on the book **Burt E. Burroughs Annotated: A History of Kankakee's Earliest Pioneer Settlers**; (seated, l. to r.) Adrien M. Richard and Olivet professor Linford Marquart.

The Bourbonnais Grove Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting local history. Monthly meetings are held at 7 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month, March through December. Museum hours are 1 to 4 p.m. on the first and third Sundays of each month, March through December or by appointment.

Visit bourbonnaishistory.org, find them on Facebook at [facebook.com/bourbonnaishistory](https://www.facebook.com/bourbonnaishistory) or call 1-815-933-6452.

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