

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NORTHWEST ILLINOIS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
CELEBRATES 2026 ANNUAL MEETING**

**HANOVER, ILLINOIS** – Northwest Illinois Economic Development (NWILED) held their 2026 Annual Meeting the evening of Thursday, Feb. 26, 2026. The event marked the organization’s 17<sup>th</sup> year of service to the business community of northwest Illinois and was held at the Marina Pavilion in The Galena Territory.

Over 120 members and supporters from over 35 organizations were present for the evening that featured a cocktail reception, dinner and short program. Opening remarks were made by NWILED Board Chair William Jahnke who stated, “All of us at NWILED thank all of you for your continued support of our efforts to make Northwest Illinois a great place to live and conduct business.” David Schmit, NWILED Regional Director, also addressed the group, confirming the release of the organization’s 2025 Annual Report, and the announcement of the upcoming 2026 NWILED Executive Committee: William Jahnke of Napcor as Chair, Mike Casper of JCE Co-op as Vice Chair, Amy Baker of Citizens State Bank as Secretary, and Amiee Schoenhaar of Riverport Railroad as Treasure. During his remarks, Schmit also commented on the organization’s Build It Grow It small business boot camp, the annual Manufacturing and Trades Day event, Genz Small Business Development Fund program, and formation of new advisory committees to better involve members in the workings of the organization.

The highlight of the evening was the announcement of NWILED’s 2026 Collaboration Awards! There were four awards presented.

- First, for their regional mock-interview workshops, marketing efforts around apprenticeships, workplace training outreach, and overall efforts to improve northwest Illinois’s regional workforce, **the 2026 Collaborator of the Year award went to Business Employment Skills Team!**
- Second, for their above and beyond financial and professional services support of NWILED, commitment of their staff to annual programing, the regional fiberoptic

rollout that is underway, and their instrumental role in helping attract Jungbunzlauer to Thomson, Illinois, **the 2026 Member of the Year award went to JCE Co-op!**

- Third, for her efforts to launch the new Northwest Illinois Pooled Retirement Plan program for area small businesses, service on NWILED's Executive Committee, and abundant efforts in the community working with our area chambers of commerce, foundations, and fellow economic development organizations, **the 2026 Board Member of the Year award went to Amy Baker!**
- And fourth, last year this community debuted a First Time Homebuyer Assistance Loan Program, approved a \$25,000 Revolving Loan to an East Dubuque manufacturer, completed their first ever County Transit Comprehensive Ridership Analysis, and advocated for new industrial acreage. And don't forget, their new Small Business Development Grant initiative gave out \$100,000 in small business grants. **The 2026 Community of the Year award went to Jo Daviess County!**

#### ABOUT NWILED:

Northwest Illinois Economic Development was created by the Jo-Carroll Energy Board of Directors to spearhead economic development structures, funding and progress in Jo Daviess, Carroll, and Whiteside counties in Northwest Illinois. Founded in 2008 and now in its 17th year of successful service, NWILED continues to be a regional development entity concentrating on growing the economy and public/private partnerships.

NWILED promotes economic development by fostering business growth and assisting expanding and relocating businesses. The organization aids in determining these needs for growth with cooperation from government and business partners. NWILED encourages entrepreneurs by assisting with access to resources to begin and grow their businesses and employs all available resources to create a welcoming business environment, aligning the skills of the available workforce with the needs of businesses, and building political and economic capital. NWILED's commitment to success also produces programs, ventures and events that nurture educational business growth and overall business community involvement.