

# Illinois Business Journal

Vol. 21 No. 11 • July 2022



Lou Fusz Ford of Highland, formerly Tri-Ford.

## Ford dealer gains new name, but the familiar faces remain

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

The original threesome at Tri-Ford has given away to one big name — Lou Fusz Ford of Highland.

The longtime family owned and operated business was sold to the Fusz auto network as of May 10.

Eric Rehkemper, formerly the president of Tri-Ford, is now general manager.

All 37 employees remain on the job.

“They didn’t change one employee,” Rehkemper said. “They kept the company just as you see it. They liked what we do, and they love our customer satisfaction. They love how we’re involved in the community. They

really didn’t want to change that. They just wanted to grow their company.”

It is, however, a big change historically for a business that opened more than 52 years ago. Three longtime friends went in on the business and all were familiar in Highland.

They were: Dave Rehkemper, Eric’s father; Ed Moenster, Eric’s uncle; and a local insurance agent, Clint Rogier.

Dave was a barber, which made him pretty good at sales, his son said. Moenster was a local mechanic, which made him good in the back end of the business. (Moenster’s wife and Eric Rehkemper’s mother were sisters.)

■ See FORD, Page 11

## State agency helps tout Southwestern Illinois

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

A state economic development association that has spent months studying Southwestern Illinois concludes

the area is ripe for growth.



Seals

Intersect Illinois is focused on bringing new businesses, jobs and investment to the state by collaborating with industry, academic, civic, and government partners to deliver a unified approach.

Representatives focused intently this past month on Metro East. They accompanied local officials and outside business consultants on a “familiarization tour” of sites to see what’s already being done to attract companies.

Intersect’s challenge is the same as every community’s — and each of the 50 states. That is, overcoming obstacles — including sometimes misleading perceptions — that block economic development.

CEO Dan Seals, who came aboard last September, said Intersect is the only organization in the state whose mission is to attract new jobs

and investment to the entire state.

“Our strategy has been to lean in to attracting new business rather than waiting for business to come to us,” Seals said.

Intersect’s board also named a coordinator of Downstate efforts. He is Robert Stephan, a Godfrey native long active in governmental affairs and strategic communication.

Since 2016, Intersect has served as the state’s public/private development arm.

Right now, it is operating off a \$3 million a year state grant and contributions from the private sector. It’s been credited with helping lure \$4.7 billion in investment and 15,800 jobs.

“We work in partnership with local communities,” Seals said. “Our focus is the top of the funnel. We’ll bring the companies into the state and partner with local communities to actually win that business.”

In April, Intersect launched a marketing campaign called, “Be in Illinois.” It targets companies that would mesh well with what Seals said are the state’s unique strengths.

“You can’t chase everything. We’ve gone through the data and looked at which industry clusters we are most competitive in and focused on those.”

■ See INTERSECT, Page 2

## ASCE presidency new chapter in engineer’s extraordinary life

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

Glen Carbon resident Marsia “Marsie” Geldert-Murphey has her feet firmly planted in a profession that focuses on working from the ground up. Come this fall, she’ll be looking at it from a new perspective.

Geldert-Murphey is the newly chosen president-elect of the American Society of Civil Engineers for the 2023–2024 term, after a month-long election that closed June 1.

She will be sworn in this October as president-elect in annual convention ceremonies in Anaheim, Cal., and then in October 2023 will be sworn in as president at the convention to be held in Chicago. She will have a three-year obligation on the board, with the last year being served as past president.

Geldert-Murphey, 57, is currently chair of ASCE’s Public Policy and Practice Committee, which coordinates public policy and government relations activities affecting the civil engineering profession.

Specializing in transportation and geotechnical engineering, she is currently the regional director for Missouri and Illinois for the Lochmueller Group Inc., a Midwestern consulting firm.

The Society president serves as the chief representative and spokesperson for the group, working with ASCE’s executive director. The president chairs the Board of Direction and the Executive Committee and assists in educating and motivating members and potential members by promoting Society principles, policies and goals.

Geldert-Murphey has led an extraordinary life, with a string of professional successes — and a personal tragedy that nearly cost her life. In 2016, she was severely injured in a freak elevator incident that required many months of recovery.

Geldert-Murphey, who holds P.E., and F. ASCE certifications, has been actively involved in ASCE for 32 years. She served on the ASCE Board of Direction from 2016–2019 as the Region 7 director. The region is comprised of South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming and the southwest part of Illinois, where she lives and works.

She began her leadership within the Society as president of ASCE’s St. Louis Section in 2006 and as Region 7 governor from 2009–2013. Committees have kept her busy with programs, finance, leader training, diversity and mentorship.

■ See ENGINEER, Page 2

## News veteran named editor of Illinois Business Journal

Melissa Crockett Meske, a veteran journalist and business executive in Southwestern Illinois, has been named editor of the Illinois Business Journal.



Meske

Grubaugh, who is scaling back responsibilities in preparation for retirement.

“We’ve found the right editor for the IBJ,” Hoskins said. “She knows this market, she knows the news business and she has a passion for the issues that drive progress in the region.”

Meske will also hold a dual role advising the editorial team at the Times-Tribune, a Madison County-based, weekly publication owned by Better Newspapers.

As longtime owner of her own content-creation business, Meske has published pieces in many of the region’s newspapers, including the IBJ. She has worked as reporter/editor for AdVantage News in Godfrey and as regional editor for the former Campbell Publications in Jerseyville. At one time, Meske also served as executive director of Jacoby Arts Cen-

ter in Alton. Formerly an adjunct faculty member in the Business Division at Lewis and Clark Community College in Godfrey, she also managed the college’s work-based learning initiative for many years.

A Jerseyville native, she now makes her home in Bunker Hill along with husband Kevin.

“I am looking forward to this opportunity in front of me, working with Better Newspapers and their publications of the Illinois Business Journal and the Times-Tribune,” Meske said. “I am honored to be following in the footsteps of Dennis Grubaugh, a force in the world of journalism and a true mentor to me throughout my career.”

Grubaugh and partner Alan Ortvals sold the Illinois Business Journal to Better Newspapers in May 2019. Ortvals retired at the time, while Grubaugh agreed to stay as editor until closer to retirement.

Meske holds a master’s degree in organizational management and a bachelor’s degree in organizational leadership. She said she looks forward to the challenge of working with both papers.

“I look forward to helping the Troy editorial team shape each edition into an even stronger, go-to news source. The future of both publications, and of the company, is exciting and bright, and I am thrilled about being a part of it all,” she said.



