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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Nancy Norton, CEO & President  
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### **GRUNDY COUNTY ANNUAL CELEBRATION DRAWS LARGE CROWD**

**MINOOKA** – A large turnout gathered to celebrate at the Grundy Economic Development Council and the Grundy County Chamber of Commerce & Industry’s Annual Dinner held March 22 at Chapin’s East in Minooka.

More than 275 business and municipal leaders, and guests were in attendance to recognize the organizations’ award winners and celebrate a successful year for the Grundy County business community.

The event started with Chris Breyman, Vice President at Grundy Bank and Chairman of the GEDC welcomed the attendees and thanked them for their support of the two organizations. Grundy County Board Chair, Chris Balkema, addressed the audience, and offered remarks about the importance of the GEDC and Chamber.

The awards presentation immediately followed dinner.

### **GRUNDY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AWARDS**

Nancy Norton, CEO and President of the GEDC, and Breyman presented the GEDC awards.

“This year is one of the most successful on record for the GEDC with new prospect investment and membership growing to its highest level in the organization’s history,” Norton said to the crowd.

A special thanks was also extended to Exelon Generation, a sponsor of the evening.

### **Hampton Inn/Blair Road Hotel Association – Welcome to Grundy County Award**

Business attraction, one of the key components of economic development, is very competitive. So when a business selects Grundy County as a new location, it is something to celebrate. The winner of the Welcome to Grundy County was Hampton Inn – Blair Road Hotel Association, in Minooka.

The new Hampton Inn has 83 rooms and certainly filled a need in the community. From the start, business customers have raved about the hotel's facility, service and all around experience. Based on the success of the Hampton, the hotel group recently announced a second hotel right across the street, Marriott Townplace Suites, which will be an extended stay, 87-room hotel with construction scheduled to begin this summer. Brian Ossian and Arne Yates accepted the Welcome to Grundy County award.

### **Joliet Junior College - Partnership Award**

Prospects and businesses frequently comment about how well Grundy County entities work together and the Partnership Award embodies this spirit. One of the top concerns in the business world is workforce, both skills and availability. Joliet Junior College was awarded the Partnership Award for its strides in workforce development.

JJC listens to the needs of the business community and responds. A perfect example is the Operations Engineering and technician program. The business community expressed a need for training operators and engineers in both technical and soft skills. Working with local industry the curriculum was designed and the program also incorporated a dress code, time clocks and a strict attendance policy. In return, each student receives a summer internship at a local business. This summer all the internships are being provided by Grundy County businesses. JJC also is a supporter of the local internship program for juniors and seniors, partners with taxing districts for local incentives, and provides many classes designed to meet the needs of local business. Dr. Judy Mitchell, President, Joliet Junior College, accepted the award.

### **Exelon Generation/Dresden Station - Business of the Year**

For more than 50 years, Dresden Station has played a vital role in the Grundy County community and economy. The station employs more than 800 full-time employees, provides enough electricity to power nearly 2 million homes and businesses, and is the largest taxpayer, by far, in the County. The impact Dresden Station has in our communities is profound. Every year the station hires an additional 1,500-2,000 workers to assist with the refueling outages, Dresden employees serve and volunteer for local charities and the company is a great supporter of nonprofits.

Norton emphasized that businesses that employ 800 people, have an annual payroll of \$80 million and pay \$25 million each year in property taxes are nearly impossible to replace. This award, is just a small way to thank Exelon for what it does for Grundy County. John Washko, Dresden Station plant manager, accepted the award.

## **GRUNDY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARDS**

Christina Van Yperen, Executive Director and John Adler, of Aflac and Chamber Board Chair presented the Chamber awards. Van Yperen thanked everyone for helping to recognize our local businesses and organizations, big and small.

"It is our pleasure to recognize those who have made a significant contribution to our area and who were nominated by Chamber members," Van Yperen said.

### **Business of the Year – D’Arcy Chevy Buick Cadillac**

With now three dealerships in the Will and Grundy County area, Terry D’Arcy and his team are no strangers to building a good reputation. Before their purchase of the Morris was even finalized, Terry and his local GM Randy Baudek had started attending Chamber events and asking how they could help to support our community. In their 15 months in Grundy County, the Morris dealership has seen a 90% increase in sales and was recognized by Chevy at this year’s Chicago Auto Show.

Starting before they had a physical presence here, D’Arcy Motors has now contributed to more than 15 organizations and nonprofits that serve Grundy County through both time and financial donations. Some of these organizations include the Morris Community YMCA, Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers, Grundy-Three Rivers Habitat for Humanity, the Grundy County Farm Bureau, Boy Scouts, and so many more. When I asked the D’Arcy team the mentality behind the vast contributions I was told Terry wants people to know they care. They don’t just give money and go away. Their contributions are not seen as sponsorships or donations to the D’Arcy team, it’s seen as an investment in their community. Community Investment Director Monica Bibian and Marketing Manager Maggie Sillar accepted the award.

### **Entrepreneur of the Year – Kim Scerine, On Broadway Dance Center in Coal City**

This year’s Entrepreneur of the Year celebrates her 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in business with On Broadway Dance Center in Coal City. Kim Scerine opened the center with a goal of providing dance instruction by integrating body, art, and intellect. From ages 3 and up and classes from ballet to tap, Kim has been helping to shape our children into mature, hardworking, well-rounded adults for decades.

One year into opening the dance center, Scerine established the On Broadway Dancers with the hope of giving rural young people an equal opportunity in performing arts. The dancers have developed into a sought after Company with a reputation for skill and talent. Dancing at Chicago Bulls games, at the Taste of Chicago, with Jesse White’s Tumblers, and in such countries as Italy, Austria, and Germany, the dancers have clearly made their mark in the professional dance field. More importantly, these dancers have made their mark on their own community, raising more than \$20,000 in toys, clothing, and food for families in the last five years through their annual Christmas Show. In addition, they help to raise funds for outside organizations such as Angels of Hope, give out annual scholarships to local students and contribute their time to those in need as they did for the families devastated by the Diamond and Coal City tornadoes. Scerine is a prime example of what being a small business owner is all about, illustrating that it’s more than a job, more than her livelihood, but also a commitment to her community. Kim Scerine accepted the award.

### **Organization of the Year – Morris Community YMCA**

In just two years, the Morris Community YMCA, a part of the Greater Joliet Area YMCA, opened its first daily presence in Grundy County and witnessed growth from the expected 250 units, to more than 1,000 units today which represents over 2,400 members. They have also partnered with Morris Hospital on several programs, including a prescription for fitness program to help prevent and improve disease.

Last year there were more than 60,000 visits to the Morris Y, the youth basketball program in Morris and Coal City continued to increase in enrollment with about 520 kids, and summer day camps were added to the Coal City area on top of Morris. Since 2006 the Y has had a presence in Grundy County and on Dec. 1 it secured a land donation from the families that own and operate D Construction for just west of White Oak School, proving their commitment to the construction of full-facility Y in Morris. Perhaps the Y’s most important contribution to the community, but the least recognized, is its policy of turning away no one for the inability to pay. At the Morris Y, one in three kids enrolled in both its Kids Zone, and summer day camp programs receive a scholarship to attend. When they opened the center two years ago the Morris Community YMCA set out to make a difference in the well-being of our Grundy County residents. It’s safe to say the Y, its local board and staff have made an incredible impact. Missy Durkin accepted the award.

**Ambassador of the Year – Stephanie Coleman, Streator Onized Credit Union (presented by Adler)**

Chamber Ambassadors serve as liaisons between Chamber members and staff. They gather feedback and answer members' questions during calls and visits they make throughout the year. Many Ambassadors find their participation in this group to be an invaluable tool for making contacts throughout the business community. Stephanie Coleman became a Chamber Ambassador nine years ago because she wanted to be more involved in the community. Coleman has served as Ambassador chair, vice chair and secretary in years past, and this is her second time winning Ambassador of the Year. She also serves on the Chamber Board.

**Closing**

John Adler of Aflac and Chamber Board Chair closed the event by reminding everyone this event was a celebration of the strides made in recruiting, retaining and promoting businesses in and around Grundy County. She thanked the businesses that have grown, entrepreneurs who have taken risks and organizations that serve this county for what they do to make Grundy County a great place to visit, live, work and do business.

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