



2025

ANNUAL **REPORT**

creating entrepreneurial opportunities

centralillinoisceo.com



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SPECIAL THANK YOU

Partnering with local businesses has made our program a success. We want to recognize both Dynagraphics and DCC Marketing for their continued support to the CICEO Program.



LETTER FROM THE **BOARD CHAIR**



KRAIG RITTER

Board Chair

Dear Investors,

I am excited to present our annual report for the CICEO Class of 2025.

Our program continues to thrive and our Board of Directors continue to look forward to further growth to ensure we provide value to our stakeholders – investors, communities, participating schools, and most importantly, our students.

Empowering the Next Generation of Leaders

The Central Illinois CEO program is more than a class—it's a transformative experience that connects high school students with real-world business leaders, equipping them with the skills, mindset, and confidence to become tomorrow's innovators and entrepreneurs.

For Our Students:

CEO provides unmatched access to mentorship, leadership development, and a hands-on experience. Through site visits, one-on-one investor engagement, and launching real businesses, students gain practical knowledge and soft skills that prepare them for any career path.

For Our Investors:

Your investment is more than financial—it's a legacy. By supporting CEO, you're directly shaping the future workforce and nurturing young talent who will return the favor by strengthening our local economy and communities. We encourage your continued engagement to reinforce such impact.

For Our Communities:

The CEO program fosters a culture of entrepreneurship, leadership, and civic pride. It builds bridges between generations, industries, and school districts, creating a ripple effect of positivity and growth throughout Central Illinois.

We want to thank you for your continued confidence in our program, and continued belief in our mission and your dedication to supporting entrepreneurship!



LETTER FROM THE **FACILITATOR**



MELANIE BROWN
Facilitator

CEO stands for **Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities**, however I believe it is far more than that.

The day to day hands on learning the students have with local businesses is helping them to see the career **opportunities** right here in Central Illinois.

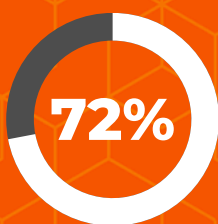
The collaboration we have with the four communities our program represents allows the students the **opportunity** to work along side peers from local communities in a work-like environment.

The non-traditional approach and project based learning in CEO gives the students the **opportunity** to work as a team, be creative, and enhance their public speaking skills.

The focus on soft skills, such as shaking hands, introductions, professional emails, writing thank you notes, resume writing, dinner etiquette, professional dress, and time management presents many **opportunities** for these students to learn and grow, setting themselves apart from their peers.

The statement "**OPPORTUNITIES ARE ENDLESS**" signifies a vast and limitless potential for advancement, growth, and achievement. It also suggests that there are numerous possibilities and chances available to individuals that exceed any perceived boundaries. This phrase emphasizes the importance of looking beyond the ordinary and embracing the potential for positive change and progress.

I believe this sums up this program and the CICEO Class of 2025. They worked hard to embrace their entrepreneurial spirit and exceeded my expectations!



When young people have a good network, they have a lot of opportunities. It is our goal to connect our CEO students with as many business owners and community leaders as possible throughout their CEO experience. After completing the program, when we asked our students if they thought they could see themselves returning to the area, 72% said they could see themselves returning to the Central IL area to plant roots in the future.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

In Central IL CEO, the community is our classroom.

CEO is a transformational program for juniors and seniors from Blue Ridge, Clinton, Maroa-Forsyth and Warrensburg-Latham High Schools.

During the course of the year, our students tour and connect with dozens of area businesses and guest speakers.

Together, students develop a class business venture in the fall and launch an individual business in the spring. Through these interactions and experiences, our goal is to help our students develop an entrepreneurial mindset which, we believe, will help set them up for success no matter which career path they choose.



VISION

CEO nurtures entrepreneurial thinkers who possess an awareness of themselves and their communities



MISSION

Being and developing life-long learners, owners, creators, communicators, and connectors



CULTURE

Expecting the best of ourselves and others that reflects the spirit and accountability found in CEO



PARTICIPATING
SCHOOLS

4



CURRENT
STUDENTS

13



TOTAL
ALUMNI

42



ACTIVE
INVESTORS

55



BOARD
MEMBERS

12



YEARS
ACTIVE

6

INVESTORS:

POWERING THE NEXT GENERATION

Our Program Investors provide support to our community driven program. An annual investment of \$1,000 provides the necessary resources for the facilitator's salary and operating expenses, and ensures the sustainability of the Central Illinois CEO class for future students. Investors also contribute their time to the program by hosting business visits, providing guest speakers, and serving as mentors. All are crucial to the success of the CICEO Program!

- ADM Carbohydrate Solutions
- Baum Chevrolet
- Bayer
- Blue Ridge Educational Foundation
- Brown, Hay & Stephens
- Busey Bank
- Central Illinois Title Company
- Chastain & Associates, LLC.
- Clinton Chiropractic Center
- Clinton Community Educational Foundation
- Clinton Rotary Club
- Comfort Keepers
- Constellation
- Corteva
- Memorial Health
- Dewitt Savings Bank
- Dunn Family Foundation
- Edward Jones
- Mr. & Mrs. Kim Ekena
- Enel
- Farm Credit Illinois
- First Mid Insurance Group
- Forvis
- Heart of Illinois Community Foundation
- Heartland Ag Group Ltd.
- Hickory Point Bank
- Horve Construction LLC
- Craig Huss
- John & Cindy Oakley
- Harbrand
- Maroa-Forsyth Foundation
- Maxwell Counters
- McLeod Express
- Midwest Siding & Windows
- Drew & Kristin Moore
- Papa Murphy's
- Northwestern Mutual
- Nutrien Ag Solutions
- John Oakley
- Performance Welding
- Regions Bank
- Risinger Bros. Transfer
- Sector 1
- Stifel
- Taylor & Lynch
- Dennis & Natalie Toalson
- TS and Juanita Ballance Foundation
- The Liquid Edge
- Brian & Jill Waddell Charitable Trust
- Warrensburg Fireman's Association
- Warrensburg-Latham Educational Foundation
- Warrensburg-Latham Lions Club
- WHOW
- Dave & Susan Wilson
- Wilson Brothers Properties



INVESTOR TESTIMONIAL

"I was 'on board' with the concept from Day 1 -- now 6 years later the ultimate reward has been engaging with the students and seeing their personal growth and the impact CEO has had on them. I am proud to support Central Illinois CEO as a board member and investor!"

- Ryan Aupperle, Heartland Ag



MENTORS

GUIDING THE NEXT GENERATION

A mentor is a business owner, entrepreneur, or intrapreneur from the Central Illinois CEO business community who plays a vital role in shaping the next generation of leaders. By sharing their time, expertise, and real-world experiences, mentors provide invaluable guidance, encouragement, and insights that help CEO students develop confidence, critical thinking skills, and an entrepreneurial mindset.



CORY BICKES

**HR Manager,
Bickes Inc.**

Mentoring: Connell Doolin

JEANNA GRIFFITHS

**Vice President,
Ray's Chili & Red Door Spice Co.**

Mentoring: Ava Smith

MIKE MANDRELL

**Agent,
State Farm**

Mentoring: Brock Wilson

GARY BOHNER

**Consultant & Advisor,
Community Bank**

Mentoring: Devin Wrestler

JULIE HINDS

**Owner/Designer,
Country Junction**

Mentoring: Aameah Toedt

ALEC MARTIN

**Financial Advisor,
Edward Jones**

Mentoring: Cole Fentress

GRACE CLARK

**Manager,
Dewitt County Farm Bureau**

Mentoring: Olivia Wendell

CURT HOMANN

**Executive Director,
Dewitt County Development
Council**

Mentor Ambassador

STEFANIE RUNYEN

**Marketing Director/Banker,
Dewitt Savings Bank**

Mentoring: Chloe Sebok

KIM EKENA

**Retired VP,
ADM**

Mentor Ambassador

TOM KOPEIKA

**Retired Independent Software
Developer**

Mentoring: Peter Hackleman

CAMILL TEDRICK

**Designated Managing
Broker,**

REMAX Choice

Mentoring: Leah Mills

SARAH FRANKLIN

**Product Manager,
ADM**

Mentoring: Emily Atten

VERONICA LOGAN

**Wealth Advisor Planner,
Busey Bank**

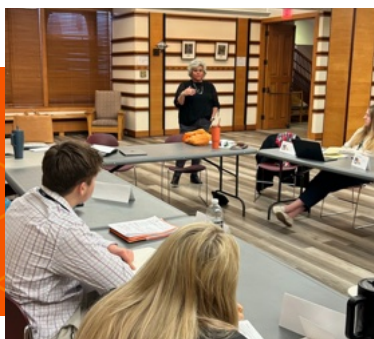
Mentoring: Mabrey Schick

LANCE WHITE

**Banker/VP Commercial
Lending,**

First National Bank Clinton

Mentoring: Jackson Cole



MENTOR TESTIMONIAL

"As a returning Mentor of the Central II CEO program, I've been honored! It's been incredibly rewarding to watch the young adults in our communities grow—discovering their passions, building relationships, and gaining a deeper understanding of what it takes to start and run a business. Even more inspiring is seeing them uncover the drive and ambition within themselves to succeed, often in ways they never imagined possible."

- Camill Tedrick, Remax Choice

CLASS OF 2025

THE ENTREPRENEURS OF TOMORROW

Ameah Toedt



Hello, I'm Ameah Toedt, a soon-to-be 2025 graduate from Maroa-Forsyth High School. When I'm not involved in CEO, I can be found working on the Yearbook, being involved in student council, and volunteering for the National Honor Society. In my free time, I enjoy babysitting, going to my grandma's, or spending time with my family. As I step into the next chapter of my life, I will be enrolling at the College of Charleston to study Business management and marketing. The CEO program has been an incredible experience which has allowed me to grow my network and understanding of the business world. My interest in Business started when my older sister studied it in college which led me to want to join CEO.



SCENTFUL CREATIONS

Scentful Creations is a candle and wax melt business inspired by my mom, who sold similar products when I was growing up. I offer a variety of wax melts, candles, and unique candles in thrifted glass jars or bowls. You can order by sending me a message on either one of my socials, @scentful creations on instagram and Scentful Creations on facebook, make sure to follow me!!

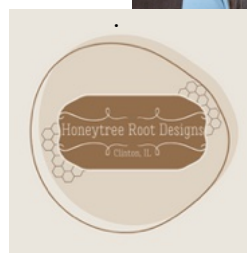
Emily Atten

Hello, my name is Emily Atten. I am currently a 17 year old Junior attending Clinton Community High School. The activities that I am involved with include FFA, 4-H, and I am a member of the National Honor Society. I was born and raised on a farm east of Clinton and I spend a majority of my time raising and showing cattle with the help of my parents and two older brothers. Livestock judging is a passion of mine, and I've had the opportunity to judge at local, state, and national levels. I plan to graduate in December 2025 and pursue studies in agriculture and animal science at Lakeland College. Throughout the year, I've developed many valuable skills that have helped me build this business. Being a part of the CEO program has been an amazing experience, and I am grateful to everyone who has been involved.



HONEYTREE ROOT DESIGN

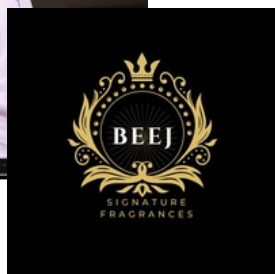
I make custom wood signs for my individual business. Simply select a picture or poster you want placed on a wood frame and I will hand make the frame, stain it to your stain color of choice and transfer your picture onto it. These make great gifts or are a great way to add art to your home. You can follow me on Instagram!



Brock Wilson



Hello! My name is Brock Wilson and I am currently a 17 year old junior at Clinton Community High School. At my school I participate in baseball and basketball. I am also involved in Student Council, National Honor Society, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes. In my freetime I enjoy hanging out with family and friends and going golfing. I am currently working at my local church nursery on the weekends and at the Clinton Country Club. During my summers I enjoy playing travel baseball. After school I plan on attending a four year college where I plan to study pre-Dentistry to help me on my path to becoming an Orthodontist while playing baseball. This year I have met so many amazing people and learned many valuable lessons.



BEEJ SIGNATURE FRAGRANCES

My individual business is Beej Signature Fragrances. I am creating two Men's fragrances, a summer fragrance and a winter fragrance. I wanted to make this business because I wanted to create an affordable cologne that smells luxurious, because smelling good shouldn't be the luxury, it should be the standard.

Chloe Sebok



Hello! My name is Chloe Sebok and I am currently an 18 year-old senior attending Maroa-Forsyth High School. I am involved in Yearbook, National Honor Society, and Heartland Tech Academy.

When I am not involved in school activities I enjoy spending time with my friends and family and babysitting. I have learned from The Heartland Tech Academy that you have to adapt how others learn and make it a priority to include those ways. After high school I will attend Eastern Illinois University and major in special education. I decided to take the CEO program because of all of the opportunities and experiences that are so different from the traditional high school classroom set up. I would like to thank all of the investors, board members, alumni, Melanie Brown, and everyone else who makes this amazing program possible.

Bark & Bliss
By: Chloe Sebok

BARK & BLISS

My individual business is Bark & Bliss By: Chloe Sebok. I sell customizable bandanas for all pups. I have some pre-made or you can special order one specific for your dog! Check out my business on instagram: barkandblissbychloe

Cole Fentress

Hi, my name is Cole Fentress. I am currently a junior at Clinton High School. I enjoy playing baseball, golf, fishing, food, and hunting. I work at Clinton Country Club doing groundskeeping. I love playing sports and working, but I enjoy hanging out with friends and being social in my free time. I aspire to own my own business one day. I do not know where I want to go to college or what I want to do, but I do know I want to own my own business one day. I joined CEO because I believe it will help me in the future to achieve my goals. I want to thank sponsors, mentors, and facilitators that made the CEO program possible.

SALT CREEK JERKY

My individual business is Salt Creek Jerky I utilize a Co-Packer to make and package my jerky. I have always loved beef jerky, but it was just so expensive and most the time didn't have good flavor or texture that's why I started salt creek jerky.



Devin Wrestler



Hello, My name is Devin Wrestler, and I am currently a 17 year old junior at Blue Ridge High School. I compete in Soccer, Basketball, Track & Field, Baseball, and Scholastic Bowl. I am also a member of the Student Council, Key Club, and FCA. The activities that I participate in have taught me a lot about teamwork, and what it takes to be successful. I lived in Switzerland until I was 12 when I moved to the USA. I am fluent in both English and German. I joined CICEO to learn about Business and Entrepreneurship. My goal in life is to be self-sufficient and be able to work from anywhere. I want to give a huge thank you to everyone who is a part of CEO, making this amazing experience possible.



PRO EDGE MEDIA

I started Pro Edge Media, a social media marketing business, in hopes of continuing it past CEO, which will give me the ability to work anywhere. My goal is to help local businesses get more recognition and traffic. You can find me on Instagram @proedgemia_ OR on Facebook @Pro Edge Media

CLASS OF 2025

THE ENTREPRENEURS OF TOMORROW

Connell Doolin



Hello, my name is Connell Doolin. I am currently a senior at Maroa-Forsyth High School. I enjoy staying active and being involved with my school through extracurricular activities. In the summer you can often find me out on the track, on the golf course, or out on the lake, and in the winter I'll be on a ski mountain. Thanks to the CEO program I have decided to attend Miami University of Ohio where I have been presented with the opportunity to graduate with both my Bachelor's in Finance and Master's in Science Business Analytics. What led me to the CEO program was the opportunities to expand my business skills and knowledge. This program has provided me with great hard skills and experiences like working with financial sheets as the CFO of our group business. I have also improved my soft skills by constantly communicating with business professionals and I have substantially grown my network. Thank you to all of the investors, board members, and everyone else that makes this amazing program possible. Without CEO I would still be clueless about what I want to do with my future and I thank this program for shaping me into the person I am today.



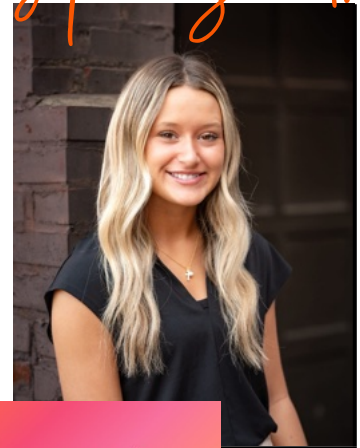
GREEN EDGE SERVICES

"Through the CEO program I have gained skills to help differentiate myself and grow as a person. Through this program I have also started up Green Edge Services where I offer services like mowing, trimming, power washing, mulching, etc. My goal is to create a personal relationship with all customers while making sure each blade of grass gets the attention it deserves!!"

Hello, my name is Ava Smith, and I am a proud member of the Class of 2025 at Warrensburg-Latham High School. Throughout my high school years, I stayed actively involved in Student Council, Business Club, Green Club, Link Crew, and Yearbook. In the spring, I also enjoyed playing softball. Outside of school, I dedicate much of my time to working as a part-time employee at the Country Club of Decatur.

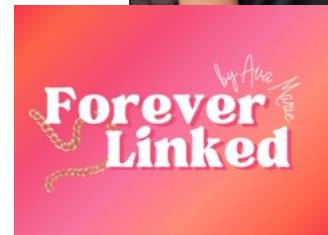
During my free time, I love spending time with my family, friends, and boyfriend. After graduation, I plan to attend cosmetology school at Tricoci University in Urbana, IL with the goal of one day owning my own salon and boutique. I joined the CEO program to expand my knowledge of business and develop new skills that would help me achieve my dreams. CEO was an incredible experience that gave me valuable insights into the business world and connected me with amazing people. I am incredibly grateful to the investors, board members, mentors, and everyone who made this experience possible for me.

Ava Smith



FOREVER LINKED

Forever Linked by Ava Marie is a permanent jewelry business dedicated to creating elegant, custom-fitted pieces designed to last. As a young entrepreneur with a passion for beauty and connection, the business offers high-quality chains with optional removable charms, allowing for a personalized touch. Whether you're looking for a special moment or simply elevating your everyday style, Forever Linked by Ava Marie ensures a seamless and stylish jewelry experience.



Jackson Cole



Hello, my name is Jackson Cole and I am a senior in high school at Maroa-Forsyth. I am ecstatic to be given the opportunity to participate in the wonderful program that CEO is and to learn the many valuable lessons it will teach me along the way. Outside of CEO, I spend most of my time playing pickleball with friends, in the weight room at the gym, working at Menards, and nerding out about the Lord of The Rings or Game of Thrones. After I graduate, I plan on attending college at ISU majoring in Finance. I am a very ambitious and driven individual and look forward to what I can learn from any challenges life may throw my way.

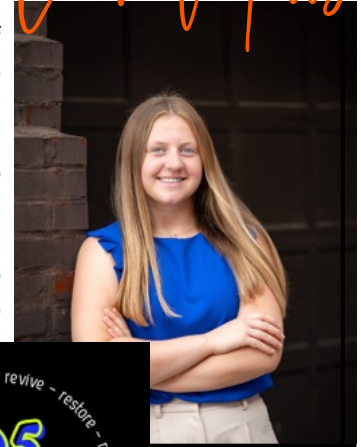


COLE'S COLLECTABLES

For my Individual business I founded Cole's Collectables. Cole's Collectables helps thorough and avid Lego collectors find sought after and rare Lego sets and mini figures to add to their collection. Whether you are a big fan of Star Wars or Batman, my store offers a wide variety of different products. If you are interested in purchasing any items, please check out my eBay store on eBay, @colectcollectibles.

Hello! My name is Leah Mills. I am currently 17 years old and a junior at Clinton High School. Through my school, I'm a member of the FFA chapter, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Lady Maroons Golf and Track teams. Outside of school I am also involved in 4-H and serve as a Sunday school teacher at St. John's Parish in Clinton. From winter through the beginning of fall, I spend numerous hours in my show barn enhancing and developing my animals. Showing pigs has taught me so many life lessons as well as put so many amazing people, connections, and endless opportunities in my path. After high school, I hope to further my education and earn a degree within agriculture of some kind. However, it is my dream to attend the University of Illinois. I have grown so much this past year and am very grateful to have been a part of the CEO Program. I believe the CEO Program has set me up with the best network and tools to help me be successful in my future! Thank you for getting to know me!

Leah Mills



R5 THERAPY

Within this incredible program, I have had the opportunity to create R5 Therapy. This is a MagnaWave service for livestock and small animals which has numerous health benefits. You can find me on Instagram @r5_therapy !



Olivia Wendell



My name is Olivia Wendell, and I am a 16 year old Junior at Warrensburg-Latham High School. Along with running my business, I stay busy participating in cheer, golf, and band, where I play the clarinet. While I'm still exploring my future career path, I'm excited to develop my entrepreneurial skills through the CEO program as I continue growing 217 Laser Co.



217 LASER CO.

217 Laser Co. is my personal laser engraving business, where I create custom, high-quality designs on wood, acrylic, metal, and more.

CLASS OF 2025

THE ENTREPRENEURS OF TOMORROW

Mabrey Schick



Hello! My name is Mabrey Schick. I'm currently a 17 year old junior at Clinton High School. Through school I'm very active in our FFA chapter as I'm currently serving as the President. With FFA, I participate in various career development events, such as public speaking and livestock judging. I plan to graduate early my senior year and compete on a collegiate livestock judging team. Outside of school, my life is focused around working on and showing cattle nationwide. Alongside with my two sisters, we spend countless hours in the barn caring for our heifers, which has allowed me to develop so many life skills. I'm also serving as the Secretary for the Illinois Junior Simmental Association, which has allowed me to work directly with the younger generation, and put on various shows and events. The CEO program has been an incredible opportunity that I wouldn't trade for anything. I'm so grateful for everyone who makes this program possible.



Chayne's Custom Caps

CHAYNCE'S CUSTOM CAPS

Within the CEO program I created my business Chayne's Custom Caps. I create completely customizable trucker hats, by ironing on patches. I work directly with each customer to develop a perfect hat just for them! You can find me on Instagram and Facebook @chaynescustomcaps!

Peter Hackleman

Hi, my name is Peter Hackleman. I'm a 17 year old senior at Maroa-Forsyth High School. At school, I'm a proud member of the National Honor Society and have previously participated in sports like basketball and football. Outside of the classroom, I enjoy spending time with my family, friends, and my car. Some of my favorite pastimes include playing pickleball, pick-up basketball, watching movies, eating at restaurants, and detailing my car. After graduation, I will begin my journey in the U.S. Army by attending Basic Training in South Carolina. I chose to join the Central Illinois CEO program because I saw it as a unique opportunity to gain a hands-on, dynamic learning experience that goes beyond the traditional classroom setting. After attending an Experience CEO Day, I was inspired by the program's exciting and professional environment. Through this program, I've gained valuable knowledge about the business world and its many facets.

I'm deeply grateful to everyone who has made this incredible experience possible.

P3'S AUTO DETAILING

For my individual project, I founded P3's Auto Detailing, an auto detailing business offering both interior and exterior services.



1st Semester Recap

from the students perspective!

IN JUST A SHORT TIME, WE GAINED VALUABLE LESSONS IN PATIENCE, COMMUNICATION, AND TEAMWORK.

We started off as complete strangers, but quickly became a group of friends we'll never forget. On just the third day of class, we were randomly paired for a high ropes course at Little Galilee, a challenge that brought us together fast.

Our first CEO assignments included the Badge Business, a Community Development Project, the WSOY Food Drive, and selecting a group business.

In addition to selecting a group business we had to prepare and pitch our vision to the CEO Board for approval. This experience definitely challenged us, but unified our team to bring our vision to fruition.

We also had the opportunity to attend workshops at Western Illinois University and Millikin University where we networked with other CEO students and learned about a variety of business concepts.



Photo above: team building
Photos below, top to bottom:
First day of class: August 2024
Community Development Project
Presentation
Group Business Board Pitch



Top photos: WSOY Food Drive, community service
Bottom photo: high ropes course, Little Galilee, Day 3 of class



MELODIES & MASTERPIECES

WHERE LEARNING MEETS DOING

OPERATION

In October, the CICEO students' were tasked with brainstorming to come up with a group business where they were to generate revenue that would help fund their individual business second semester. In their research and discussions, they came up with a dinner and an art auction. They prepared an ambitious pitch and presented it to the CICEO Board. Although the board was skeptical, they approved their idea and the students idea took flight!

The CEO students spent months planning every detail. They set up a website, had meetings with local businesses to secure sponsorship, marketed the event, networked with local artists to gather art for the auction, secured a pianist, ordered supplies, and worked closely with The Decatur Club to ensure that they carried out the vision they had for their event, Melodies & Masterpieces.



The event was held on January 25th at 6 pm where each guest was served a lovely dinner, enjoyed live music by the talented Christopher Weisenborn. Sean Streaty, the WAND TV evening news anchor, was the Emcee and kept the program moving along while the distinguished Auctioneer, Mike Maske, did an incredible job auctioning off the twenty seven pieces of art donated by local artists. The students ran and organized all of the details of the evening for nearly two hundred guests who attended.

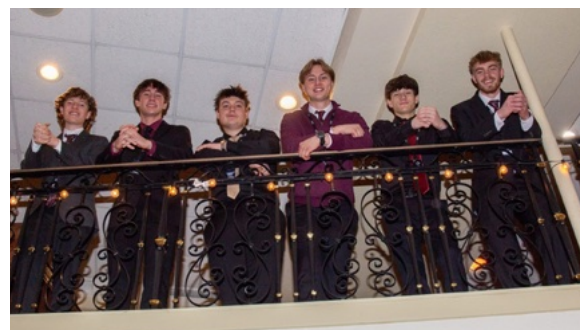


THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS:

First National Bank, Brinkoetter Realtors-Doolin Group, Buena Vista National Bank, Gustafson & Associates, Busey Bank, HarBrand Fertilizer, Lincoln Diagnostics, New American Funding, Edward Jones, Peterson Insurance, Armer Insurance, Dunn Company, Millikin University, and Dynagraphics.

FINANCIALS

Melodies & Masterpieces was a hugely successful event! The students were able to capture a profit of \$20,000, which provides capital to start their individual businesses. They also donated 10% of the proceeds to the Alzheimer's Association (check presentation picture bottom right corner).



BUSINESS VISITS

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: LEARNING FROM REAL BUSINESSES

A key part of the CEO experience is visiting local businesses in Central Illinois. Every day, people pass these businesses without realizing their impact on the local economy. Through these visits, students gain a new perspective—walking away with a deeper appreciation and never seeing these businesses the same way again.

Little Galilee

The Perfect Pair

Brass Horn

Clinton City Hall

Briggs Kennel

Dewitt County Farm Bureau

Clanin Marketing

Sweet Mae's

ATI

Buena Vista Bank

Dunn Company

McLeod

Crawford's Pizza

Millikin University

Country Junction

ADM

Krekels Forsyth

The Vault

EDC of Decatur & Macon County

Barclay Library

Farm Credit

Warner Hospital & Health Services

Downtown Decatur tour with Chastain & Associates

Jackie Joyner-Kersey Academy & Community Center

Herff Jones, Arcola

Hickory Point Bank

Liquid Edge

Marco

First Light

Plume

Baum Chevrolet

WHOW

Hampton Inn

Evergreen Senior Living

Colee's Pharmacy



2nd Semester Highlights...

from the students perspective!

At the start of the semester, we balanced running our class business, Melodies & Masterpieces, while building the foundation for our individual ventures. Along the way, we delivered two rounds of business pitches—first to the CEO Board for approval, and then during our class Shark Tank competition. In addition to all of this, we juggled site visits, class days, and recruiting, while also developing our soft skills through a resume workshop and a professional dinner etiquette session. All of this preparation is building toward our biggest event yet: the Trade Show, where we'll present our businesses to hundreds of attendees.

Photos:

Top Row:

Dinner Etiquette Session with Julie Schumacher & recruiting at Clinton High School

Middle row: Coffee & Connect in February at The Vault

Bottom Row - Team building: Pipeline Game, Solo Cup Challenge, and The Pringle Challenge



GUEST SPEAKERS

WISDOM FROM THOSE WHO'VE BEEN THERE

CEO participants gain a unique experience because guest speakers serve as instructors for the program. Community leaders share their life stories, entrepreneurial journeys, and valuable lessons on a variety of business topics.

Kevin Breheny, Leadership
Stephanie McLeese, Branding
Julie Schueler, Photo shoot
Curt Homann, DCDC
Sarah Probst Miller, DISC Training
Bruce Nims, Entrepreneur Mindset
Barb Barber, DISC Training
Tom Kopieka, Be a Multiplier
Honey Zimmerman from WIU, Conflict Resolution
Eric Benting, Chick-Fil-A
Alumni Panel
Karalee Miner, Solvr Group
Matt Riley, financial reports
Ray's Chili
Red Door Spice Co.
Anne Matalonis, creating your brand
Tim Sinclair, how to make a pitch
Julie Schumacher, ISU, Dinner Etiquette
Jessica Whitlock, How to give an effective pitch
Mike Mandrell, State Farm
Wes Johnson, Forvis
Kim & Ray Fields, Papa Murphy's Pizza
Bart Rose, Regions Bank
Gretchen Murphy, Murphy & Co.
Lindsey Wise, Brown, Hay & Stephens



GUEST SPEAKER QUOTE:

"You are a CEO of your life. The decisions you make right now are very important!" advice from Kevin Breheny, the very first speaker of the school year. They were given so many valuable life lessons through the year by all of these incredible people in our community.



Behind The Scenes...

Long before the spotlight and the pitch, our students were hard at work - brainstorming, researching, testing, and refining their ideas. Over the past three months, each CEO student has gone through the real process of launching a business from the ground up.

From early concept development to branding, budgeting, and market research, they faced challenges, asked tough questions, and made bold decisions. With guidance from mentors and support from the community, these young entrepreneurs turned their ideas into real ventures.

What you didn't see on stage was the late nights, the group discussions, the trial-and-error moments, and the excitement of breakthroughs. This behind-the-scenes journey is where true growth happened - where confidence was built, creativity flourished and future leaders emerged.



BANKER DAY

"BUSINESS PLAN PITCH DAY"

Each year we host a CEO Banker Day to give the students a real life experience of presenting a business proposal and requesting a loan.

After several months of researching, planning and writing a business plan for their individual businesses, each student meets with and presents their business financials to two local bankers. The students are expected to have a P&L statement and present 3 month projections. Additionally, they are expected to know their profit margin and break even point. The students are also expected to make a request for the amount of money they need to launch.

Concluding the meetings, the Bankers give the Facilitator and CEO Board feedback on how much money each student needs to cover start up costs. Based on this feedback each student is awarded a grant to help them start their businesses.

Thank you to our 2025 Banker volunteers:

Lance White, First National Bank Clinton
Bart Rose, Regions Bank
Gage Moore, Busey Bank
Brian Ury, Buena Vista Bank



THANK YOU
**FIRST NATIONAL
BANK OF CLINTON**
FOR HOSTING THIS
ANNUAL EVENT!

Shark Tank - Pitch Competition

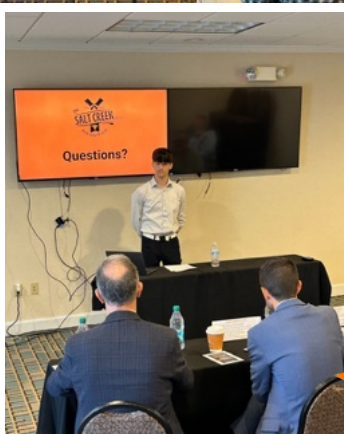
In April the CEO students took the spotlight to pitch their original business ideas in a Shark Tank-style competition. Each student had just 10 minutes to present their vision to a panel of five local business owners and community leaders. Thank you to our esteemed "sharks," Wanda Timmons, Bruce Nims, Chris Gilmar, Steve Clevinger, and Curt Homman.

From innovative products to socially driven services, the pitches reflected creativity, passion, and real-world potential. The sharks asked tough questions, offered insightful feedback, and were genuinely impressed by the professionalism and ambition on display.

While CEO Student Devin Wrestler walked away with a \$250 grand prize, provided by Altorfer, the sponsor of our event, every student left with invaluable experience, connections and confidence. The future of business is in good hands!

Thank you to our Shark Tank Sponsor!

ALTORFER



TRANSFORM OUR COMMUNITY **GET INVOLVED**



GUEST SPEAKER

Guest speakers are really the true teachers in CEO. We love for speakers to tell us stories about how their business started, personal philosophies about work and success, life topics or specific business topics. This is a great way to engage with the program!



BUSINESS VISIT

Students look forward to visiting the many different businesses that create our community. Consider inviting the class to tour and learn more about your business. Contact [facilitator@centralillinoisceo.com] to learn more.



MENTOR

Become a mentor if you are ready to experience CEO right along with the students. Being a mentor is a rewarding way to get involved.



INVESTOR

CEO is free for students and schools. The program relies on local investors to support this transformative learning experience. By helping us connect our young people with local businesses and area leaders, you can make a direct impact on the workforce and leaders of tomorrow.



BOARD MEMBER

Becoming a board member for CEO offers a rewarding opportunity to shape the future of aspiring entrepreneurs. Serving on the board allows you to contribute to the growth of the next generation of innovators and make a lasting impact on our community.

BOARD MEMBERS

STEERING THE FUTURE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP



KRAIG RITTER
CEO Board Chair
Partner, Forvis



KIM EKENA
CEO Board Vice Chair
Retired, ADM



ANGI CARTER
CEO Board Treasurer
VP Lending, Farm Credit IL



KEVIN MAXWELL
CEO Board Secretary
Founder, Maxwell Counters



RYAN AUPPERLE
Farm Manager,
Heartland Ag Group Ltd.



KATHERINE BRODBECK
Owner,
Sector 1 LLC



CURT NETTLES
Retired Superintendent,
Clinton Unit School District



JOHN OAKLEY
CFO,
World of Powersports



HILLARY STANIFER
Superintendent,
Blue Ridge CUSD #18



BRIAN WADDELL
Director of Procurement,
HarBrand Company



CHERYL WARNER
Superintendent,
Warrensburg-Latham
CUSD #11



KAROL WILSON
Human Resources/Education
Development Specialist,
Heritage Behavioral Services

THE VALUE OF OUR **ALUMNI...**

Over the past six years, we've had the privilege of impacting the lives of more than 60 students through our program. These alumni represent the heart of our mission and future of our communities. We are committed to staying connecting with them - linking them to mentors, investors, internships, and job opportunities beyond high school. As they continue to grow, we aim to support them in becoming active community leaders, giving back to the places they call home and inspiring the next generation.

Class of 2020:

Brenden Flannell
Cameron Reynolds
Colton Hoback
Gabriel Jenkins
Madison Miller
Max Stauffer
Ruslan Turner
Vince Baldassari
Trenton Sanders

Class of 2021:

Emmah Cook
Emma Culbertson
Jordan Gearlds
Marina Rohman
Rheys Sams-Moore

Class of 2022:

Grace Coffey
Boston Hale
Morgan Jones
Reanna Munjoy
Booke Oakley
Rachel Wisner

Class of 2023:

John Aupperle
Macy Carter
Mason Devore
Alexa Harris
Jack Horve
Makayla Hunt
Carlye Parson
Elan Rodriguez
Jace Snyder
Aiden Tohill

Class of 2024:

Cami Lawson
Ty Meeker
Sarah Mills
Mikee Montemar
Damjien Penny
Karla Ramirez
Gracie Rigg
Conley Schick
Ben Sellmeyer
Derek Troike



FRIENDS OF CICEO

Business SPOTLIGHTS

We extend our sincere gratitude to DCC Marketing, Kara Demirjian Huss, and her incredible team for their generous donation of time, talent, and creativity in producing a powerful video for our CEO Program.

They took our ideas and vision and brought them to life in a way that truly captures what the CEO experience is all about - the growth, the impact, and transformation happening in our students and communities.

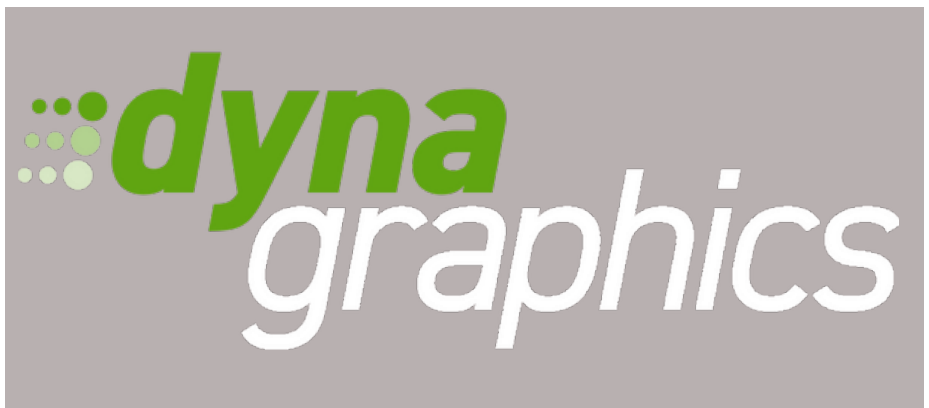
Their professionalism, passion, and dedication made this collaboration not only meaningful but enjoyable. We are so thankful for their support and belief in the mission of the CEO Program.



*Scan this code to
watch the video!*

We want to take a moment to sincerely thank Dyna Graphics and the entirety of their team, for supporting the CICEO Program in so many different ways throughout this past year. If it weren't for their extreme generosity we would not have been able to produce such a renown and successful event, Melodies & Masterpieces. They helped us take our vision and turn each idea into effective marketing pieces that helped us produce the WOW!

Additionally, we are grateful to partner with them each year to produce our annual report. They offer top notch screen printing services and we are proud to call them a FRIEND OF CEO!

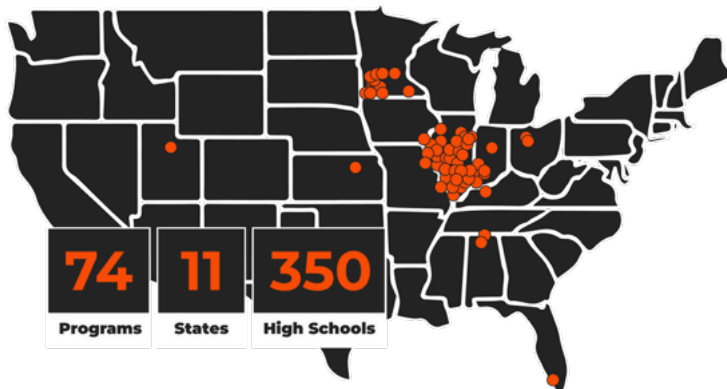




WE NEED COMMUNITY-MINDED INDIVIDUALS LIKE YOU.

CEO is free for students and schools. The program relies on local investors to support this transformative learning experience.

INVEST IN TOMORROW, TODAY.



By helping us connect our young people with local businesses and area leaders, you are making a direct impact on the workforce and leaders of tomorrow.

AS AN INVESTOR, YOU RECEIVE:

- Name/Logo Recognition on CEO Website
- Social Media Acknowledgement
- First Rights to host/visit the class



"The CEO experience has been life changing for me. I learned a lot of skills I wouldn't have been able to gather otherwise and I feel more prepared for my future. CEO opened up more doors for me than any other opportunity ever has."



"CEO is so much more than how to run a business. It is teaching students the life skills and all of the things that go into being successful in any career path you choose. It exposes all of our students to what endless opportunities are right here in our backyard."



"In 20+ years in economic development, the chamber of commerce and the economic development corporation, CEO has been the most beneficial most gratifying program I have been involved with."

Contact us



www.centralillinoisceo.com/Investors



facilitator@centralillinoisceo.com

DISCOVER HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR COMMUNITY THROUGH CEO.

The CEO (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) Program gives young people hands on business experience and transforms them into entrepreneurial thinkers who are invested in our community.



ABOUT THE

CEO PROGRAM

CEO (Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities) is unlike any other class. It is a program for high school juniors and seniors that teaches them about business. But even more, it teaches them about life.

Kids think that opportunity exists everywhere but in their hometowns. The CEO Program shows them that there are thriving businesses, opportunities for growth, and people who want to support them right here in their community - all they have to do is look.

We know that where our young people have a good network, they have opportunities.

70%

Of all CEO students said they could see themselves returning to their community in the future.



CEO IMMERSSES STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY.

CEO is never held in a classroom. Instead, students visit area businesses and hear from guest speakers from their community.



CEO INSTILLS AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET.

Each student is guided through the creation of two real businesses. Every CEO participant leaves the class with an operating business.



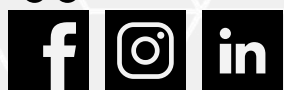
CEO INSPIRES THE NEXT GENERATION

It challenges young people to own their work, innovate creative solutions, and consider the possibilities available to them.



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