

CED celebrates 40 years of raising the tide

This year marks the Will County Center for Economic Development's 40th anniversary. I am proud to serve as board chairwoman through this milestone year and to shine a light on the impact the organization has had on our community.

The CED was formed in 1981, when unemployment was at an all-time high in Joliet and Will County. Empty buildings cast shadows on what once was a bustling manufacturing hub, and times were tough for many in our community. A group of concerned business leaders rallied in response, contributing their funds to form a non-profit that would cement the region's future.

Today, the CED has a solid reputation for improving the quality of life for all residents in Will County by



GUEST VIEW

Lydia Garvey

helping thousands of businesses thrive here, creating tens of thousands of jobs as a result. Nearly 200 CED investors from public and private entities fund the organization's impact. My colleagues on the CED Board of Directors hail from more than 60 companies representing about 20 sectors of our regional economy, and all share the goal of raising the tide in Will County. Partnerships between business, labor and government are at the root of the CED's success.

Forty years' worth of impact is difficult to measure. The CED has been a

catalyst for the county's first comprehensive transportation blueprint and has championed key studies and plans for infrastructure that enable our economy to thrive, even in a pandemic.

The CED had a hand in other game changers for our local economy, including the development of Center-Point Intermodal and the formation of the Joliet Arsenal Development Authority to redevelop a superfund site that has become the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery for veterans, BNSF Logistics Park Chicago and Prairie View Landfill. Additionally, Will County has become the largest inland port in North America. In sharp contrast to the CED's founding year, our residents enjoy strong transportation assets, plentiful work oppor-

tunities and access to award-winning health care and high-quality educational institutions.

CED President and CEO John Greuling speaks of economic development as a "legacy business"; the true impact of the work is far-reaching and long-term. As we celebrate 40 years, we reflect on the legacy sparked by those concerned business leaders from our early days while raising up investors who carry the torch through a new era. I am especially proud of how we continue building a bigger table to ensure that the voices around it represent the people within our county.

• Lydia Garvey is vice president/general manager of Hollywood Casino and board chairwoman for the Will County Center for Economic Development.

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IL 60435

include the author's full name, home address and day and evening telephone numbers. We limit letters to 300 words and one published letter every 15 days. All letters are subject to editing for length and clarity at the sole discretion of the editor.

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